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JAMADA ALAWWAL 7, 1444 AH  
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# National Assembly approves emergency election decrees

MPs demand fundamental reforms, combating corruption

ESF students visit Kuwait Times, Kuwait News



KUWAIT: Students and teachers of The English School Fahaheel visit Kuwait Times and Kuwait News offices on Nov 30, 2022. — Photo by Abdul Raheem Abdeen (See Page 12)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly on Wednesday overwhelmingly approved two emergency Amiri decrees issued by HH the Amir ahead of the Sept 29 parliamentary elections to regulate the snap polls. The first decree stipulated the use of civil IDs for establishing the identity of voters and proving their residential address, while the second decree added several residential areas to electoral districts after they were previously excluded, thus adding tens of thousands of new voters.

Fifty-three members, including Cabinet ministers, approved the decrees, while only three MPs opposed them. The Constitutional Court last week rejected petitions challenging that the two decrees violated the constitution and demanded scrapping them and nullifying the election process.

Meanwhile, the Assembly completed the debate of the Amiri address delivered on the opening day of the new house, with many MPs calling on the government to forge ahead with political, economic, social and administrative reforms. At the end of the debate, remarks made by MPs were sent to a three-MP panel responsible for preparing the response to the Amiri address.

MP Saud Al-Asfour stressed that political reforms are the true prelude to other reforms, mainly reforming the election system through approving legislation for legalizing political groups (parties) and collective lists of candidates to replace the current individual-based system. He said we cannot talk about a new era while we are still heavily burdened with problems of the past, especially rampant corruption where billions of dinars of public funds had been stolen, adding that the government must track down these funds and recover them. MP Hamad Al-Obaid said that there can be no development and progress without halting and fighting corruption and widespread bribery. MP Osama Al-Zaid also insisted that political reforms are the most important and key for all other reforms, adding the government must fight the use of money in politics. MP Fares Al-Otaibi called for diversifying sources of income and stop total dependence on oil as the only source of income, contributing 90 percent to state revenues. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said the country needs true political, administrative, financial and legal reforms, adding the election system must be reformed with the establishment of an election commission.

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## News in brief

### Steel bottles banned in schools

KUWAIT: The education ministry has banned steel water bottles from schools after an elementary school student used it to assault a fellow student, who was sent to the emergency room. "The decision was previously intended only for boys' schools, but the decision was changed to include all schools of all levels," an education source revealed to Kuwait Times.

### US to sell \$1bn systems to Qatar

WASHINGTON: The US government on Tuesday announced the approval of a \$1 billion sale of FS-LIDS counter-drone systems and other equipment to Qatar. "The proposed sale will improve Qatar's capability to meet current and future threats by providing electronic and kinetic defeat capabilities against Unmanned Aircraft Systems," the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) said in a statement. — AFP

### IS announces death of leader

BEIRUT: The Islamic State group said Wednesday that its leader Abu Hasan Al-Hashimi Al-Qurashi has been killed in battle and announced a replacement. A spokesman for the group said Hashimi, an Iraqi, was killed "in combat with enemies of God". Speaking in an audio message, the spokesman identified the group's new leader as Abu Al-Hussein Al-Husseini Al-Qurashi. The spokesman said he was a "veteran" jihadist and called on all groups loyal to IS to pledge their allegiance to its fourth leader. — AFP

## Kuwait mourns former parliament speaker Adsani

KUWAIT: Kuwait on Wednesday lost Mohammad Yousef Al-Adsani, former speaker of the National Assembly (1981-1985) and one of the pioneers of political and parliamentary work in the country. Adsani was born in Kuwait in 1925, and his career was full of parliamentary, governmental, political and diplomatic work. Adsani participated in several National Assembly elections and won the 1963 and 1981 elections, while he lost in the 1967 and 1985

elections. Adsani also held ministerial portfolios: he served as minister of planning in 1976-1978 and minister of public works in 1978. He also served as president of the Municipal Council, member of the Planning Council and ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Lebanon.

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences on Wednesday to the family of Adsani. HH the Amir extolled Adsani's great contributions to parliamentary action and his professionalism and



Mohammad Al-Adsani

wise leadership of the National Assembly. He also recalled Adsani's dedication and great service to the dear homeland, which made everybody hold him in high esteem. HH the Amir prayed to Allah the Almighty to lodge Adsani in paradise and grant his family patience and solace.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also sent a cable of condolences to the family of Adsani. In the cable, HH the Crown Prince recalled the outstanding contributions made by Adsani and the distinguished sincerity and loyalty in serving the dear country during his holding of various high positions with efficiency and competence. HH the Crown Prince expressed sympathy and deep condolences to Adsani's family, praying to Allah the Almighty to bestow mercy on Adsani's soul and patience and solace on his family. — KUNA

## Former Chinese president Jiang Zemin dies at 96

BEIJING: Former Chinese leader Jiang Zemin died Wednesday at the age of 96, state media reported, hailing him as a great communist revolutionary who helped quell the 1989 pro-democracy protests. Jiang took power in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square crackdown, in which the military used deadly force to end peaceful demonstrations, and led

China towards its emergence as a global economic powerhouse.

The major bodies of China's ruling Communist Party announced his death through a letter that expressed "profound grief". "Jiang Zemin passed away due to leukemia and multiple organ failure in Shanghai at 12:13 pm on Nov 30, 2022, at the age of 96, it was announced on Wednesday," news agency Xinhua said. His death



Jiang Zemin

came after all medical treatments had failed, it added, citing the letter.

"Comrade Jiang Zemin was an outstanding leader... a great Marxist, a great proletarian revolutionary, statesman, military strategist and diplomat, a long-tested communist fighter, and an outstanding leader of the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics," it said. Jiang's death comes as China sees a flare-up of anti-COVID lockdown protests that have morphed into calls for more political freedoms - the most widespread since the 1989 pro-democracy rallies.

"During the serious political turmoil in China in the spring and summer of 1989, Comrade Jiang

Continued on Page 6

## 3/4 of people over 10 own a mobile phone

GENEVA: Nearly three quarters of people over the age of 10 now own a mobile phone, potentially opening the way to broader Internet use, the United Nations said Wednesday. The UN's International Telecommunication Union has provided its first estimate of regional and global ownership, revealing that 73 percent of the world's population over 10 years of age owned a

cellphone in 2022.

"Mobile phones are the most common gateway to internet use, with the percentage of ownership serving as an indicator of Internet availability and access," the ITU said as it launched its annual report on global connectivity. But it cautioned that mobile phone ownership remains higher than Internet use - especially in lower-income countries, with broadband usually more expensive than cellular-only services.

The ITU found that mobile phone ownership had grown steadily in recent years, estimating it had risen from under 67 percent in 2019. The online population also saw a big "bump" up in 2020 during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. ITU

Continued on Page 6



DOHA: A USA fan looks at her mobile phone at the Al-Thumama Stadium on Nov 29, 2022. — AFP



# Teenagers make money using social media platforms, but at what cost?

## Psychologist discusses long-term effects of social media on children

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Have you ever thought teenagers who are earning money through social media platforms and neglecting their studies are being exploited, whether by media platforms that seduce them, parents who are using them as a source of income, or even the society that appreciates these teenagers more than those who are studying and building their future with things that benefit them.

Kuwait Times spoke to Dr Hassan Al-Mosawi, Psychological and Social Consultant, and asked him about the main reasons that encourage teenagers to neglect or drop their studies and concentrate on social media platforms, in addition to the effect of this decision on their future.

Dr Mosawi said in order to understand the effect of this on a teenager's future, "we need to know the reasons for parents letting their children live this way, and reasons are mostly between it being an economic factor, which means their children are a source of income for their parents to improve their economic situation, or some families they are looking to show off their children in order to become

famous, which gives their parents a feeling of pride and vanity".

"In addition to all of these factors, there is a psychological side, which is that many parents don't want to place any kind of pressure on their children, especially teenagers, so as not to be exposed to psychological problems, because it is mostly a part of their freedom and the new generation's lifestyle," he added.

Mosawi stressed that despite these factors and reasons, they have a negative effect on their future. "What are the benefits teenagers get by being on social media platforms at an early age, other than blind imitation and fame," he said, adding "the only things that they are getting is a waste of their time, studies and future - for nothing," he said.

"Unfortunately, the material aspect has become more important for teenagers than studying, as their way of thinking has changed. They believe being on social media will help them earn money more than having a good education, in addition to getting the attention of the media and people. This has led to people's appreciation of material values more than moral values," Mosawi pointed out.

Addressing the role of social media platforms is

very important as they prod teenagers to work with them. "Some parents have the idea that unless their teenagers are not doing anything wrong, such as using drugs, moral deviations or homosexuality, then they are safe," he explained.

"But these parents don't understand that in the long-term, they are creating weak characters that will not be able to catch up with the rapid changes in the world in the future, which will leave their children empty handed and feeling inferior," Mosawi said. He gave an example of merchants who didn't get any education, which made them unable to follow up updates. Regarding the ways social media is used to attract teenagers to work with them and drop out of school, Mosawi explained: "Having role models is not a bad thing, but the issue is that they are focusing on negative role models,



Dr Hassan Al-Mosawi



while positive models are being ignored, especially those who made something with their lives after dropping out of school. They highlight temporary careers that don't benefit them, such as vlogging, playing football or becoming an actor, for example. This will destroy the way how the next generation thinks and understands life, and surely it will affect their lives negatively."

## KU holds first international conference on AI

**KUWAIT:** Under the sponsorship of Education Minister Dr Hamad Al-Adwani, and in the presence of the Acting Director of Kuwait University, Dr Suad Al-Fadhli, the College of Medical Sciences held its first international conference on artificial intelligence for education in the College of Medicine, at the Health Sciences Center in Jabriya.

"The field of artificial intelligence began to impact many areas of life during the past twenty years, explaining that the main goal of the conference is to improve the quality of healthcare services in Kuwait by increasing knowledge about ways in which artificial intelligence (AI) can be applied in providing healthcare services," Dr Al-Fadhli said.

"The conference on AI will focus on its benefits in health science education and healthcare applications, as it is a challenging phase as the faculty begins to introduce AI, machine learning, and other technologies into their curricula and courses," she clarified.

Al-Fadhli indicated that classic methods of teaching basic sciences and other educational courses are not sufficient without implementing advanced technology and machine learning," she added.

"The second objective of the conference is based on the application of artificial intelligence in healthcare, in which Kuwait has made giant leaps since 2014, through the use of robotic surgery in various specialties. Moreover, it aims to introduce artificial intelligence and its applications in healthcare facilities through oral presentations, keynotes, video presentations and poster presentations," she added.

She added, "The results of our conference allow for the creation of distinct networks among the public, filling literacy gaps around artificial intelligence in health sciences and healthcare education applica-



Dr Suad Al-Fadhli

tions, introducing frontline technology for healthcare providers and working towards a first-class model for all faculties. So we are pleased to unite a community of people who are committed to reshaping technology using the latest artificial intelligence technologies," she said.

The conference featured several lectures, including 'The Beginning of Artificial Intelligence in Health Sciences Education' by Professor Nabil Zari, 'Artificial



KUWAIT: Dr Suad Al-Fadhli listens to a student.

Intelligence in Healthcare' by Professor Farah Maghribi, and 'How Much Should Healthcare Professionals Know About Artificial Intelligence?' Dr Adhari Al-Zaabi

and 'Robotic Urology' were lectured by Dr Saad Al-Dosari.

The conference will continue on December 1, 2022



> Students at Kuwait University in Shadadiya during a sandstorm (2022).

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Local

# Experts: Increased awareness on cybersecurity crucial in digital era

Kuwait Technical College holds panel discussion entitled 'Computer Science Day'



KUWAIT: Representatives from the US military during the discussion. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The audience

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Technical College organized a panel discussion entitled 'Computer Science Day' on Wednesday with the participation of the US Embassy and the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority at its premises. "We live today in the era of digital technology and information revolution. With the spread of smart devices and cloud services, and with electronic development, there are those who seek to target these systems through cyberattacks and information penetration in different ways," Chairman of K-Tech Mashari Boodai said.

"These attacks can affect every business entity in different societies, so we must work together to raise awareness and find solutions to avoid these cyberthreats and protect everyone, whether at the international level, governmental and private sectors, or at the level of individuals," he added. "Kuwait Technical College is keen to organize sessions by experts and specialists in the field of cybersecurity from CITRA and the US Embassy to Kuwait to talk about the steps and measures to limit these attacks," Boodai pointed out.

Meanwhile, representatives from the US military discussed several topics and gave an overview of current cybersecurity threats and best practices to

keep information and information systems secure at home, work and school. Experts discussed sociopolitical events influencing cyberactivity and emerging topics in cybersecurity, saying that during the pandemic many people start working from home and still do, so they have to make sure the companies are securing the devices they use and the kind of security they were offered, taking into consideration that we are living in the technology era where the Internet is everywhere and people are at risk.

They believe networks are constantly vulnerable or have already been hacked. Therefore, ongoing verification of users, devices and access is necessary. The representatives also had a discussion on sociopolitical

events influencing cyberactivity and emerging topics in cybersecurity, computer security and best practices, showing recent examples of cyberattacks.

The discussion was presented by experts BG Robert Powell, who is currently serving as the 335th Signal Command (Theater) (Provisional) commander at Camp Arifjan in Kuwait, MAJ Ameerah Lago, an MS in Computer Science - currently serving in 160th Signal Brigade, Sham McLendon, serving as the first female Warrant Officer Advisor to the Kuwait Ministry of Defense J6, Zenetta Mitchell, serving as the IT Lead for OMC-K, and Kyle Brundage, who is serving as the System Administrator for OMC-K.



KUWAIT: Zain and Zain Esports teams at the event.



KUWAIT: Zain organized mini-tournaments and presented prizes to winners.

## Zain Platinum sponsor of POP UP BY COMFEST

**KUWAIT:** Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announced its platinum sponsorship of POP UP BY COMFEST 2022, the biggest gaming and comics gathering in Kuwait. The event, which Zain supported for the third year running, welcomed huge crowds of gaming, comics, and pop culture fans at SIRBB Circuit in Shuwaikh.

Zain continues to support this unique event to encourage initiatives that offer a unique entertainment and social experience for young people, who are society's most vibrant segment. The company is also committed to supporting and empowering Kuwaiti SME owners, many of whom joined the event to offer their services and products to visitors.

Zain was present at POP UP BY COMFEST



KUWAIT: Young people enjoy Zain's programs at the event.

2022 via its dedicated booth, through which the company held exciting mini championships under its Zain Esports brand. Visitors enjoyed competing against each other, and Zain presented valuable prizes to the winners.

POP UP BY COMFEST is considered Kuwait's biggest gaming and comics event, having featured

many of the entertainment and gaming industries' biggest brands. The event hosted popular international celebrities that audiences had the chance to meet and greet. The event also witnessed the participation of many Kuwaiti SME owners (who are comic and pop culture fans) who featured their unique products at the event.

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.



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Thai ambassador Rut Thammamongkol. —KUNA

## FM hosts outgoing Thai envoy

**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday the outgoing Thai ambassador Rut Thammamongkol, praising his efforts to promote the bilateral relations. —KUNA



Kuwaiti Ambassador to Romania Talal Al-Hajri with Secretary of State in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Head of the Department of Emergency Situations Dr Raed Arafat. —KUNA

## Security delegation follows up on missing Kuwaiti in Bucharest

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Embassy in Romania confirmed Wednesday the follow-up on the case of the missing Kuwaiti citizen Mohammad Al-Baghli, in the presence of a Kuwaiti security delegation. This came after the meeting of Kuwaiti Ambassador to Romania Talal Al-Hajri, in the presence of a delegation from Kuwait's Ministry of Interior (MoI), with the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Head of the Department of Emergency Situations Dr Raed Arafat.

In a phone call to KUNA, Al-Hajri said that during the meeting, they discussed the latest developments in the case of Al-Baghli, who has been missing in Romania since August 2015, indicating that he urged for more efforts to find out his fate, as the case receives great attention. The embassy is still following up and communicating with Romanian officials, he underscored. Al-Hajri underlined the keenness of the political leadership in Kuwait and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue and know the latest findings of the investigation results in the case.

Al-Baghli, a businessman, disappeared under mysterious circumstances in Cheia village in Prahova county, north of the capital, Bucharest, in August 2015. Kuwait's MoI previously sent security delegations to Romania to follow up on the case and coordinate with Romanian police and competent authorities. —KUNA



A falconer trains the bird to be agile in hunting



A falconer uses a 10-20-m string to wave a piece of meat attached to the string to lure the falcon

## Al-Milwah trains falcons for hunting

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaitis are probably the world's finest falcon trainers. Falcons are so admired in the country that they appear on the state's coat of arms, and one optometrist's shop in Kuwait City

has a stuffed falcon in its window, apparently as a symbol of good vision. In Kuwait, falcon owners and their retainers train the birds themselves before dispatching them against the hubaras, which migrate through Kuwait in the fall and winter.

Al-Milwah is an experienced falconer who trains falcons for hunting. By waving a piece of meat or a feather attached to a 10-20-meter string, he draws the bird's attention. Al-Milwah repeats the practice until the falcon is ready for real hunting. On bustard hunts, the falcons are kept blindfolded with leather hoods while their owners cruise the countryside in

trucks. The sandy colored bustards are hard to find because when frightened, they crouch against the ground. But the falcons spot them with their sharp eyes and pounce on them.

In olden times, falcons were chronicled by local poets, but nowadays, Kuwaitis make movies of falcons to show at home." In the simpler days of the past, Kuwaitis caught their falcons here in the country side, but nowadays falcons are also imported from Pakistan, Syria and Iran. The birds must be caught because they do not breed in captivity.

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## News in brief

## Kuwait FM starts official visit to Saudi

KUWAIT: Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday left for sisterly Saudi Arabia on his first visit to the Kingdom as Foreign Minister of the State of Kuwait. He is scheduled to hold talks with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud on the bilateral ties and a range of regional and international issues of common concern. —KUNA

## Defense minister hosts envoys

KUWAIT: Defense Minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Abdullah on Wednesday held separate meetings with the ambassadors of Oman, the United Kingdom, Spain and Italy addressing bilateral relations and issues of common interest. The military said in a statement that minister Sheikh Abdullah Ali received the envoys at his office, adding that the talks dealt with means of boosting cooperation and various issues at the regional and international levels. —KUNA

## Kuwait oil exports to Japan down

TOKYO: Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan in October declined 7.1 percent from a year earlier to 7.79 million barrels, or 251,000 barrels per day (bpd), down for the second month in a row, government data showed Wednesday. As Japan's third-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 9.2 percent of its total crude imports, compared with 11.5 percent in the same month of last year, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report. Japan's overall imports of crude oil in October grew 15.7 percent from a year earlier to 2.72 million bpd for the 15th straight monthly expansion. —KUNA

## Convict overpowered in Funaitees

KUWAIT: A previously convicted felon was arrested in Funaitees by Mubarak Al-Kabeer CID, but inflicted injuries to servicemen before he was detained. He was charged with additional violations and the detective ordered to detain the suspect until a medical report of the servicemen arrives to make a decision.

## HB.COMICS



## KU provides jobs for students

KUWAIT: Kuwait University grants its students great opportunities by providing them with jobs within the university facilities, with the student employment program, which operates on the hour system, considering their academic schedule without conflicting with lectures.

Student employment offers several advantages that can benefit the students and the university in multiple aspects, as

students obtain a monthly salary based on their working hours on university grounds. Acting Head of the Psychology Department Dr Huda Jafaar stated that the university's Student Affair Department provides the student employment's program based on specific requirements such as the student's GPA, and the daily hours students can work. Dr Jafaar affirmed that the program helps the scientific department by employing students to assist the teaching staff by assigning them with tasks such as conducting research, data collecting and scientific sources research. She also said that this program serves the students experience in several aspects by forming a healthy rela-

tion between students and professors that contribute and benefits their future, noting that the program also helps accomplish tasks such as seminar coordination, conference and various activities, especially in staff shortage.

Head of the Social Care Department at Kuwait University Wael Al-Obaid stated that Student Employment Department coordinates with specific centers to provide job opportunities within the university facilities. Al-Obaid added the jobs opportunities are only granted to KU undergrad students who have not received more than one warning, adding that first-degree relatives are not allowed to work in the same center. —KUNA



Wael Al-Obaid



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NEW DELHI: Ambassador of Kuwait to India Jasem Ibrahim Al-Najem at the JNU International Conference along with participants. —KUNA

## Envoy: Arabic a bridge among civilizations

NEW DELHI: Ambassador of Kuwait to India Jasem Ibrahim Al-Najem stressed on Wednesday the importance of Arabic language as a bridge among civilizations as he participated in an international conference at Jawaharlal Nehru University in the Indian capital New Delhi. Addressing the international conference held by the Center for Arab and African Studies at the famous university on "Journey of Arabic literature: Development of its different genres through the ages" on Tuesday and Wednesday, Najem drew attention of the participants to the importance of the Arabic language as a bridge for communication between different civilizations.

Kuwait has played an active role in promoting the Arabic language and strengthening cultural relations between Kuwait and India. The ambassador said the Arabic language is taught in Indian universities as the oldest living language on earth, which is also capable of providing job opportunities for thousands of experts. Several officials from Arab missions in New Delhi also participated in the conference, along with JNU Rector Prof Satish Chandra Garkoti, President of the All-India Union of Arabic Language Scholars Professor Habibullah Khan Al-Nadawi and a large number of teachers and students of Arabic language and literature from various Indian universities.

Head of the Center for Arab and African Studies at the university, Prof Rizwan Al-Rahman, delivered the

welcome speech. Director of the Conference in the Center Dr Obaid Al-Rahman Al-Tayeb introduced the conference, stressing the importance of Arabic literature and highlighted its position among other international literatures. Referring to the importance of Arabic poetry in human life, Najem stated that poetry is considered a summary of human experiences and a source for codifying knowledge.

He also referred to the development of Arabic poetry through different eras starting from the pre-Islamic to the modern era. He also quoted some pre-Islamic, Islamic, Abbasid and modern era poets. The ambassador also expressed hope that there will be participation of Kuwaiti men of letters in seminars and cultural events in India as they play a prominent role in cultural and literary exchange and provide an opportunity for everyone to get acquainted with new literary trends.

On the occasion, Kuwait Ambassador presented Al-Babtain's Dictionary of Arab Poets in India by Dr Abdullah Al-Qatam to the library of the Center for Arab and African Studies, which contains Indian poets, along with examples of their poems. Najem expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the organizers of the conference, wishing them success, and expressed the readiness of the Embassy of Kuwait to co-operate in holding events that contribute to promoting the Arabic language and strengthening cultural relations between Kuwait and India.

Prof Garkoti stated that Arabic language is one of the richest languages in the world and occupies a prominent place among world languages. He added that even though he does not know the Arabic language, he likes the Arabic melodies very much and Arabic language teaching in Indian universities enhances cultural relations between India and Arab countries. —KUNA



S African parole for Hani's killer roiled by protests

## Vienna welcomes Iran freeing Austrian for medical treatment



SEOUL, South Korea: A group of protesters hold a gathering in Seoul on November 30, 2022, in support of demonstrations held in China over Beijing's COVID-19 restrictions. — AFP

# China protesters clash with police

## New demonstrations in China's southern city as authorities warn of 'crackdown'

BEIJING: Clashes broke out between police and protesters in a southern Chinese city, part of a wave of COVID lockdown-sparked demonstrations across the country that have morphed into demands for political freedoms.

China's top security body warned late on Tuesday night that authorities would "crack down" following the protests, which are the most widespread since pro-democracy rallies in 1989 that were crushed with deadly force.

The demonstrations erupted over the weekend across major cities, including Beijing and Shanghai, with China's vast security apparatus moving swiftly to smother any further unrest. But new clashes broke out in China's southern city of Guangzhou on Tuesday night and into Wednesday, according to witnesses and social media footage verified by AFP.

Security personnel in hazmat suits formed ranks shoulder-to-shoulder, taking cover under see-through riot shields, to make their way down a street in the southern city's Haizhu district as glass smashed around them, videos posted on social media showed. In the footage people could be heard screaming and shouting, with orange and blue barricades strewn across the ground. People are seen throwing objects at police, and later nearly a dozen men are filmed being taken away with their hands bound with cable ties.

A Guangzhou resident surnamed Chen told AFP on Wednesday that he had seen around 100 police officers converge on Houjiao village in Haizhu dis-

trict and arrest at least three men on Tuesday night.

Some students at Guangzhou's universities said they were forced out of their dormitories overnight Wednesday, according to social media posts, as a growing number of universities nationwide ordered students home in the wake of campus demonstrations. Multiple Guangzhou districts lifted restrictions on some or all locked-down neighbourhoods Wednesday afternoon, according to government announcements.

### 'Crackdown' looms

Anger over China's zero-COVID policy—which involves lockdowns of huge numbers of people and has strangled the economy—has been the trigger for the protests. A deadly fire last week in Urumqi, the capital of the northwestern region of Xinjiang, was the catalyst for the outrage, with people blaming Covid curbs for trapping victims inside the burning building.

But demonstrators have also demanded wider political reforms, with some even calling for President Xi Jinping to stand down. China's strict control of information and continued travel curbs have made verifying protester numbers across the vast country very challenging.

However, the widespread rallies seen over the weekend are exceptionally rare in China. The 1989 pro-democracy protests ended in bloodshed when the military moved in, most famously in Beijing's Tiananmen Square and surrounding areas.

And the Wednesday news of the death of former

Chinese leader Jiang Zemin—who came to power just after Tiananmen—saw state media emphasise his role in that crackdown. "During the serious political turmoil in China in the spring and summer of 1989, Comrade Jiang Zemin supported and implemented the correct decision of the Party Central Committee to oppose unrest," state broadcaster CCTV said.

Some internet users used Jiang's death to juxtapose the more liberal 1990s with rule under Xi, China's most hardline ruler in decades. "The Jiang era, while not the most prosperous era, was a more tolerant one," one Weibo user wrote.

Signalling its zero-tolerance approach to the protests, China's top security body on Tuesday called for a "crackdown" on what it described as "hostile forces". The body — which oversees all domestic law enforcement—also agreed at a meeting that it was time to "crack down on illegal criminal acts that disrupt social order" as well as "safeguard overall social stability". The warning came after a heavy police presence across Beijing and Shanghai on Tuesday appeared to have quelled protests in those cities.

Some rallies did go ahead elsewhere on Monday and Tuesday, however. At Hong Kong's oldest university, over a dozen people led the crowd Tuesday in chanting slogans such as "give me liberty or give me death". "We are not foreign forces, we are Chinese citizens. China should have different voices," one woman shouted, while another held a placard mourning victims of the Urumqi fire. — AFP

## At least 16 killed, 24 wounded in north Afghanistan blast

KABUL: At least 16 people were killed and 24 others wounded Wednesday by a blast at a madrasa in Afghanistan's northern city of Aybak, a doctor at a local hospital told AFP. There have been dozens of blasts and attacks targeting civilians since the Taliban returned to power in August last year, most claimed by the local chapter of the Islamic State (IS) group.

A doctor in Aybak, about 200 kilometres (130 miles) north of the capital Kabul, said the casualties were mostly youngsters. "All of them are children and ordinary people," he told AFP, asking not to be named. A provincial official confirmed the blast at Al Jihad madrasa, an Islamic religious school, but could not provide casualty figures.

The Taliban, which frequently plays down casualty figures, said 10 students had died and "many others" were injured. "Our detective and security forces are working quickly to identify the perpetrators of this unforgivable crime and punish them for their actions," tweeted Interior Ministry spokesman Abdul Nafay Takor.

Images and video circulating on social media—which could not immediately be verified—showed Taliban fighters picking their way through bodies strewn across the floor of a building. Prayer mats, shattered glass and other debris littered the scene.

### Lull between blasts

The Aybak doctor said some critically wounded patients had been moved to better-equipped hospitals in Mazar-i-Sharif, which is about 120 kilometres away by road. "Those who are here... were mostly hurt by shrapnel and blast waves. They had some shrapnel on their body and face," he said.

Aybak is a small but ancient provincial capital that came to prominence as a caravan stopping post for traders during the fourth and fifth centuries when it was also an important Buddhist centre. There has been a lull of a few weeks between major blasts targeting civilians in Afghanistan, although several Taliban fighters have been killed in isolated attacks.

In September, at least 54 people—including 51 girls and young women—were killed when a suicide bomber detonated a device at a hall in Kabul packed with hundreds of students sitting a practice test for university admissions.

No group claimed responsibility for that bombing, but the Taliban later blamed the Islamic State and said it had killed several ringleaders. In May last year, before the Taliban's return to power, at least 85 people—mainly girls—were killed and about 300 were wounded when three bombs exploded near their school in the neighbourhood — AFP

## EU eyes special court to try Russia for war

BRUSSELS, Belgium: European Union chief Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday floated the idea of a "specialised court" to put Russia's top officials on trial over the war in Ukraine. "While continuing to support the International Criminal Court, we are proposing to set up a specialised court backed by the United Nations to investigate and prosecute Russia's crime of aggression," she said.

The chief of staff to Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, who has pushed for such a tribunal, hailed von der Leyen's words and said: "Russia will pay for crimes and destruction. They will not avoid it."

But the initiative faces formidable legal and political obstacles. The main problem is that the International Criminal Court (ICC) does not have jurisdiction over Russia's "crimes of aggression"—its invasion and war in Ukraine—because Moscow is not a signatory to the court's treaty.

That tribunal can therefore only judge specific cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated in Ukraine, but even then Russian President Vladimir Putin and his prime minister and foreign minister enjoy immunity from prosecution while in office. The only way the ICC can be called in to judge Russia's war is through a decision by the UN Security Council—something that is impossible because Russia, with its permanent seat on the council, would veto it.

To get around that, von der Leyen is proposing to have a court set up in an EU country that could tackle Russia specifically on the crime of aggres-



BAKHMUT, Ukraine: Photograph shows a destroyed building in Bakhmut, Donetsk region, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Once known for its vineyards and cavernous salt mines, Bakhmut has now been dubbed "the meat grinder" due to the brutal trench warfare, artillery duels and frontal assaults that have defined the brutal fight for the city for over six months. — AFP

sion, while leaving war crimes and crimes against humanity to the ICC.

The Netherlands, which already hosts the ICC in The Hague, has indicated its willingness to establish the mooted new court on its territory. "It is our task, as the international community, to make sure that we do justice," Dutch Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra told journalists in Romania, as he attended a NATO meeting. He said that should be done "through the ICC—but also through other measures".

A proposal text circulated by von der Leyen's European Commission noted that 14 EU member states had already opened investigations into acts carried out in Ukraine "based either on personal or universal jurisdiction".

It said that, where it came to crimes of aggres-

sion, "an alternative investigation mechanism could be considered" where EU countries' interests or citizens were affected. Commission officials said that path would run alongside the ICC—to which "the EU will continue to give its full support"—and would need UN support.

That would involve a procedural gambit where the proposal would be submitted to the UN Security Council—where Russia is sure to shoot it down—and then to the wider UN General Assembly of all UN member states, where it stands a chance of passing.

The officials said there had been initial contact with the United States on the idea, but no indication as yet whether Washington would back the initiative. The United States, like Russia, is not party to the ICC. — AFP

## International

# Belgium starts trial over 2016 suicide bombings that killed 32

## On December 5, main evidential hearings will begin

**BRUSSELS, Belgium:** Belgium launched its biggest-ever criminal trial on Wednesday, the landmark prosecution of alleged jihadists accused of directing or aiding 2016 suicide bombings in Brussels' metro and airport that killed 32 people.

The prime French suspect in the dock confirmed his identity as proceedings began: "Salah Abdeslam, 33, electrical mechanic."

Salah is already notorious after being convicted in a separate trial in France for his role in 2015 attacks in Paris that killed 130 people.

Only one of the nine defendants present, 30-year-old Osama Krayem, refused to stand as they were presented to the high-security court, a purpose-built space in the disused former headquarters of the NATO alliance. A 10th suspect, 33-year-old Oussama Atar, is believed to have been killed in Syria.

Wednesday's hearing kicked off jury selection from a huge poll of more than 1,000 citizens. The court was to choose 12 jurors and 24 potential replacements who will need to attend near daily sessions of a months-long process leading into next year.

On December 5, the main evidential hearings will begin. Both the November 13, 2015 Paris attacks and the March 22, 2016 suicide bombings in Brussels were claimed by the Islamic State group, and investigators believe they were carried out by the same Belgium-based cell, including Abdeslam.

The group was planning more violence, allegedly including attacks on the Euro 2016 football cup in France, but acted quickly after Abdeslam was arrested on March 18.

### Life sentence

Four days later, on March 22, two bombers blew themselves up in Brussels airport and another in a city centre metro station near the headquarters of the European Union.

Alongside those killed, hundreds of travellers and transport staff were maimed and six years on many victims, relatives and rescuers remain traumatised.

Five of the nine defendants to appear in the dock



**BRUSSELS:** Salah Abdeslam's Lawyer Delphine Paci (L) speaks with Defense lawyer Virginie Taelman (C) and Stanislas Eskenazi, lawyer of Mohamed Abrini, at the opening of the trial against the nine alleged jihadists accused of taking part in the March 2016 suicide bombings, at the Justitia building in Brussels on November 30, 2022. —AFP

in Belgium have already been convicted in the French trial, including Abdeslam. He is serving life without parole in France and faces a further sentence in Belgium.

Hundreds of witnesses and victims will testify in the months to come, some still hopeful that telling the story of Belgium's worst peacetime massacre will offer them a measure of closure.

"I don't really expect a lot of answers," said Sandrine Couturier, who was on the Maelbeek metro platform and plans to come to face the defendants.

"But I want to confront myself with what human beings are capable of doing. I have to accept that not everyone is good," the PTSD survivor told AFP ahead of the opening.

### Memory loss

Like many of those who have spoken to reporters, she suffers from memory loss and concentration problems. Many seek treatment for depression.

Sebastien Bellin, a former professional basketball player who was due to fly to New York on the morning of March 22, lost the use of a leg in the attack.

He says that now he feels no hatred. "It would suck the energy I need to rebuild myself," he says. The trial should have begun in October, but there was controversy over the dock, in which the accused were to have been held in individual glass-walled boxes. The defendants' areas were rebuilt as a single, shared space. — AFP

## At least 20 tornadoes hit southern US

**HOUSTON, United States:** At least 20 tornadoes hit the southern United States on Wednesday, cutting power and damaging homes, the National Weather Service said, urging residents to seek shelter. Tornadoes struck the states of Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, damaging roads, downing trees and blowing roofs off houses, NWS said.

NWS described one tornado ripping through Alabama as "life-threatening" in an advisory issued at 0845 GMT. "Tornadoes are extremely difficult to see and confirm at night. Do not wait to see or hear the tornado. TAKE COVER NOW!" Parts of Alabama and Mississippi were under a tornado watch until 6:00 am (1200 GMT) Wednesday, NWS said. Hail ranging from "quarter size" to "baseball size" was forecast for affected counties in Alabama, it said. — AFP

## Vienna welcomes Iran freeing Austrian for medical treatment

**VIENNA, Austria:** Vienna on Wednesday welcomed the release of an Austrian from prison in Iran to get medical treatment. Massud Mossaheb, a 76-year-old Austrian citizen of Iranian origin who was jailed in Iran on charges of espionage, was freed last week.

He has spent almost four years at Tehran's notorious Evin prison. "We have been raising the issue at the highest levels and we welcome that these diplomatic endeavours have now produced first results," a foreign ministry spokeswoman said.

"As far as we are concerned, we will continue with everything in our hands to work for a humanitarian solution in all cases of Austrians imprisoned." Two other Austrians are currently detained in Iran.

Mossaheb's daughter, who declined to be named, said her father had been diagnosed with prostate cancer and had been released "for the

length of his treatment". He is not allowed to leave Iran and has to report twice a month to the authorities, she added, thanking Austrian authorities for their efforts.

Mossaheb was the general secretary of the Austro-Iranian Society, an organisation set up to encourage exchanges between the two countries. He was arrested in Tehran in January 2019 while he was accompanying a visiting group of Austrian scientists. Accused of spying for Israel and Germany, he was sentenced to 10 years in jail.

Iran currently holds more than 20 Westerners, many of them with dual nationality. Rights groups such as Amnesty International have condemned their detention as "hostage-taking" for political ends, as a means to put pressure on Western powers to win concessions.

Iran, which does not recognise double nationality, says that all the people held have been detained following rulings by the courts. One of the two Austrians still detained was arrested recently. Iranian authorities have not specified the reasons, according to Austria. Businessman Kamran Ghaderi, another Austrian citizen of Iranian origin, was arrested in 2016 and sentenced to 10 years in jail on spying charges. — AFP

## Self-driving lorries hit the road in Sweden

**SODERTALJE, Sweden:** Barreling down a motorway south of Stockholm in a 40-ton lorry and trailer, the driver keeps a careful eye on the road but, jarringly, no hands on the wheel. Instead, the truck drives itself, and veteran driver Roger Nordqvist is at the ready only in case of unexpected problems. Swedish truck maker Scania is not the only auto manufacturer developing autonomous vehicles, but it recently became the first in Europe to pilot them while delivering commercial goods.

"We take their goods from point A, drive them to point B, fully autonomously," Peter Hafmar, head of autonomous solutions at Scania, tells AFP outside the company's transport lab in Sodertalje, south of Stockholm. In the pilot project, the self-driving truck is maneuvering a stretch of some 300 km between Sodertalje and Jonkoping in Sweden's south, delivering fast-food goods.

From the outside, the vehicle looks almost like any other lorry, save for a rail on the roof packed with cameras and two sensors resembling bug antennae on the sides. Inside the cab, the wheel and seats are where you'd expect to find them, but small devices and screens dot the dashboard and a nest of wires run to the computer rack housed behind the passenger seat.

Engineer Goran Fjallid sits next to the safety driver in the passenger's seat, eyes glued to his laptop as it receives video from the truck's cameras and flickering text with information about what the vehicle is seeing. A second screen shows a 3D-visualisation of the truck on the road and all nearby vehicles. The lorry combines all

the input from the various sensors with a GPS system, with the different technologies acting as back-ups for each other.

"If the road markings disappear for a while, then it will use the GPS and it stays perfectly in its lane," Fjallid explains. "It drives better by itself than when you drive it manually," he adds. But he acknowledges that a lot of trial and error has gone into getting the truck to that point. They've had to tweak things like how the truck handles merging onto the motorway, and what to do when another car cuts in front of it.

Every time the truck does something unexpected, such as braking or slowing down for no apparent reason, Fjallid makes a note of the exact timing so the logs and data can be examined. The lorry's sensors are also calibrated daily before hitting the road. Hafmar says there are still some hurdles to clear before driverless trucks - without safety drivers - become a common sight on roads, both in terms of technology and legislation. They expect to have this ready by the end of the 2020s or the beginning of 2030s, Hafmar says.

The advent of self-driving trucks can be seen as a threat to the jobs of truck drivers - one of the world's most common professions. But Hafmar insists autonomous vehicles are needed to address a global driver shortage. And, he says, it will be a long time before artificial intelligence will be able to handle all aspects of logistics. Initially, self-driving lorries will likely be used for long-haul trips, but the last-mile distribution to shops and customers "will happen with human drivers", Hafmar adds.

According to a report from the International Road Transport Union (IRU) in June, there were some 2.6 million unfilled positions for truck drivers around the world in 2021. Hafmar also points out other potential benefits: since computers don't need to sleep or rest, the vehicles can be scheduled for trips at times when there is less traffic, or drive slower to save on fuel. — AFP

retired people, with just over 37,000 of them receiving pensions below KD 1,000 per month. In a reply to a question by MP Jenan Bushehri, the minister added some 30,000 retired people receive pensions over KD 2,000 per month, while 56,550 of them draw a monthly pension between KD 1,000 and 1,500. Of the retired people, around 40,000 receive pensions between KD 1,500 and KD 2,000. The next Assembly session is on Dec 13.

## Former Chinese president Jiang...

Continued from Page 1

Zemin supported and implemented the correct decision of the Party Central Committee to oppose unrest, defend the socialist state power and safeguard the fundamental interests of the people," state broadcaster CCTV said Wednesday.

When Jiang replaced Deng Xiaoping as leader in 1989, China was still in the early stages of economic modernization. By the time he retired as president in 2003, China was a member of the World Trade Organization, Beijing had secured the 2008 Olympics, and the country was well on its way to superpower status. Analysts say Jiang and his "Shanghai Gang" faction continued to exert influ-

## 3/4 of people over 10 own a...

Continued from Page 1

senior economist Thierry Geiger told AFP. Unsurprisingly, ownership was highest in wealthy countries, where 95 percent of people currently own a mobile phone, and lowest in low-income countries, where only 49 percent do, the ITU said.

The UN's telecoms agency says roughly a third of the planet has still never been online. But the online population has been increasing and an estimated 5.3 billion people, or 66 percent of people worldwide, are now using the Internet. "Access to the Internet is increasing, but not as quickly and evenly across the world as it needs to," Doreen Bogdan-Martin, who heads the ITU's telecommunications development division and will soon take over as agency chief, said in the statement. "Too

### News in brief

#### 240 migrants rescued

**LILLE, France:** French emergency services rescued 240 migrants heading in small boats across the Channel to the southern coast of England within a 24 hour period this week, local authorities said. The 240 were rescued in five different operations between Monday and Tuesday off Calais on France's northern coast, France's Maritime Prefecture of the Channel and the North Sea said in a statement late Tuesday. According to the UK authorities, 426 migrants were detected crossing the Channel on Monday after very few crossed the week earlier during a period of bad weather.

#### Cambodia arrests union leader

**PHNOM PENH, Cambodia:** Cambodia has arrested a union leader who spearheaded strike action against the country's biggest casino, a court confirmed Wednesday, drawing criticism from the United States. Chhim Sithar has long campaigned for the reinstatement of hundreds of workers laid off from NagaWorld casino in Phnom Penh during the coronavirus pandemic. She was accused of violating bail conditions by travelling overseas, and was arrested on Saturday at Phnom Penh's airport as she returned from a conference in Australia. "Chhim Sithar had left the territory of the Kingdom of Cambodia without the permission of the investigating judge," the Phnom Penh Municipal Court said in a statement Wednesday.

#### Spain seizes 5.6 tonnes of cocaine

**MADRID, Spain:** Spanish authorities said Wednesday they had seized 5.6 tonnes of cocaine worth over 340 million euros in the port of Valencia, the nation's biggest haul of the drug in four years. Police found the drugs during a search of a suspicious shipping container that arrived in the Mediterranean port, one of Europe's busiest, from South America, the interior ministry said in a statement. A photo shared by the ministry showed a pile of plastic-wrapped bricks of what it said was cocaine with the word "rey" ("king"), written in bold letters on them. The authorities began the investigation that led to the seizure in 2021 after becoming suspicious that criminal gangs were "taking advantage" of the legal importation of fruit and vegetables to bring drugs to Spain "from the other side of the Atlantic".

#### German jailed for life

**BERLIN:** A German man was given a life sentence on Wednesday for shooting dead two police officers to escape being caught for illegal game hunting during a routine traffic check. The regional court in Kaiserslautern found 39-year-old Andreas Schmitt guilty of the killings in January this year, which sent shockwaves across Germany. His co-defendant, referred to by the court as Florian V., was found guilty of abetting illegal poaching. The 33-year-old was in the car with Schmitt when the officers discovered dead game in the boot, investigators said. "We are all to this day horrified that a supposed routine control could turn into a fatal incident," Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said in a statement after the verdict. — From AFP

## National Assembly approves...

Continued from Page 1

Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rasheed said on Wednesday that Kuwait has over 163,000

ence over communist politics long after he left the top job, including in the selection of Xi Jinping as leader in 2012.

Concerns over Jiang's health had been raised when he did not attend the opening or closing ceremonies of last month's Communist Party Congress, at which Xi was granted a historic third term. CCTV said flags would be flown at half-mast at Chinese government buildings until the funeral, the date of which was not announced. State media websites turned black-and-white, and they posted a black-and-white photo of a chrysanthemum on their official accounts on social media platform Weibo. Apps such as Alipay and Taobao also turned monochrome.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was one of the first world leaders to pay tribute, saying Jiang had been "a dear friend of our country". "The bright memory of such an authoritative politician and a wonderful person will forever remain in my heart," Putin said in a message of condolence. — AFP

many people still live in digital darkness."

Estimates of global Internet use typically look at the price of mobile-broadband services, which allow users to access the Internet from a smartphone and are relatively inexpensive compared to a fixed internet service. According to Wednesday's report, the global median price of mobile-broadband services dropped from 1.9 percent of average gross national income (GNI) per capita last year to 1.5 percent now.

However, the cost still remains too high for the average consumer in most low-income economies, where a basic mobile data plan is estimated to cost nine percent of GNI per capita. The ITU called on all countries to ensure affordable broadband access, defined as costing less than two percent of GNI per capita. While the cost of connectivity appears to be continuing its decline, Geiger warned rising costs for other necessities could force many to move offline. The ITU report also found a significant gender gap: Some 259 million fewer women have access to the Internet than men. Only 63 percent of women are currently using the Internet, compared to 69 percent of men, it said. — AFP

## International

# Hong Kong security chief warns against supporting China protests

## Protester shot by Hong Kong police jailed for six years

**HONG KONG, China:** Hong Kong's security chief said he saw indications of a "colour revolution" at events held in solidarity with Chinese protesters and warned Wednesday they may violate the city's national security law.

Rare demonstrations on the mainland calling for an end to COVID-19 lockdowns and greater political freedoms have sparked a series of small public gatherings in Hong Kong since Sunday, including at university campuses and in the financial district.

Once an outspoken enclave in China, Hong Kong has quietened since Beijing imposed a national security law, a year after huge and sometimes violent protests in 2019. Secretary for Security Chris Tang said Wednesday that some in Hong Kong had used the solidarity events to "incite against the central government".

"I noticed some early signs of another colour revolution," he said, using a euphemism favoured by Beijing and other authoritarian governments to describe allegedly foreign-backed protests. "We can see some of the familiar faces that actively [participated] in the illegal acts of 2019," Tang told reporters, adding that the latest gatherings were "highly organised" and made use of anti-China social media platforms.

Solidarity events in Hong Kong have drawn dozens of attendees, who have mirrored protest tactics used in mainland China, such as holding blank pieces of paper. But Tang said other signs bore words such as "revolution" and "autocracy" or called for leaders to step down, and warned these may "contravene the national security law".

"Many people say nothing will happen if you just hold a piece of paper... but they are deliberately down-

playing the severity," Tang said. "Their intent is to subvert the regime." Subversion is one of four national security offences, which can be punished with a maximum of life in prison.

No one in Hong Kong has been arrested over the recent protests, but police have taken some participants' names. Political dissent and mass assemblies in Hong Kong have largely disappeared or been forced underground since the national security law came into force in 2020, while large gatherings in public have been banned under coronavirus pandemic restrictions. The recent solidarity events at two universities drew both local and mainland Chinese students, with participants chanting: "We are not foreign forces, we are Chinese citizens."

Meanwhile, a Hong Kong man shot by police at point-blank range during democracy protests in 2019 was jailed for six years Wednesday on charges that included trying to snatch the firearm that wounded him.

Chow Pak-kwan, 23, lost his right kidney and was injured in his liver and spine after a traffic cop shot him at a road intersection amid clashes between protesters and the authorities. Footage of the incident showed an officer drawing his gun, pointing it at protesters blocking the road, grappling with one of them and eventually firing at Chow, who was unarmed.

Judge Adriana Noelle Tse Ching sentenced Chow to six years in jail for attempted robbery, obstructing a police officer and attempting to escape from custody. The judge said Chow's attempt to grab the officer's gun could have inflamed the crowd's emotions and was a factor contributing to the lengthy sentence.



**HONG KONG, China:** Protesters hold up a sign (R) and sheets of blank paper at the University of Hong Kong campus in solidarity with demonstrations in mainland China against strict COVID restrictions and demanding for greater freedoms, in Hong Kong. —AFP

Another defendant in the case, Woo Tsz-kin, 22, was also jailed for six years after being found guilty of obstructing a police officer and attempted robbery. The protest took place near the height of Hong Kong's citywide protests three years ago, which began in opposition to a proposed extradition bill before growing to include calls for greater freedoms.

Rights activists have criticised police for using

excessive force to quell protests, with Chow's shooting sometimes cited as an example. Police have insisted that officers were acting in accordance with the law and following internal protocols.

As of August, Hong Kong had arrested nearly 10,300 people over the 2019 democracy protests and have prosecuted or initiated legal proceedings against 2,900 of them, according to police. —AFP



'We are Chinese citizens'

## S African parole for Hani's killer roiled by protests

**PRETORIA, South Africa:** The release from prison of the far-right killer of South African anti-apartheid hero Chris Hani hung in the balance on Wednesday, amid fierce bids to block the move.

Janusz Walus, a 69-year-old immigrant from then-communist Poland, was to be released by Thursday after being controversially granted parole by the Constitutional Court.

But the decision has ignited angry protests. On Tuesday, Walus was stabbed inside prison. On Wednesday, the South African Communist Party (SACP), which Hani used to head, said it was petitioning the court to go back on its ruling.

"Yesterday we filed our documents with the Constitutional Court as well as with the High Court, and against the minister of justice to oppose the release," SACP Secretary-General Solly Mapaila told AFP.

He later explained they were seeking a so-called rescission order, which would "reverse this decision." The party has asked Justice Minister Ronald Lamola to halt execution of the parole order until

the petition is heard and concluded.

Mapaila spoke as he led hundreds of demonstrators in front of the Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre in Pretoria where Walus is being held and receiving treatment following Tuesday's incident.

He was allegedly attacked by another inmate, according to prison authorities which have launched an investigation. Details of his injuries have not been released.

The SACP, a political ally of the ruling African National Congress (ANC), has been leading rolling protests since the weekend.

### 'Struggle continues'

Protesters, including senior ANC politicians, wore black T-shirts bearing Hani's portrait captioned "Don't kill Chris Hani again: The struggle continues".

Prison officials, armed with rifles and dogs, stood guard behind green metal prison gates as protesters chanted. Hani, a hugely popular figure and fierce opponent of the apartheid regime was the SACP's general secretary and chief of staff of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the armed wing of the ANC.

He was shot dead in the driveway of his house on April 10, 1993, in Boksburg, a suburb east of Johannesburg. The killing almost



**PRETORIA, South Africa:** Members of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) sing and chant slogans as they picket outside the Kgosi Mampuru Correctional Facility in Pretoria, on 30 November 2022, against the release of Janusz Walus. —AFP

plunged South Africa into a race war.

It occurred just as negotiations to end apartheid were entering their final phase, stoking protests and rioting in black townships that some feared would erupt into civil war.

Then-ANC president Nelson Mandela appeared on national television to appeal for calm, a move that helped ease tensions and open the way to South Africa's first multi-racial elec-

tions the following year.

Walus was quickly arrested after the killing and handed the death sentence—a punishment that was commuted to life imprisonment after the death penalty was abolished in post-apartheid South Africa.

His accomplice Clive Derby-Lewis, who supplied the gun, was released in 2015 on medical parole after 22 years in jail. He died of lung cancer in 2016, aged 80. —AFP

## Two militia leaders guilty of sedition in US Capitol assault

**WASHINGTON:** Two leaders of the far-right Oath Keepers militia, including founder Stewart Rhodes, were found guilty of sedition on Tuesday in the most high-profile case yet stemming from the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol by supporters of then-president Donald Trump.

A federal jury convicted Rhodes, 57, and Kelly Meggs, 53, leader of the militia's Florida chapter, of the rarely pursued charge of seditious conspiracy, which carries up to 20 years in prison. The 12-person jury acquitted three other members of the Oath Keepers—Kenneth Harrelson, Jessica Watkins and Thomas Caldwell—who faced the sedition charge, but it convicted them of lesser offenses such as obstructing an official proceeding. Rhodes, an eyepatch-wearing former soldier and Yale law school graduate, and the four other group members were accused of plotting to keep Trump in power and overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election won by Democrat Joe Biden.

During the nearly two-week trial in Washington, prosecutors said the Oath Keepers "concocted a plan for an armed rebel-

lion... plotting to oppose by force the government of the United States." Hundreds of Trump supporters have been arrested for their roles in the assault on Congress but they have faced less serious charges than those lodged against Rhodes and the other Oath Keepers. The jury deliberated for three days before reaching a verdict in the case, which the defendants characterized as a political trial carried out by the Biden administration against supporters of Trump, who has announced plans to run for the White House again in 2024.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland named a special counsel this month to oversee the investigation into Trump's own efforts to overturn the election result and the attack on Congress by his supporters. The special counsel will also take over the Justice Department's probe into a cache of classified government documents seized in an FBI raid on Trump's Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida in August.

### 'Off-mission'

A not-guilty verdict on the sedition counts for all five defendants would have been a setback for the Department of Justice, which plans to try members of the Proud Boys, another right-wing extremist group, on the same charges.

The verdict was hailed by the congressional committee investigating the Capitol assault. "Today's convictions are a victory for the rule of law and reinforce the fact that the violence



**WASHINGTON, United States:** File photo shows Stewart Rhodes, founder of the Oath Keepers, is seen on a screen during a House Select Committee hearing to investigate the January 6th Attack on the US Capitol, in the Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington. —AFP

of January 6th included a deliberate attempt to overturn the results of the 2020 election and block the transfer of presidential power," a statement from the committee's chairs, Democratic Congressman Bennie Thompson and Republican Liz Cheney, said. Edward Tarpley, an attorney for Rhodes, said he was "disappointed."

"There was no evidence introduced indicating that there was a plan to attack the Capitol," Tarpley told reporters. During the trial, prosecutors accused the Oath Keepers of stocking weapons at a hotel near Washington and joining the crowd that stormed the Capitol in a bid to block the certification by Congress of Biden's election victory. —AFP

## Belgian city terrorised by drug violence

**ANTWERP, Belgium:** In Belgium's port city of Antwerp, residents live in fear of eruptions of violence between the gangs that control Europe's vast cocaine trade. The city is the main port of entry into Europe for Latin American cocaine, a busi-

ness controlled by transnational cartels with an increasing reputation for the most extreme violence.

This week investigators working off a database of criminal messages seized from a cracked communications app once favoured by gangs busted one major smuggling network. But while illicit cargoes flow through Antwerp there will always be gangsters to fight over the spoils, in an underworld conflict that now spills onto the city's residential streets.

Steven De Winter, a 47-year-old bank employee from the city's Deurne district,

has counted three waves of violence since 2017, the latest starting in the spring of this year. A house on his residential block was targeted over two nights by some sort of firework-style explosive projectile that triggered bomb-like explosions in the night.

### Grenade blasts

According to his account, it began at 10:30 pm on a Friday while neighbours celebrated a marriage in their garden near the targeted house, reputedly the home of a person implicated in the drugs trade. "It

was panic," De Winter said. "It can't go on! That's enough. Our neighbourhood must be protected."

Several other districts have suffered similar eruptions, including the popular residential area of Wilrijk and even parks near the centre of a city of half a million people. In five years, the local prosecutor has recorded 200 incidents of drug-related violence, threats, beatings and explosive devices—including sometimes military grenades.

Last year, around 90 tonnes of cocaine were seized in the port. Customs agents

expect to reach 100 tonnes by the end of the year, and estimate they are only halting a 10th of shipments. A lot of money is at stake, sharpening the competition between gangs.

The explosions are thought to be efforts to intimidate business rivals or to attract police attention to one group or place, diverting it from another. After the weekend of the double explosion in May, De Winter and his neighbours wrote to city hall and demanded protection. He also led a reporter around Deurne, his neighbourhood of 14 years. —AFP

## Australian ex-PM censured over key ministry posts

**SYDNEY:** Australia's parliament on Wednesday censured ex-prime minister Scott Morrison for secretly appointing himself to several key ministries during the COVID-19 pandemic, delivering a rare and stinging rebuke. By a vote of 86 to 50, the parliament said that the former conservative leader's actions "eroded public trust in Australia's democracy" and made proper accountability impossible.

It is the first time in Australian history that a former prime minister has been formally censured by the House of Representatives. Over two years, Morrison had himself sworn in as minister for finance, home affairs, treasury, resources, agriculture and environment—without telling the public, parliament or existing ministers.

"He owes an apology to the Australian people for the undermining of democracy," said Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, whose centre-left party ousted Morrison in a May 2022 election. Wednesday's vote fell largely along party lines, with political rivals seeking to frame the debate as beyond party politics, or motivated entirely by it.

Morrison was in the chamber for much of the debate and listened largely impassively as he was denounced. When he rose to speak, it was to issue a strident defence of his actions, and to accuse the Labor government of partisanship, "political intimidation" and trying to "impose its retribution".

### 'Unintentional offence'

"I am proud of my achievements in this place, and I am proud of my government," he said. "I gave it everything I had." Morrison did express some misgivings about keeping his appointments secret and claimed he would have told the public if asked by journalists.

"I acknowledge that the non-disclosure of arrangements has caused unintentional offence and extend an apology to those who were offended," he said. "I do not apologise for taking action, especially prudent redundancy action, in a national crisis in order to save lives and to save livelihoods."

Members of Morrison's party lined up to shake his hand as they left the chamber. But there were isolated acts of dissent. Morrison's party ally Bridget Archer described her former leader's actions as "an affront to our democratic Westminster system" and voted in support of the censure.

"This is not a game, there are things that sit above the cut and thrust of politics." More than a dozen members did not vote. A recent inquiry by a former high court judge found Morrison's actions had been "corrosive of trust in government" and recommended closing several loopholes that allowed the appointments to remain secret. Morrison's actions were ultimately found to be legal, but his use of extraordinary ministerial powers to block a major gas project is being challenged in court. Morrison has refused calls to resign from parliament. —AFP

# Business

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2022

## US private hiring eases more than expected in November

### Economy grew 2.9% in third quarter amid rise in consumer spending

WASHINGTON: US employers eased their hiring pace in November, with job creation slowing the most since early 2021, as the central bank's interest rate hikes trickle through the economy, payroll firm ADP said Wednesday. Private employment rose by 127,000 jobs this month, much less than analysts expected and below the 239,000-job increase in October, with firms no longer in "hyper-replacement mode," the survey showed.

As the Federal Reserve battles to tamp down surging inflation and cool the world's biggest economy, one concern was an uptick in wages over the past year as companies competed to find and retain workers in a tight labor market. But in November, job creation slowed by the most since January 2021, ADP said. This was led by construction and other sectors sensitive to interest rate hikes, while consumer-facing segments such as health care and hospitality proved to be "bright spots." "Turning points can be hard to capture in the labor market, but our data suggest that Federal Reserve tightening is having an impact on job creation and pay gains," said ADP chief economist Nela Richardson in a statement.

Richardson added that the post-pandemic recovery is also "stabilizing" with fewer people quitting their jobs. Employees saw annual pay gains moderate further to 7.6 percent in November, according to ADP's recently revamped report which includes wage data. For those who changed jobs, the median change in annual pay was up 15.1 percent, but the report noted that job changers had the smallest increase in pay since January as well.

"Overall, the trend in job growth remains positive and the labor market remains tight. But there are

some initial signs of softening," said economist Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics in a note. While she expects job growth to remain positive for now, the pace is "expected to slow further in response to Fed hikes, which will... slow demand and economic activity over time." The ADP data also comes before key employment figure is released by the Labor Department on Friday.

The US economy grew more than initially reported in the third quarter this year, with government data released Wednesday reflecting upward revisions to retail spending and some forms of investment.

GDP growth in the July to September period came in at 2.9 percent, annualized, better than the 2.6 percent figure reported in October by the Commerce Department. It was the first expansion this year, after two quarters of negative growth that deepened fears of a recession in the world's biggest economy. The pick-up came days before midterm elections in the United States, in welcome news for President Joe Biden, but analysts have cautioned of a less rosy path ahead, saying that the leap seen in exports was unsustainable. The latest estimate "primarily reflected upward revisions to consumer spending and nonresidential fixed investment," the Commerce Department said Wednesday. But this was partially offset by private inventory investment that was lower than expected, while imports decreased more than earlier estimated, the statement added. But economist Oren Klachkin cautioned that the headline figure "masks cracks beneath the surface." A downward revision to imports meant net trade offered an "even heftier" boost to growth, he added in a note.



WASHINGTON: US employers eased their hiring pace in November, with job creation slowing the most since early 2021, as the central bank's interest rate hikes trickle through the economy, payroll firm ADP said Wednesday.

He added that the report also offered an early look at how companies fared in the last quarter, noting that profits "fared relatively well" despite a challenging environment. "Despite higher borrowing costs and prices, household spending - the driver of the economy - appears to be holding,"

added economist Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics in an analysis. While economists expect this to be a positive trend in the near-term, they expect growth to follow a slower path as moves to cool the economy and bring down inflation bite. —AFP

## Macron tours US ahead of Biden talks on trade

WASHINGTON: France's President Emmanuel Macron underlines US-French cooperation with a tour of NASA headquarters Wednesday, but his state visit will veer into tougher territory when he meets his counterpart Joe Biden for the main part of a rare state visit.

The French leader, who arrived late Tuesday with his wife Brigitte, will join Vice President Kamala Harris at the US space agency facility in Washington. He'll stay in the high-tech sphere later when he attends a meeting on civilian nuclear energy. The busy schedule, which also includes a working lunch to discuss biodiversity and clean energy, and a visit to the historic Arlington National Cemetery, illustrates the ambitions set for the trip—the first formal state visit by a foreign leader to Washington since Biden took office nearly two years ago.

The core of the visit will be Thursday, including a White House military honor guard, Oval Office talks with Biden, a joint press conference and a banquet where Grammy-award-winning American musician Jon Batiste will perform. Compared to Macron's edgy experience as the guest of Donald Trump in 2018, this trip will be a carefully choreographed display of transatlantic friendship.

### EU-US trade tensions

But tensions are rising over trade as Europeans nervously watch the rollout of Biden's signature green industry policy—the Inflation Reduction Act. The IRA is set to pump billions of dollars into climate-friendly technologies, with strong backing for



WASHINGTON: US Vice President Kamala Harris (right) and French President Emmanuel Macron attend a meeting on French-US cooperation in Space, at NASA headquarters in Washington, DC, on November 30, 2022. —AFP

American-made products. A similar effort is being put into microchip manufacturing. Europeans fear an unfair US advantage in the sectors just as they are reeling from the economic consequences of the war in Ukraine and Western attempts to end reliance on Russian energy supplies.

Talk in Europe is now increasingly on whether the bloc should respond with its own subsidies and championing of homegrown products, effectively starting a trade war. Another gripe in Europe is the high cost of US liquid natural gas exports—which have surged to try and replace canceled Russian deliveries. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby struck a cautious note, telling French reporters that "right now we're in the mode of listening and making sure we understand

concerns by our European partners." Kirby went out of his way to praise Macron, referring to his "experience and wisdom."

The breadth of Macron's entourage—including the foreign, defense and finance ministers, as well as business leaders and astronauts—illustrates the importance Paris has put on the visit. At the White House, however, a senior official said the main goal is to nurture the "personal relationship, the alliance relationship" with France—and between Biden and Macron. That more modest-sounding goal will include improving coordination on helping Ukraine to repel Russia and the even more vexing question of how to manage the rise of superpower China. "We are not allies on the same page," one adviser to Macron told AFP, forecasting "challenging" talks with Biden. —AFP

## Eurozone inflation falls for first time in 17 months

FRANKFURT: The eurozone annual inflation rate fell for the first time in 17 months in November as it slowed to 10 percent, official data showed Wednesday. Boosted by soaring energy and food bills triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine, the rate of price increases had hit a new historic record every month since November 21.

Analysts had expected the inflation rate in the single currency area to fall but the drop was steeper than predicted by Bloomberg and FactSet, who foresaw 10.4 percent.

Inflation had hit 10.6 percent in October. But the November figure may not convince the European Central Bank that it can stop raising interest rates, as its president Christine Lagarde has expressed skepticism that inflation has peaked. As late as Monday, Lagarde warned: "I think that there is too much uncertainty ... to assume that inflation has actually reached its peak. It would surprise me."

Analysts said the reverse in the trend could see

the bank go for a smaller 50-basis-point increase in rates next month rather than the expected 75-point bump. "We were due some good news," said Bert Colijn, senior eurozone economist at the ING bank. "The eurozone inflation rate ticked down after a few nasty upside surprises."

### Food price inflation up

Nevertheless, he cautioned that core inflation remained stable.

"Whether this is the peak in inflation remains to be seen," he said. "Another episode in the energy crisis could easily push inflation back up again and core inflation usually proves to be sticky after a supply shock." Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist at Capital Economics, also sounded a note of caution. "Eurozone headline inflation may now be past its peak but with core inflation unchanged in November and likely to stay well above 2 percent throughout next year, we expect the ECB to press on with another 50 basis point or even 75 basis point deposit rate hike in December," he said.

An easing in the speed with which energy prices are rising was the main reason for the November fall in overall inflation, compensating for still accelerating food and drink costs. Among the 19 countries that use the euro, Spain now has the lowest



ECB President Christine Lagarde warned: "I think that there is too much uncertainty ... to assume that inflation has actually reached its peak. It would surprise me."

inflation rate, dropping to 6.6 percent compared to previous top performer France, now on 7.1. Germany and Italy are still running high inflation rates, but both dropped slightly, the former down 0.3 percentage points to 11.3 percent and the latter down 0.1 points to 12.5 percent. —AFP

## Jack Ma living in Japan after China tech crackdown

TOKYO: Alibaba founder Jack Ma has been living in Tokyo for almost six months after disappearing from public view following China's crackdown on the tech sector, the Financial Times reported Wednesday, citing multiple unnamed sources. The billionaire has kept a low profile since the crackdown, which has included Chinese regulators scrapping the IPO of Ma's Ant Group and issuing Alibaba with record fines. But the FT said he has spent much of the past six months with his family in Tokyo and other parts of Japan, along with visits to the United States and the Zionist entity.

The British newspaper said Ma has frequented several private members' clubs in Tokyo, and become an "enthusiastic collector" of Japanese modern art, as well as exploring expanding his business interests into sustainability. Ma has been spotted elsewhere since he effectively disappeared from public view in China, including on the Spanish island of Mallorca last year. —AFP



Jack Ma

## H&M to cut 1,500 jobs worldwide

STOCKHOLM: Swedish fashion retailer H&M said Wednesday it would cut some 1,500 jobs worldwide as a result of a cost-cutting program launched following its decision to leave the Russian market.

"The program relates to administrative and overhead costs, and also entails reducing the workforce by around 1,500 positions," the company said in a statement. The restructuring program was announced in September, as the clothing giant announced a sizeable drop in third quarter profits, which was largely impacted by the company's decision to "wind down the business in Russia" following the invasion of Ukraine.

"The cost and efficiency program that we have initiated involves reviewing our organization and we are very mindful of the fact that colleagues will be affected by this," CEO Helena Helmersson said in the statement Wednesday. According to H&M, the program is expected to cost some 800 million Swedish kronor (\$76 million) but would provide annual savings of around two billion kronor. In September, H&M said it had closed just over 30 of its 172 shops in Russia. —AFP



Business

# India growth slows to 6.3% as pandemic bounceback wanes

## Elevated crude prices and a falling rupee impact India's trade balance

**NEW DELHI:** India's growth slowed to 6.3 percent in the September quarter, official figures showed Wednesday, with rising rates and higher consumer prices both dragging on Asia's third-largest economy. This year India bounced back strongly from the coronavirus pandemic but it is now grappling with the same headwinds buffeting the global economy. The pace of expansion fell dramatically from 13.5 percent year-on-year GDP growth in the previous quarter, a figure more illustrative of the shock to activity during the height of last year's coronavirus wave.

India imports more than 80 percent of its crude oil needs and rising petrol costs since Russia's February invasion of Ukraine have hit the wallets of the country's 1.4 billion people. Consumer inflation has consistently overshoot the central bank's two-to-six percent target range this year, hitting an eight-year high of 7.79 percent in April.

Official data showed consumer inflation moderating slightly to 6.77 percent in October after reaching a five-month high of 7.41 percent in September. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in September raised interest rates for the fourth time in five months-up a total 190 basis points this year-with a further rate hike expected next week. Merchandise exports hit a 20-month low of \$29.78 billion in October, as high inflation and recession fears hit demand in key overseas markets.

**'Resilient progress'**  
Elevated crude oil prices and a falling rupee have left India struggling with a deteriorating trade balance as import costs rise. The Indian rupee has hit record lows this year, plunging up to 10 percent against the US dollar as the greenback rallied on risk-averse market sentiment. But India's currency has proven more resilient than its Asian peers, aided by regular central bank intervention.

Analysts also say pent-up consumer demand and expectations of higher government expenditure will support growth in the face of headwinds. "Several indicators suggest that the Indian economy is making resilient progress," State Bank of India Chief Economic Adviser Soumya Kanti Ghosh said in a note.

"Growth impulses continue to be strong and it may be better to look through the GDP headline numbers for a couple of quarters before arriving at a definitive conclusion about the growth trajectory." The International Monetary Fund forecasts 6.1 percent growth for India next year, down from 6.8 percent in 2022 but still significantly higher than every other major economy.

India's benchmark Sensex index closed 0.67 percent higher in Mumbai ahead of the GDP data release. —AFP



MUMBAI: A vendor arranges vegetables at a stall at a farmers market in Mumbai on November 30, 2022. —AFP

## Peruvian mining town at a crossroads

**LA OROYA, Peru:** The Peruvian mining city of La Oroya, one of the most polluted places in the world, is seeking to reopen a heavy metal smelter that poisoned residents for almost a century.

The Andean city, situated in a high-altitude valley at 3,750 meters (12,300 feet), is a grey, desolate place. Small houses and shops-many abandoned-cluster around towering black chimneys, surrounded by ash mountain slopes corroded by heavy metals and long devoid of vegetation.

In 2009, the gigantic smelter that was the economic heartbeat of La Oroya went bankrupt, forcing residents to leave in droves and bringing local commerce to its knees.

Since 1922, the plant processed copper, zinc, lead, gold, selenium, and other minerals from nearby mines. If the metallurgical complex reopens, as announced by its new owners in October, it could breathe life back into the economy. "The large majority of the population is eager and has waited a long time for this to start up again, because it is the source of life, the economic source," said 48-year-old taxi driver Hugo Enrique. But at what cost?

### A lifetime of disease

In 2011, La Oroya was listed as the second-most polluted city on Earth, falling into fifth place two years later,

according to the Blacksmith Institute, an NGO which works on pollution issues. It was in insalubrious company, rubbing shoulders with Ukraine's nuclear-sullied Chernobyl and Russia's Dzerzhinsk, the site of Cold War-era factories producing chemical weapons. According to the International Federation for Human Rights, in 2013, 97 percent of La Oroya children between six months and six years of age, and 98 percent between age seven and 12, had elevated levels of lead in their blood.

Manuel Enrique Apolinario, 68, a teacher who lives opposite the foundry, told AFP his body has high levels of lead, arsenic, and cadmium. Residents had "gotten used to the way of life, surrounded by smoke and toxic gases," he said.

"Those of us who have lived here for a lifetime have been ill with flu and bronchitis, especially respiratory infections."

### Another 100 years?

The foundry was opened in 1922, nationalized in 1974, and later privatized in 1997 when US natural resources firm Doe Run took it over. In June 2009, Doe Run halted work after failing to comply with an environmental protection program and declared itself insolvent.

Now, despite years of residents accusing Lima and Doe Run of turning a blind eye to the harmful effects, some 1,270 former employees want to reopen the smelter next March-with the vow not to pollute.

Luis Mantari, one of the new owners, who is in charge of logistics, said the plant would operate "with social and environmental responsibility." "We want this unique complex to last another 100 years," added human resources boss



LA OROYA, Peru: Yolanda Zurita, a member of the NGO Movement for Health of La Oroya, poses for a picture in the city of La Oroya, located at 3,745 meters above sea level in the department of Junin, east of Lima, on November 8, 2022. —AFP

Jose Aguilar. The company has stockpiled 14 million tons of copper and lead slag waste waiting to be converted into zinc.

"Those of us who fought against pollution have never opposed to the company working. Let it reopen with an environmental plan," said Pablo Fabian Martinez, 67, who also lives near the site.

For many, though, the decision comes down to pure pocketbook issues. "I want it to reopen because, without the company, La Oroya lost its entire economy," added Rosa Vilchez, a 30-year-old businesswoman. Her husband left to work in another city after the closure.

### Respect health

In 2006, La Oroya residents sued the Peruvian government at the Inter-

American Commission on Human Rights for allowing the company to pollute at will. Hearings began in October with the court sitting in the Uruguayan capital Montevideo, and residents recounted how they struggled with burning throats and eyes, headaches, and difficulty breathing. Others told of tumors, muscular problems, and infertility blamed on pollution from the smelters. The commission found last year that the state had failed to regulate and oversee the behavior of the mining company and "compromised its obligation to guarantee human rights." "We are aware that the metallurgical complex is a source of employment. We don't deny that," said Yolanda Zurita, one of the litigants, who plants trees to counter the pollution. "But it must respect the population's health." —AFP

## EU proposes funding freeze for Hungary

**BRUSSELS:** The European Commission recommended on Wednesday that €13 billion (\$13 billion) in EU funds for Hungary be frozen because Budapest is falling short on its commitments to meet European rule of law. The EU executive said Hungary had in particular failed to make good on promised reforms to ensure a fair judicial system when it comes to prosecutorial decisions.

EU member states will now have until December 19 to vote on whether to back, reject or change the commission recommendation. "Hungary has not progressed enough in its reforms," the commission said in a statement, noting that it had "failed to adequately implement" parts of the 17 remedial measures it had pledged to carry out by a deadline that ran out on November 19. As a result, the commission upheld an earlier warning that it would suspend 65 percent of EU budget funding earmarked for Hungary, amounting to €7.5 billion. Also, €5.8 billion from an EU coronavirus recovery fund was frozen until

Hungary showed it was meeting 27 "super milestones" for its reforms, particularly on the judiciary issue.

"The 'essential milestones' must all be met in full before Hungary can submit its payment request," commission Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis told a news conference.

"If they are not met, the entire payment would be blocked, and all subsequent ones too. In short: no funds will flow until the 'essential milestones' are properly implemented."

The commission's blunt recommendation was foreshadowed well in advance, with Hungary under repeated criticism by Brussels for perceived backsliding on principles and practices underpinning EU standards of democracy and law. EU officials, however, indicated they were aware of the risk that Hungary might continue with blocking tactics on EU decisions requiring member state unanimity, a form of "blackmail" to try to ease the pressure from Brussels. Budapest has already been standing in the way of efforts to extend sanctions on Moscow-with which it has good ties and energy dependency-over Russia's war in Ukraine.

It is also holding up EU adoption on a 15-percent corporate tax rate worked out in the OECD. Hungary denies that its obstructionism is linked to the tussle over

by leaders' warnings of a crackdown on dissent. Traders were awaiting a key speech by Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell, with many expecting him to outline plans for future interest rate hikes to tackle high US consumer prices. Eurozone inflation eased to 10 percent in November, the first drop in 17 months but holding in double figures, the EU statistics agency said.

### Focus on rising rates

European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde has expressed skepticism that inflation has peaked. "The ECB is still increasing (interest



BRUSSELS: European Commission vice-president in charge of the Euro, Social Dialogue, Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union Valdis Dombrovskis (left), EU commissioner for Budget and Administration Johannes Hahn (center) and EU commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders (right) hold a press conference on Hungary's recovery and resilience plan and on the application of the Rule of Law conditionality regulation at EU headquarters in Brussels, on November 30, 2022. —AFP

rule of law. Yet those stakes-and tactics-will be on the table when EU ministers and leaders hold previously scheduled meetings over the coming weeks. In a carrot-and-stick approach, the commission gave a positive assessment of Hungary's plan for the

rates and this is what traders are focused on," AvaTrade analyst Naeem Aslam told AFP, in reference to market reaction following the data. Inflation in the bloc had hit a record 10.6 percent in October, boosted also by soaring energy and food bills in the wake of Russia's war in Ukraine.

"Euro area inflation figures surprised on the downside, providing an early indication that the record price pressures seen in recent months may have peaked," added CEBR economist Karl Thompson. However, he warned that "inflation is nonetheless likely to remain elevated throughout 2023" and

forecast rising rates next month. Global central banks, including the Fed, have ramped up borrowing costs this year in a bid to dampen red-hot inflation that was fuelled also as economies reopened from the pandemic. Meanwhile on Wednesday, Asian stocks mostly rebounded as investors looked past weekend demonstrations in China after officials announced moves aimed at softening the zero-COVID strategy. But in a sign that the leadership was determined to maintain its authority, the country's top security body called for a "crackdown" against "hostile forces". —AFP

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## Britain unveils digital trade deal with Ukraine

**LONDON:** Britain will Wednesday agree a digital trade deal with Ukraine, whose economy has been ravaged by Russia's invasion. UK Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch and Ukrainian Economy Minister Yulia Svyrydenko will meet in London to unveil the deal, the government said in a statement.

The accord will guarantee access to the UK's financial services industry, helping reconstruction efforts and establishing closer cooperation on cybersecurity and emerging technology.

"Trading digitally is particularly important in the current conflict, where damage to Ukrainian infrastructure and warfare makes it much harder to trade physically," the statement added. "Digital tools and technologies will help Ukrainians access everyday vital goods and services during the war."

The agreement comes after London slashed tariffs on all Ukrainian goods to zero under a free trade deal with the war-torn nation. "The landmark digital trade deal agreed today between our two countries paves the way for a new era of modern trade between us," said Badenoch.

"This agreement will mean our businesses and governments can collaborate even more and ensure Ukrainians have access to essential goods and services digital trade opens up."

The UK had inked a similar accord with Singapore earlier this year, and signed a memorandum last week to boost cooperation in financial technology. Britain has pursued a series of commercial deals outside Europe following its exit from the European Union at the start of last year. It has chased new trade agreements particularly for the financial services sector, which was not covered by a post-Brexit EU deal. —AFP

## Unemployment continues to fall in Brazil

**BRASILIA:** Brazil's unemployment rate continued its downward trend in the three months through October, hitting a seven-year low of 8.3 percent, the government said Wednesday, a month before president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva takes office. The number of jobless workers in Latin America's biggest economy fell to nine million for the period from August to October, down 0.8 percentage points from the three months prior, according to figures released by the national statistics institute, IBGE.

It was the lowest rate since March-May 2015 — the latest sign of Brazil's gradual recovery from its economic crisis during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The unemployment rate had reached 14.9 percent in the first quarter of 2021, at the height of the crisis.

The figures come as veteran leftist Lula, who previously led Brazil from 2003-2010, prepares to take over from far-right President Jair Bolsonaro on January 1 after narrowly defeating him in a divisive election last month. With inflation finally starting to cool — the annual rate came in at 6.47 percent last month — and analysts polled by the central bank predicting GDP growth of 0.7 percent next, Brazil's economy looks to be slowly improving.

But it remains far from the commodities-fueled boom that Lula presided over in his first presidency. —AFP

## Europe stocks, euro rise on elevated inflation

**LONDON:** European equities and the euro rose Wednesday as eurozone inflation slowed but remained elevated on high energy costs. Markets were also buoyed by hopes that China will further ease its strict COVID containment measures following widespread protests, though gains were tempered

## Business

# China factory activity contracts as COVID disruptions spread

## IMF may have to lower China's growth forecasts: Director

**BEIJING:** China's factory activity shrank for a second straight month in November, official data showed Wednesday, as large swathes of the country were hit by COVID-19 lockdowns and transport disruptions. The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) — a key gauge of manufacturing in the world's second-biggest economy — came in at 48.0, down from October's 49.2 and well below the 50-point mark separating growth from contraction, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS).

China is the last major economy welded to a zero-COVID strategy of eliminating outbreaks with strict quarantines and mass testing even as infections reached record highs this month, dragging down demand and business confidence. "In November, impacted by multiple factors including the wide and frequent spread of domestic outbreaks, and the international environment becoming more complex and severe, China's purchasing managers' index fell," NBS senior statistician Zhao Qinghe said in a statement.

November's figure was lower than the 49.0 reading predicted by Bloomberg analysts. The manufacturing PMI has been in contraction territory for all but four months of the year so far, as a summer of heat waves was bookended by COVID lockdowns in major cities during the spring and autumn. Zhao said domestic outbreaks in November caused "production activity to slow down and product orders to fall", noting "increased fluctuation in market expectations".

Activity fell at businesses of all sizes during the month, with the PMI for small enterprises hit hardest at 45.6. The non-manufacturing PMI came in at 46.7 points in November, also reflecting a contraction in activity and down from 48.7 points in October.

Zhao said that for transport, accommodation, catering and entertainment in particular "the total industry business volume fell significantly", as "some regions saw a relatively large impact from the pandemic". Chinese leaders have set an annual economic growth target of about 5.5 percent, but many observers think the country will struggle to hit it, despite announcing a better-than-expected 3.9 percent expansion in the third quarter.

Meanwhile, rare nationwide protests have erupted among a population exhausted by almost three years of zero-COVID, while authorities have offered mixed messages on transitioning away from the strategy. "The virus situation continues to cloud the economic outlook," Sheena Yue, China economist at Capital Economics said in a note on Wednesday. "Most cities have taken to implementing localized lockdowns, similar to the ones we saw in April, which will continue to weigh heavily on services activity," Yue said. She warned, "there is little upside that might offset the weakness," with a global downturn putting pressure on export-focused businesses in China.

Meanwhile, The International Monetary Fund may have to slash its growth forecasts for China, managing director Kristalina Georgieva warned Tuesday, after protests erupted opposing Beijing's strict policies to combat COVID.

"There is indeed the possibility that, in this time of very high uncertainty, we might have to revise these projections down," Georgieva said, referring to the fund's forecasts for China. In October, the IMF cut its projection for the world's number two economy to 3.2 percent this year as it is weighed down by COVID-zero policies, as well as a slowdown in the property sector. It projected China's growth would rise to 4.4 percent next year. Beijing's tough approach involves compelling local



**NANTONG, China:** Workers produce footballs at a factory in Nantong in China's eastern Jiangsu province on November 29, 2022. —AFP

governments to impose snap lockdowns and quarantine orders, and limit freedom of movement in response to minor outbreaks. Demonstrations not seen in decades erupted in major cities at the weekend opposing COVID lockdowns and demanding greater political freedoms.

Georgieva, speaking in Berlin after meeting Chancellor Olaf Scholz and heads of other international financial organizations, said China was

"looking into its zero-COVID policy with a perspective to shift to more targeted response to COVID cases". This was aimed at ensuring "less interruptions to the Chinese economy, and less negative spillover for the rest of the world," she said. "We have been supportive of looking into what China can do to make its COVID policy more effective for China itself and for its role in the world economy." —AFP

## Congress leaders signal support to prevent rail strike

**WASHINGTON:** Democratic and Republican congressional leaders said Tuesday they will intervene to prevent a potentially catastrophic US rail freight strike — deploying a rarely used legislative power to impose a resolution on unions.

Speaking at the White House after a meeting with President Joe Biden, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said the top leaders of both his Democratic party and the Republicans support the emergency measure. "All four of us agreed we've got to resolve this rail shutdown as quickly as possible," Schumer said, adding that the senior Republican senator, Mitch McConnell "agreed to try to get it done ASAP".

Nancy Pelosi, Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives, said the lower chamber would vote Wednesday on forcing unions to accept a deal averting a strike. It would then go to the Senate.

A strike by freight rail workers, who are integral to US supply chains, is expected to start December 9 unless Congress intervenes. Legislators would effectively be forcing hold-outs to accept a September deal agreed to by a majority of unions on

increased wages. The White House invested heavy political capital during the September talks, getting the preliminary deal after a nearly all-night negotiating marathon in Washington.

Now the administration finds itself back at square one and forced to reach for the nuclear option of congressional intervention. A strike could see nearly 7,000 freight trains grind to a halt, at a cost of more than \$2 billion a day, according to the American Association of Railroads.

The repercussions would extend throughout the economy, leading to around three quarters of a million people losing their jobs, according to Biden. The latest brinkmanship comes as US retailers are reporting strong pre-Christmas sales but warning of "devastating" effects from any strike.

A strike could hit consumer sentiment "at the worst possible time," National Retail Federation president Matthew Shay said. But one union, the BMWED, said it was "deeply disappointed" by Biden's decision to call in Congress. It "both denies railroad workers their right to strike while also denying them of the benefit they would likely otherwise obtain if they were not denied their right to strike," the union said in a statement.

Biden also called Tuesday's White House meeting to discuss the "lame duck" session of Congress ahead of January when Republicans will take over control of the House of Representatives, after their narrow win in November's midterm elections. Democrats will retain a thin majority in the Senate.

## Kaspersky supports Interpol's operation to combat cybercrime

**KUWAIT:** Kaspersky has contributed to Interpol's Africa Cyber Surge Operation (ACSO) by sharing data, comprising of indicators of compromise (IoCs) on various cyberthreats and types of cybercriminal activity targeting African countries. This evidence provided the grounds for a series of operational and investigative activities against the threat actors behind the cybercrimes and their malicious infrastructure.

The threat intelligence data was shared with Interpol's as part of the agency's long-standing Gateway project, which encourages the partnership between law enforcement and private industry players to accumulate threat data from multiple sources enabling police authorities to prevent attacks. Based on the information shared by Kaspersky together with the rest of Gateway project partners, 28 cyber activity reports were drafted. They highlighted a range of threats targeting the African continent and outlined recommended actions to be taken by the national authorities, paving the way for the ACSO.

The ACSO was initiated by Interpol's Cybercrime Directorate and Interpol's Support Program for the African Union (ISPA) and was carried out in collaboration with the Africpol

## Musk's Twitter lifts rule against COVID misinformation

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Twitter said it has stopped enforcing a policy intended to prevent the spread of COVID misinformation, as new owner Elon Musk — who has clashed previously with US officials over pandemic safety rules — continues to remake its content moderation poli-

cies. The move comes after the mercurial billionaire reinstated a slew of accounts on the social media network that had previously been banned for violating its content rules, such as that of former president Donald Trump.

"Effective November 23, 2022, Twitter is no longer enforcing the COVID-19 misleading information policy," read a message posted at a Twitter transparency web page. During the pandemic, Twitter took to labeling misleading tweets about COVID and booting users who persisted in spreading such misinformation. Banned content included statements intended to influence people to violate health authority guidelines, along with bogus cures or denial of scientific facts, according to a Twitter blog.

As of September of this year, Twitter had suspended



**WASHINGTON:** Activists in support of unionized rail workers protest outside the US Capitol Building on November 29, 2022 in Washington, DC. —AFP

The White House said Biden and the congressional leaders discussed maintaining funding for the US government and unprecedented military aid for Ukraine in its fight against Russian invasion. Biden, who faces the next two years of his first term with Republicans blocking his legislation in the House, offered an olive branch, according to the White House. He told his "Republican colleagues that whatever disagreements they may have, he is always interested in finding new common ground, and that he has an open door to hear their perspectives," the statement said. —AFP

utilizing Interpol's platforms, tools, and channels. This operation focused both on cyber criminals and compromised network infrastructure in Africa, allowing member countries to identify more than 1,000 malicious IP addresses, Dark Web Markets, and individual threat actors, enhancing cooperation between Interpol, Africpol and the member countries, and contributing to connecting policing for a safer world," said Craig Jones, Director Cybercrime Directorate.

"Kaspersky has always seen international cooperation as a key element of the effective fight against borderless cybercrime and has been working closely with its partners, including Interpol, to disrupt malicious activities of threat actors worldwide. We are happy to be a part of Interpol's ACSO and, together with other participants, help African countries tackle the cybercrime threat. The successful operation boosts the role of collaborative efforts in combating cyber offences and achieving greater cybersecurity," commented Genie Gan, the head of Public Affairs and Government Relations for Asia Pacific & Middle East, Turkey and Africa.

In 2019, Kaspersky and INTERPOL signed a five-year cooperation agreement, under which the company committed to provide human resources support, training, and threat intelligence data on the latest cybercriminal activities to the law enforcement agency. Since the document was signed, the two parties have been further advancing the cooperation by jointly preventing cybercrime and raising awareness on acute cyberthreats through collaboration in the cybersecurity industry.

11,230 accounts under the policy, the blog stated. Musk, who also runs Tesla, clashed with officials in 2020 over pandemic safety orders which temporarily shut down the electric car giant's plant in California, calling shelter in place orders "fascist" and "an outrage" that infringed on personal freedom.

Under Musk, who calls himself a "free speech absolutist," Twitter has begun reinstating roughly 62,000 accounts in what is being referred to internally as "the Big Bang," according to Platformer news blog. Since taking over the platform last month, Musk has cut around half of Twitter's workforce, including many employees tasked with fighting disinformation, while an unknown number of others have voluntarily quit. —AFP



**BAY CITY, United States:** US President Joe Biden (left) listens as SK Siltron CSS CEO Jiamwei Dong speaks during a tour of the SK Siltron CSS facility in Bay City, Michigan, on November 29, 2022. —AFP

## US retailers cheer strong holiday sales

**WASHINGTON:** US retailers cheered a buoyant start to the holiday shopping season Tuesday, but warned that a potential freight rail strike could still cripple the critically busy period.

In spite of grinding inflation, customer counts on "Black Friday" and throughout the Thanksgiving holiday shopping weekend jumped from last year, exceeding expectations, according to data from the National Retail Federation. Surveys had suggested shopper reticence, but "there's a difference between attitude and action," said NRF President Matthew Shay.

Consumers "say one thing and do another," added Shay, who characterized the robust labor market as an offset to the drag from higher costs for gasoline and household staples.

The NRF's survey estimated that 196.7 million Americans shopped in stores in the five-day stretch between last Thursday's Thanksgiving and "Cyber Monday," spending an average of \$325.44 on holiday-related purchases. The number of shoppers accounts for almost 60 percent of the US population and stands 17 percent above the 2021 level, with most of the increase coming from a resurgence in physical shopping after e-commerce saw heady growth the last two pandemic-affected seasons.

The NRF has projected that holiday retail sales will grow between six and eight percent over 2021 to as much as \$960.4 billion for the entire season. "We continue to expect a healthy holiday season," Shay said. "Consumers are spending and generally speaking, retailers are feeling positive about their inventory levels." But Shay emphasized that a rail strike would have "devastating" effects on the consumer-driven US economy, employing the same word US President Joe Biden used Monday night in calling on Congress to intervene in the matter.

The issue has come to a head after workers at four of 12 freight rail unions rejected a September agreement between the rail industry and organized labor, setting the stage for a potential strike on December 9. The proposed contract, reached after lengthy negotiations involving the White House, includes hefty wage increases but no paid sick leave.

Shay endorsed Biden's message, noting that a rail strike would stress the nation's transportation system at a time when it is still recovering from supply chain problems.

But beyond the direct impact on commerce, Shay said a rail strike also had potential to dent consumer sentiment in a way similar to government shutdowns and other "external" events that have crimped prior holiday seasons. A strike could hit consumer sentiment "at the worst possible time," he said. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



In this file photo fans of Brazil watch the live broadcast of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group G football match between Brazil and Switzerland, at the FIFA Fan Fest in Copacabana beach, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. —AFP photos



Makeup artist Natalia Bastos (right), who creates themed makeup for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, poses in her studio with client Milene Cristina in Ibirite, metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

# Yellow the new black as World Cup fashion sweeps Brazil



In this file photo Brazilian makeup artist Natalia Bastos poses at her studio with a themed makeup for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 created by her in Ibirite.



Brazilian makeup artist Natalia Bastos poses at her studio with a themed makeup for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 created by her in Ibirite.



Brazilian Havaianas flip-flop are displayed at a store in Sao Paulo.

In a yellow-and-green outfit with matching shoes, eye glitter and fingernails, Julia Barbosa is on her way to watch Brazil's big match in a Sao Paulo bar. But she looks like she could be strutting her stuff on a runway modeling Brazil's latest fashion trend: World Cup style. As the five-time champions wage their campaign to bring home their sixth world title, the 24-year-old marketing student is waging a campaign of her own. "I'm going to have a different look for every match," Barbosa says proudly, posing for pictures in the outfit she bought for Brazil's opening match against Serbia Thursday.

Next up, she says: a bikini top and shorts in the colors of the flag, which have flooded streets, shop windows and online stores in Brazil as the football-mad nation starts its World Cup party. The team won its first two games and

has qualified for the knock-out stage of the tournament.

Some Brazilians have eschewed yellow and green in recent years, which were associated with outgoing President Jair Bolsonaro and his far-right base. But with the World Cup now under way and Bolsonaro on his way out after losing last month's elections to leftist president-elect Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, fans are re-embracing "Brazilcore," a streetwear fashion heavy on symbols of national pride and the yellow, green and blue of the flag. Pop superstar Anitta and an army of influencers on social media have pushed the trend-redefining the symbolism of yellow and green.

The trend "aims to reclaim pride in the national colors, giving all Brazilians a sense of belonging, regardless of their politics," said Katia Lamarca of the European

Design Institute (IED) in Sao Paulo. Engineer Vivianny Sales, 31, was also looking sparkly in a form-fitting T-shirt of blue sequins. "I wanted to shine, and I want the team to shine too," she told AFP.

### Flip-flops

"Brazil is the country of football, and it's important for fashion to be attuned to what consumers—who are also football fans—want," said fashion analyst Paula Acioli. "It has to have the right timing, be attractive and be assertive." One top Brazilian brand, flip-flop maker Havaianas, launched a new product line ahead of the World Cup celebrating "brasilidade," or Brazilian-ness, with yellow-and-green sandals stamped with the iconic number 10 of Neymar and Pele. "Brands know the emo-

tional pull of an event of this magnitude," said Lamarca.

"That can translate to purchases and increase profits." Rio de Janeiro brand Farm meanwhile launched a line including sleeveless T-shirts stamped with slang and double entendres, such as "Pra joga," which can mean both "ready to play" and "available." Men have not stayed on the sidelines of the World Cup fashion frenzy. Shop windows and online stores are packed with World Cup-themed clothing for men, with options going way beyond the traditional national team jersey, and sometimes even bordering on elegant.

Neymar and team led the way, arriving in Qatar wearing sleek, light-weight suits by renowned Brazilian designer Ricardo Almeida. Almeida said the trend may be here to stay—"especially if Brazil win the World Cup." —AFP



Brazilian Havaianas flip-flop are displayed at a store in Sao Paulo, Brazil.



Brazilian makeup artist Natalia Bastos applies a themed makeup created by her for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 to client Milene Cristina in her studio.



A fan of Brazil has her makeup done at a booth after watching the live broadcast of the Qatar 2022 World Cup.

## William and Kate head to the US for first time in eight years

Prince William and his wife Kate head to the United States this week for their first visit in eight years, and the popular couple's inaugural trip as prince and princess of Wales. The three-day visit to the northeastern city of Boston culminates on Friday evening with a star-studded ceremony for William's Earthshot Prize initiative to tackle climate change. The awards ceremony—described by royal insiders as William's "Superbowl moment"—is now in its second year, and rewards five innovators with £1 million each (\$1.2 million). A host of stars are expected at Boston's MGM Music Hall, including singers Billie Eilish and Annie Lennox, sisters Chloe x Halle, and actor Rami Malek.

As last year, the British naturalist and television presenter David Attenborough will contribute, alongside the actress Cate Blanchett, who is on the judging panel. The trip is the most high-profile since 40-year-old William became heir to the throne in September, when his father succeeded queen Elizabeth II to become King Charles III. The new monarch soon made his eldest son prince of Wales—the traditional title of heirs apparent dating back to the 13th century. The last princess of Wales was William's mother, Diana.

In Boston, the couple will meet the city's mayor, Michelle Wu, and tour the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum with the former president's daughter, Caroline. Caroline Kennedy is



Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales, (left) and his wife Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, speak with South Africa's president (not seen) at the Corinthia Hotel in London at the start of the president's two-day state visit. —AFP

currently Washington's top envoy to Australia. Other engagements include discussions with local officials about rising sea levels in the city on the North Atlantic coast.

They will also meet charities working with disadvantaged young people and a laboratory specializing in green technologies. Kate, who has three children aged four to nine with William and has an interest in early years education, will visit Harvard University's Child Development Centre.

### No Harry or Meghan

No meeting has been announced between Prince William and his estranged younger brother Harry, 38, who lives in California with his wife Meghan, 41, and their two young children. The two couples have been at loggerheads particularly since Harry and Meghan—also known as the Duke and Duchess of Sussex—sen-

ationally quit the royal family in 2020. Relations soured further after they gave a television interview to Oprah Winfrey last year and accused the royal family of racism, prompting a public denial from William.

The death of William and Harry's grandmother failed to bring about any visible meaningful reconciliation. The two couples made a frosty joint appearance at Windsor Castle to view floral tributes and both attended the queen's state funeral.

Unusually though for William and Kate, who are used to their public appearances dominating headlines in the UK, they may have to deal with playing second fiddle to Harry and Meghan in the United States.

The Sussexes are more popular in the United States and on December 6 are due to receive a major humanitarian award from the Robert Kennedy foundation in New York. Comparisons between the two couples will inevitably fuel interest in the royal soap opera even before the expected release next month of a documentary about Harry and Meghan on Netflix.

The royal family is also bracing for the release of Harry's memoirs "Spare" on January 10 in which he promises to lift the lid on his life in Britain's most famous institution. William and Kate's US visit will be seen as a more conventional approach to royal outreach. Among the 15 Earthshot finalists are a Kenyan initiative for a cleaner-burning stove and a Dutch invention to stop maritime plastic pollution.

A pair of French and Spanish entrepreneurs is also in the running with their biodegradable seaweed packaging. The couple made their first official visit to the United States in 2011, when they met Hollywood A-listers in California. In 2014, they visited New York and Washington, in a trip that included a reception at the White House with the then-president Barack Obama and his deputy, Joe Biden. —AFP



Meghan Markle and Prince Harry

## Meghan faced death threats as a royal: Senior UK police officer

The UK's most senior police officer of color has said the duchess of Sussex faced "disgusting" threats to her life during her time in the royal family. Neil Basu said that as head of counter-terrorism, he had to deal with credible threats from far-right extremists against Meghan Markle and her husband Prince Harry. His comments, in an interview with Channel 4 News broadcast late Tuesday, appear to reinforce Harry's claims about security fears. Meghan, a mixed-race former television actor, married the younger son of King Charles III in 2018, but they quit royal life in 2020 and moved to the United States. Basu, 54, who is stepping down after 30 years with London's Metropolitan Police, was asked if there were genuine threats to Meghan's life. "Absolutely," he replied, calling the threats "disgusting and very real." "We had teams investigating it. People have been prosecuted for those threats." Harry, 38, took the UK government to court to force a review of a decision to pull his state-funded protection when he was back in the country from the United States. At the beginning of their relationship, Harry took the rare step of publicly criticizing the tone of some media coverage of Meghan. —AFP



# English School Fahaaheel students tour Kuwait Times, Kuwait News

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** The English School Fahaaheel students on Wednesday visited Kuwait Times Newspaper and Kuwait News offices during a field trip to explore more about journalism and to learn how it has developed over the years. Deputy Managing Editor, Islam Al-Sharaa, explained to the students about the processes and the publishing stages - starting from the work of reporters, editors, page makers and designers.

The students visited Kuwait Times' archive room. They were excited to see the old versions of the newspaper - dated back to the early sixties. The head of printing department Al-Watheq Bellah Darwish took the students on a tour of the Printing House. He showed them how the process of printing begins and ends, while Kuwait Times' reporters (Majd Othman and Faten Omar) answered questions regarding to reporting.

The students were amazed to see the area Kuwait Times and Kuwait News opened for young artists to express their thoughts - through arts. They took some memorable pictures. At the end of the tour, Kuwait Times team headed by the Managing Editor Mustafa Darwish took a group picture with the students and their teachers. They also met cat "Lucy". They played and took some photos with the cat.



Photo shows Managing Editor Mustafa Darwish (left), Kuwait Times' reporter Faten Omar (second left), Deputy Managing Editor Islam Al-Sharaa (center) and Kuwait Times' reporter Majd Othman (right) posing with English School Fahaaheel students and teachers at Kuwait Times and Kuwait News offices. — Photos by Abdul Raheem Abdeen



Sports

# Dominant Australia take control of opening Test against Windies

## Labuschagne cracks a masterful unbeaten 154

PERTH: Marnus Labuschagne cracked a masterful unbeaten 154 while Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith hit 50s as a dominant Australia took control of the opening Test against the West Indies at Perth Stadium on Wednesday. The hosts reached an ominous 293-2 at stumps on day one following captain Pat Cummins' decision to bat in hot and dry conditions.

The total was built off the back of a 142-run stand between Labuschagne and Khawaja, who came together after David Warner was out for five, then an unbeaten 142 with Smith. A focused Labuschagne, who survived chances on 75 and 137, brought up his eighth century in his 29th Test and with the in-form Smith unbeaten on 59 the omens are not good for the visitors, who have failed to win a Test in Australia for 25 years.

"When you finish the day at around 300 for 2, you feel good. It was nice to build partnerships throughout the day," said Labuschagne. "Scoring a Test hundred any time is amazing, so to be able to do it in the first Test of the summer can hopefully set you up for this game, and also the summer. "It was all about the process, build your whole game around it and don't worry about anything else," he added.

The West Indies bowled with plenty of discipline in front of just 10,929 spectators, but the chances were few and far between. After getting the early wicket of Warner for five, they had to toil for hours in the heat to bag another, with Khawaja compiling 65 before edging Kyle Mayers to wicketkeeper Joshua Da Silva just before lunch. "We bowled well in spurts, but we didn't get the breaks," said West Indies coach Phil Simmons.

"We'll look to get a couple of wickets early

tomorrow and try and peg them back that way. Even if they get 450 we're still in it because I think the wicket looks like it can get better." Labuschagne and Khawaja came together after Warner fell to young pacesman Jayden Seales, and hardly put a foot wrong. They had to work hard in the opening session of the first Test between the sides for nearly seven years, reaching 72-1 at lunch. But they accelerated after the break with Labuschagne bringing up his 50 with a three off Jason Holder.

A faultless Khawaja, who has been a rock at the top of the order this year, soon followed, cracking spinner Roston Chase for four and then a single to reach his 18th half-century in his 52nd Test. Khawaja had scored four Test centuries and reached the 90s twice in the last 12 months, with more glory beckoning. But he was undone by a beautiful delivery from Mayers, which trimmed the outside edge of his bat and was an easy take for Da Silva. Undeterred, Labuschagne powered to three figures from 192 balls, hitting the milestone with his 13th boundary.

Smith has reverted to a more orthodox batting style which saw him score 94 and an unbeaten 80 in Australia's recent one-day series against England, and he again looked in good nick. The 33-year-old was untroubled as he swept to a 37th Test 50, eyeing another century to draw level with the great Donald Bradman on 29. Wearing black armbands to mourn former West Indies wicketkeeper David Murray, who died last week, the visitors kept Warner and Khawaja in check in the opening overs. Warner's first attacking shot saw Seales pulled for a boundary in the fourth over.

But the left-hander's aggression cost him next



PERTH: Marnus Labuschagne of Australia runs between wickets during the first day of the first Test cricket match between Australia and the West Indies at Perth Stadium on November 30, 2022. —AFP

ball as tried to drive a wider delivery only to drag it back onto his stumps. The West Indies suffered a blow before the match with allrounder Raymon Reifer ruled out after picking up a groin injury. They handed a debut to batsman Tagenarine

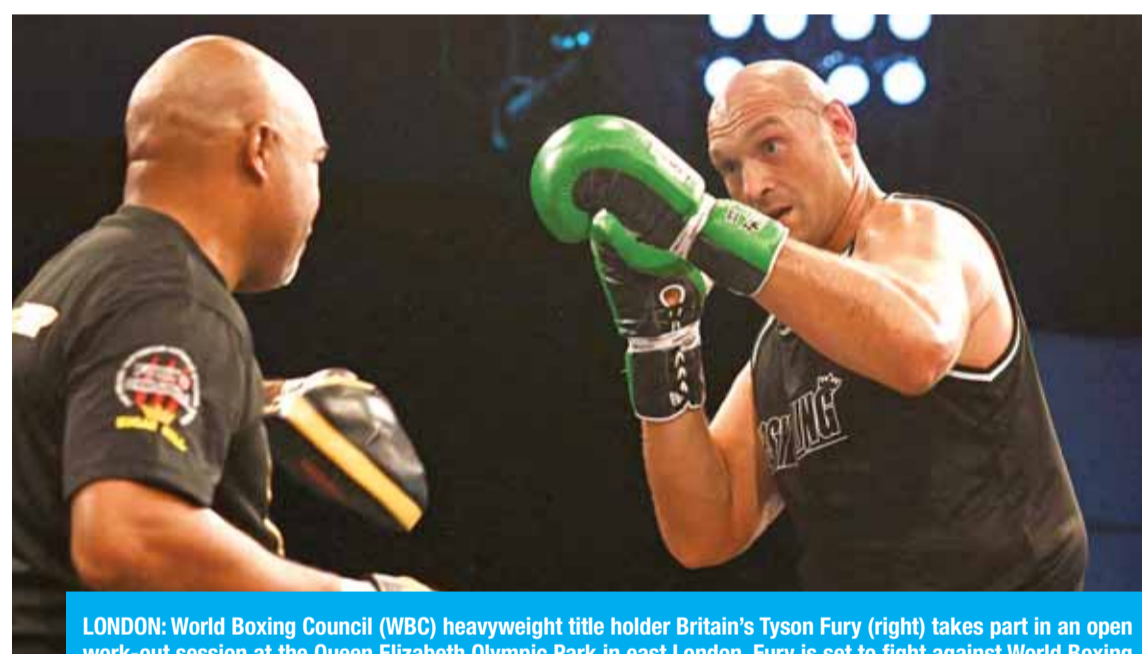
Chanderpaul, the son of retired great Shivnarine. Top-ranked Australia made just one change from their last Test against Sri Lanka in July, with speedster Josh Hazlewood in for spinner Mitchell Swepson. —AFP

## Fury puts friendship aside for third shot at Chisora

LONDON: Tyson Fury has vowed to put a burgeoning friendship with Derek Chisora to one side as he aims to beat his fellow Brit for a third time on Saturday. Fury is the huge favorite to maintain his unbeaten professional record and retain the WBC world heavyweight title. The fight with Chisora at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium was agreed after negotiations over a much-anticipated bout with Anthony Joshua broke down.

Fury could also face Ukrainian Oleksandr Usyk next year in a bid to unite the heavyweight division, but he insisted he would not take his eye off the ball against Chisora. The two, who last faced off in 2014, have struck up a friendship in recent years and shook hands between media duties on Tuesday. "You're going to see Del Boy get knocked sparked out. I'm not playing games. This is not fun and games for me. This is strictly business," said Fury.

"People say, 'Oh well, I'm the overwhelming favorite'. But I'm only a man with a chin, and so is he. I could get knocked out and he could get knocked out. "We can be friends out here and



LONDON: World Boxing Council (WBC) heavyweight title holder Britain's Tyson Fury (right) takes part in an open work-out session at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in east London. Fury is set to fight against World Boxing Association (WBA) International heavyweight champion, Derek Chisora on December 3, 2022. —AFP

shake hands, go for a burger afterwards, but in here there's no friends." The standoff between Fury and Joshua's camps has given the 38-year-old Chisora an unlikely final shot at claiming the

scalp of the "Gypsy King." "I'm in great shape," said Chisora. "Tyson looks like he's in great shape. "Do I have to knock him out? Yeah, that's the whole point." —AFP

## Unspecified virus sweeps through England camp

RAWALPINDI: The first Test between England and Pakistan could be postponed after around half of the touring side's players, including captain Ben Stokes, were struck down by an unspecified virus a day before the match. The Pakistan cricket board said on Wednesday that it was discussing next steps with the England and Wales Cricket Board. "The PCB and ECB are in discussions regarding the commencement of the 1st #PAKVENG Test as some England players are down with viral infection," the board said on Twitter.

"The PCB continues to monitor the situation, is in contact with the ECB and will provide further

updates in due course." A ceremony for the two captains to unveil the series trophy was postponed to earlier in the day to give Stokes time to recover. Former captain Joe Root told reporters that "a few guys were not feeling 100 per cent," but did not provide details on individual players and possible changes to the starting XI.

"It's hard to say, I haven't seen anyone this morning," he said, adding: "I don't think it's food poisoning or COVID or anything like that, it's just one of those things that we have unfortunately picked up as a group. "I felt unwell yesterday and woke up feeling much better today, so hopefully it's a 24-hour thing." The British press had earlier reported that players were suffering from viral food poisoning after the ECB issued a statement saying that "several players and staff members, including England captain Ben Stokes, are feeling unwell and have been advised to stay at the hotel to rest up".

ECB spokesman Danny Reuben later clarified that "13-14 of the squad members, including six to

seven players are suffering from a virus which is not related to food poisoning or COVID related". Root, Zak Crawley, Harry Brook, Ollie Pope and Keaton Jennings were the players at training on Wednesday, while head coach Brendon McCullum was also in attendance. All of the squad had trained on Tuesday. Lancashire all-rounder Liam Livingstone is due to make his Test debut Thursday, while opener Ben Duckett was recalled for his first Test in six years.

England are on their first Test tour of Pakistan in 17 years, following their Twenty20 side playing seven matches in the country two months ago, taking the series 4-3. Problems with food and players becoming ill during the Twenty20 series led to the decision to bring a chef, Omar Meziane, who also worked with the England men's football team at the 2018 World Cup in Russia and at Euro 2020. England and Pakistan will contest a three-Test series with the second in Multan beginning December 9 and the third in Karachi from December 17-21. —AFP

## New Zealand clinch series win over India

CHRISTCHURCH: New Zealand clinched a 1-0 series win over India after the third and final one-day international was abandoned in Christchurch on Wednesday. Rain forced players from Hagley Oval following the 18th over of New Zealand's chase, with the home side 104-1 after India had been dismissed for 219 in the 48th over.

Play never resumed, meaning there was no result as the Black Caps needed to face a minimum 20 overs for an official match to be registered. New Zealand were well placed to push for victory thanks to an opening stand of 97 between Finn Allen (57) and Devon Conway (38 not out). The outcome nevertheless hands the Black Caps a series win that cements their status as the world's top-ranked ODI side 10 months out from the World Cup in India.

After winning the first match in Auckland by seven wickets, both remaining fixtures were washed out, including the second game in Hamilton which lasted just 13 overs. Wicketkeeper Tom Latham said his New Zealand team could take plenty of confidence from Wednesday's abandoned game. "I thought we bowled fantastically. Obviously winning the toss there was a little bit of assistance in the wicket and the guys managed to get something out of it," he said.

"The way Finn and Devon went out and played, I thought they absorbed a little bit of pressure at the start. "Then I thought Finn played beautifully and it was a great start from those two." Allen's fourth ODI half-century featured eight fours and one six. His aggression was a contrast to a more watchful approach from the Indian top order. Recalled pace bowler Adam Milne and allrounder Daryl Mitchell both took three wickets as the Black Caps employed a seam-based attack to good effect on a green Hagley Oval pitch.

Dropped for game two, Milne (3-57) celebrated his recall with a sharp opening spell in which he claimed openers Shubman Gill and Shikhar Dhawan, before later returning to remove danger man Suryakumar Yadav cheaply. Indian allrounder Washington Sundar scored 51 off 64 balls, reviving an innings which was teetering at 121-5 when he arrived at the crease in the 26th over. India play the first of three ODIs against Bangladesh in Mirpur on Sunday. New Zealand's next assignment is a two-Test series in Pakistan starting just after Christmas. —AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaifan	24849807
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Shamiya	24848913
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shuwaikh	24814507
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Chest Hospital	24849400	Nuzha	22526804
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Adan Hospital	23940620	Qadsiya	22515088
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Dasmah	22532265
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Shaab	22518752

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707	Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Rawda	22517733	Mirqab	22456536
Adaliya	22517144	Sharq	22465401
Khalidiya	24848075	Salmiya	25746401

### CHANGE OF NAME

I Tamanna Mohammad Rameez Pasha holder of Indian Passport No. M2619219 having permanent address Maharashtra, India, plot no. 35, teachers colony, Jafar Nagar, Nagpur, 440013 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as - Given name: Tamanna, Surname: Pasha.

I, Suleman Irfan S/o Arfan Ali resident of Adalat Garh District Sialkot, Pakistan, have changed my name to Suleman Arfan for all purposes as per my ID card number 34603-9162131-3.

I Mohd Rameez Jilani Pasha holder of Indian Passport No. P3503464 having permanent address Maharashtra, India, plot no. 35, teachers colony, Jafar Nagar, Nagpur, 440013 residing in Kuwait at present, here-

by declare that henceforth my name will be read as - Given name: Mohd Rameez, Surname: Pasha. (C #2806) -30-11-2022

I, Eman Irfan D/o Arfan Ali resident of Adalat Garh District Sialkot, Pakistan, have changed my name to Eman Arfan for all purposes as per my ID card number 34603-3844088-2. (C#2804)

I Naima, holder of passport no T8767215 do hereby change my name to Naima (as Given name) Ahmed (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Naima Ahmed and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. - 29-11-2022

I, Faimida, holder of Passport No. M0492156 do

hereby change my name to Faimida Hakimuddin (as Given name) Gadiwala (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Faimida Hakimuddin Gadiwala and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2809) - 01-12-2022.

I, Ajab, holder of Passport No. V6129352, do hereby change my name to Ajab (as Given name) Gadiwala (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Ajab Gadiwala and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2809) - 01-12-2022.

## Sports

# Mavericks overpower NBA champs Warriors 116-113

## Doncic delivers a 41-point triple-double

LOS ANGELES: Luka Doncic delivered a 41-point triple-double to power the Dallas Mavericks to a 116-113 victory over NBA champions Golden State on Tuesday in a rematch of last season's Western Conference finals. Dallas' Slovenian star added 12 rebounds and 12 assists in the victory - his 51st career triple-double and his fifth this season. "It's getting boring," joked Mavericks coach Jason Kidd. "I mean, let's see something different. Maybe do it with his left hand." The Mavs, who fell to the Warriors in five games in last season's conference finals, needed every bit of the "Luka Magic."

Although they jumped to a quick 23-6 lead, the Warriors had cut the deficit to one point at halftime thanks in large part to the efforts of their bench, who outscored the Mavs reserves 43-29. Doncic scored 13 points in the third quarter, but the Mavs still couldn't shake the Warriors, the lead changing hands six times in the action-packed fourth that ended with the Mavs snapping a four-game losing streak. Stephen Curry scored 32 points for Golden State, including a three-pointer over Maxi Kleber for a 110-108 lead with 2:09 to play.

But Doncic fed Tim Hardaway for a three-pointer and blocked a Curry attempt before teammate Josh Green banked in a shot and the Mavericks took the lead for good. With 10.1 seconds remaining and the Warriors down by two points Curry was whistled for traveling. Dorian Finney-Smith then sank a free throw for Dallas before Golden State sharp-shooter Klay Thompson missed a three-pointer that could have tied it with 2.6 seconds remaining.

"I was scared, I'm not going to lie," Doncic said. "It's Klay. He don't miss many open shots. I was happy." Hardaway scored 22 points for the

Mavericks and Spencer Dinwiddie added 14 before he was ejected for a flagrant foul after an elbow to the face of Jordan Poole early in the fourth. It was a morale-boosting performance for Hardaway, whose struggles this season included a six-point effort in a loss to Milwaukee on Sunday.

### Randle leads Knicks

New York's Julius Randle celebrated his 28th birthday with a season-high 36 points as the Knicks trounced the Pistons 140-110 in Detroit. "I'm getting old," Randle quipped in a post-game interview with MSG Network after a standout performance that included seven rebounds, five assists and a steal. "I've got to cherish these games." Quentin Grimes, Jalen Brunson and RJ Barrett scored 16 points apiece for the Knicks and Immanuel Quickley added 15 off the bench.

The Knicks had lost four of their previous five contests, but stretched their winning streak against Detroit to 11 games. The Pistons, who haven't beaten the Knicks since January 2020, were led by 19 points from Isaiah Stewart, who was back in action after missing seven games with a sprained toe. Detroit's Bojan Bogdanovic scored 13 in his return from injury, but two regular Pistons starters, Cade Cunningham and Jaden Ivey, were sidelined.

The Pistons put together a 20-9 run to take a 45-44 lead with 8:09 left in the second quarter. The Knicks responded with a 24-8 run to take a 70-56 lead at halftime. They out-scored the Pistons 38-21 in the third, which Randle opened with three baskets - one of them a dunk that Stewart took exception to, giving Randle a shove to earn a technical foul. The Knicks led 108-77 going into the fourth



MILWAUKEE: Luka Doncic #77 of the Dallas Mavericks is fouled by Jrue Holiday #21 of the Milwaukee Bucks during the second half of a game at Fiserv Forum on November 27, 2022. — AFP

quarter, which Randle and the rest of the Knicks starters watched from the bench.

In Portland, the Los Angeles Clippers capped the night with a 118-112 come-from-behind victory over the Trail Blazers. Norman Powell led the Clippers with 32 points off the bench. Reggie Jackson added 24, playing on after taking a hard fall on his back

that left him needing help to get to the bench. Anfernee Simons led the Blazers with 37 points and Jerami Grant added 32 before fouling out in the fourth quarter, when Portland, with star Damian Lillard still sidelined by a calf strain, were unable to halt the Clippers' rally from an 18-point third-quarter deficit. — AFP

## Kuwait 20th Fast Chess Championship kicks off

KUWAIT: The 20th edition of the Fast Chess Championship (organized by the Kuwait Chess Association) will kick off on Friday. This is aimed at encouraging people who are passionate about the sport and to develop their skills. The championship is split into nine rounds and will last for one day. On this occasion, sponsor of the competition, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah assured his keenness to hold the championship for its importance in developing personalities and encouraging mental abilities towards creativity.

"The responsibility of preparing generations that appreciate mental sports is for everyone, as the youth championship will be sponsored next year to encourage young talents," he said - expressing his passion for the sport. "We hope for all younger generations to benefit from the sport's ability to activate the mind, expand awareness, gaining planning and organization skills and developing the ability to handle comfortably situations under pressure," he said. "The competition encourages planning and strategy in decision making, as it necessitates focusing on memory and faster reactions to achieve victory, which is the least that I can present to Kuwait and its youth," he added.

For his part, international referee Khalaf Al-Azmi, head of the arbitration committee at the Kuwaiti Club for Mental Games, expressed his happiness at the launch of the 20th Kuwait Fast Chess Championship under the sponsorship of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, stressing that chess is one of the mental games that receives international and local attention.



Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah



Khalaf Al-Azmi

## Lebanon crisis means 'no football this year' for World Cup fans

BEIRUT: Football fans looking for a respite from Lebanon's crushing economic crisis have found a challenge in simply watching the World Cup after the bankrupt state failed to pay for broadcasting rights. "No football this year," said Jean Bassil angrily, flicking through channels on his old-fashioned television screen.

"They have deprived me of the only fun thing amid all this bad news," the 58-year-old told AFP at his small phone accessories shop in Jounieh, north of the capital Beirut. Lebanon has been gripped by an economic crisis that the World Bank dubbed one of the worst in modern history. Since late 2019, the local currency has lost more than 95 percent of its market value, and poverty rates have climbed to cover most of the population.

Right until the start of the World Cup on November 20, Lebanese had hoped the matches would be broadcast free on public network Tele Liban, as was the case during the 2018 tournament. But the caretaker cabinet has never approved the \$5

## Brazil's World Cup bid built on solid foundations

DOHA: Brazil might be fretting about the state of Neymar's ankle, but if a successful World Cup campaign is built on a solid defense then the foundations are there for Tite's side to win the title in Qatar. Two games into Brazil's bid to win a record sixth World Cup, the Selecao have not conceded a goal and have not even given away a shot on target in victories over Serbia and Switzerland that saw them clinch qualification for the last 16 with a group game to spare.

It is early days, and Brazil always tend to start strongly at the tournament - they are now unbeaten in a record 17 matches in the World Cup group stage - but the signs for Tite are good and there is no need to be overly reliant on Neymar. A team with Liverpool's Alisson Becker in goal, Thiago Silva and

is not here (in Qatar), he is with us." The 31-year-old defender said he needed to take a leading role when news of the former Liverpool striker's injury was confirmed. "I couldn't believe it when I heard about his injury. I knew there would be a lot more pressure, but we are a team," he said.

"Yes, Sadio is a star - he is a symbol of the Senegalese football team - but there are 11 players on a football field. "This is their time to shine". Manager Aliou Cisse said during the week that Mane was "here with us" and regularly contacted several members of the squad. Normally cool and calm, manager Cisse showed rare emotion after Koulibaly's winner, screaming with delight on the touchline. "Yes, it was something that was very important for us. It was a goal that sealed our spot in the Round of 16.

"It was exhilarating. Football is an emotional game... football is a beautiful game." Like Koulibaly, Cisse dedicated the win to Senegalese midfielder Papa Bouba Diop, who died two years aged just 42, but added "we could also dedicate this victory to lots of other people". Diop scored the only goal as they stunned then world champions France 1-0 at the 2002 World Cup on their way to a quarter-final appearance, which remains the furthest an African team has progressed at a World Cup. —AFP

million expense. This has left many football fans with little choice but to watch the tournament in cafes, or via bootleg streaming services on their phones - though many complain Lebanon's sluggish internet has made this difficult.

### 'All we can afford'

"After these three years, we Lebanese feel we need this fun," said Samer Idriss, an 18-year-old student, at a cafe-restaurant in Dekwaneh, east of Beirut. The flags of teams such as Brazil, Argentina and Germany dot the streets of towns and cities across Lebanon. But amid the country's overall gloomy outlook, even the usual football fever seems somewhat toned down. "We try to have fun... as much as our economic situation allows," said Idriss, wearing a Brazil jersey and brandishing the South American country's flag.

Lebanon's economic meltdown came in tandem with the coronavirus pandemic and a devastating explosion at the Beirut port in 2020 that killed more than 200 people and ravaged swathes of the capital. The struggling state is now unable to deliver more than an hour or two of mains electricity a day, and the cost of a full tank of petrol now far exceeds the minimum monthly wage.

Idriss said he paid 250,000 Lebanese pounds (around six dollars) to watch a recent World Cup game, but some venues may ask for up to double that amount. Others crowd pavements around informal

streetside cafes whose generator-powered televisions light up roads plunged into darkness. "We're watching at a cafe... It's all we can afford," said Zein Nasreddine, who works for a security company, at a venue in Beirut's southern suburbs. —AFP



ES SABTIYEH: Labanese women smoke nargileh (water pipe) and watch a streaming broadcast of the FIFA World Cup 2022 group G soccer match between Brazil and Switzerland, at a cafe-restaurant in the area of Sabtiyeh, north of Beirut. —AFP

streetside cafes whose generator-powered televisions light up roads plunged into darkness. "We're watching at a cafe... It's all we can afford," said Zein Nasreddine, who works for a security company, at a venue in Beirut's southern suburbs. —AFP

Richardson up front."

### Perfect understanding

Having a strong defence is key - the six goals France let in four years ago was the most conceded by a World Cup winner since Italy in 1982. Spain let in just two goals in seven games during their victorious campaign in 2010, just like Italy in 2006 and France in 1998. Casemiro is so central to maintaining balance in a Brazil team overloaded with outstanding attackers - even without Neymar - that Liverpool star Fabinho is not a regular in Tite's line-up.

Neymar himself took to Twitter after the Switzerland game to hail Casemiro as having been "the best midfielder in the world for a long time". "I don't usually comment on other peoples' opinions," said Tite. "But this time I will allow myself to say that I agree with Neymar." Behind him the pairing of Thiago Silva, still going strong at 38, and Marquinhos may be even more important. The duo were teammates at PSG for seven years before Silva left for Chelsea in 2020, but Marquinhos was hardly used at the 2018 World Cup when Joao Miranda was preferred to him. —AFP

## Senegal stars 'shone' in Mane's absence

DOHA: Senegal captain Kalidou Koulibaly said on Tuesday he never gave up hope of reaching the World Cup knockouts when star striker Sadio Mane was ruled out, even if most of the world doubted them. Koulibaly's second-half goal was the difference as Senegal beat Ecuador 2-1 to book a spot in the last 16 for only the second time in their history.

The Chelsea defender was named man-of-the-match and dedicated the win to Mane, who was forced out of the tournament with a knee injury picked up with club side Bayern Munich. "When it came to his injury, I think two thirds of the world probably doubted we would be able to qualify," Koulibaly told the post-match press conference. "The only ones who thought we could still qualify were the African people and the Senegalese people."

Koulibaly, whose goal was his first in 67 appearances for Senegal, revealed his side had been inspired from a pre-game message from Mane. "He sent us a message before the game. Even though he



DOHA: Senegal's defender #03 Kalidou Koulibaly (right) celebrates scoring his team's second goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A football match between Ecuador and Senegal on November 29, 2022. —AFP



# England sink Wales to set up Senegal clash

## Rashford shines; England power into last 16

DOHA: England booked a World Cup last 16 clash against Senegal as Marcus Rashford and Phil Foden inspired a 3-0 win against Wales that sent their neighbors crashing out of the tournament on Tuesday. Gareth Southgate's side sealed first place in Group B thanks to key contributions from Rashford and Foden after they were restored to the team by the England boss. Foden showed why there has been such a clamour for him to start as he won the free-kick that Rashford converted to break the deadlock early in the second half at the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium in Doha.

Foden doubled England's lead just seconds later to effectively ended the one-sided 'Battle of Britain' and Rashford struck again to ensure Wales' first World Cup since 1958 ended in disappointment. With Foden and Rashford providing the cutting edge so lacking in their previous match-a four goal-less draw against the United States-England won for just the second time in their last nine games.

A spluttering first half showed the Three Lions still have room for improvement as they chase a first major trophy since the 1966 World Cup. But the ruthless way they demolished Wales after the break provided encouragement ahead of Sunday's showdown with Group A runners-up Senegal. "I thought we had complete control in the first half but didn't create enough clear chances. We just felt that by swapping the wingers' positions we could get the option of them coming in off the line. Phil did that really well for the free-kick," Southgate said.

"You need goals from all areas. Of course it's a problem for opposition teams if the threat is coming from other areas." While England fans regard Germany and Scotland as their main rivals, Wales have never hidden how much they enjoy getting one over on their hated neighbors. The Wales squad were famously filmed celebrating England's embarrassing Euro 2016 exit against Iceland, while Welsh striker Kieffer Moore recently said he would love to knock the English out of the World Cup.

With those slights in mind, condemning Wales to elimination was a welcome bonus for England. But more importantly they eased the angst that had



DOHA: England's forward #24 Callum Wilson and Wales' defender #06 Joe Rodon fight for the ball during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group B football match between Wales and England on November 29, 2022. — AFP

mounted since they were booed off after the lethargic United States stalemate that followed their 6-2 rout of Iran in the group opener. Wales manager Rob Page said: "We've got to put things in perspective. We haven't got the players that England have. It's an amazing achievement to be here.

Rashford, one of four changes by Southgate, had a golden opportunity to give England an early lead when he surged onto Harry Kane's pass, but he took

too long to shoot and Danny Ward raced off his line to save. Unable to lay a glove on England, Wales barely made it out of their own half as Southgate's men monopolized possession for long spells without producing the breakthrough. Criticized for his performance in the defeat against Iran, Wales captain Gareth Bale substituted at half-time with a hamstring problem.

Within six minutes of the restart, Bale's absence

was rendered irrelevant by England's quick-fire barrage. Southgate had said he was concerned about Foden feeling under pressure to deliver after the calls for him to be selected, but he didn't need to worry after the precocious Manchester City playmaker. Foden was the catalyst for England's opener as he drove forward to win a 50th minute free-kick that Rashford brilliantly curled into the far corner of Ward's goal from 25 yards. — AFP

## Discontent as Iran lose to US

TEHRAN: Iranians had been hoping for a repeat of their 1998 World Cup victory over the United States but their 1-0 defeat in Qatar on Tuesday plunged Tehran into disappointed silence as they exited the tournament. There was no replay of the street celebrations last Friday, when people danced after Iran beat Wales. In a cultural centre in the north of the capital, a dozen families had gathered at the start of the evening to watch the game in Qatar on a big screen.

"Come on, come on," parents and children cried, waving Iranian flags. A US goal in the 38th minute however soon put a damper on hopes of a repeat of Iran's 1998 win. The match had been billed as the "Mother of all football matches" in the runup, after decades of mutual enmity between the geopolitical foes. But watching the game, Asghar Mohammadi, a 50-year-old shopkeeper, said he was surprised by the friendly atmosphere on the pitch.

"Many said this game would be contaminated by politics, but we only saw friendly behavior between the players on the pitch. Every time a player fell, the opponent helped him up," he said. "Our players fought with all their might, especially in the second half," he added. While it was not the World Cup final, the match still made headlines because of its symbolic and political significance to two countries which have not had diplomatic relations in more than 40 years. "Politicians sometimes use football as a political tool, but in my opinion sport should not be politicized," said Amir Moradian, a 45-year-old topographer.

"I wanted Iran to win the match. I was very sad about the result. This loss makes people sad, it's natural, but we mustn't lose hope, and think about the next tournaments," he said. Another spectator criticized the tactics of the national team. "In my opinion, our players were looking for a draw, it was a bad tactic, they should have played to win, they were capable of it. We should have won against America. It was a shame." If Iran had drawn they would have advanced to the last 16 for the first time in their history. — AFP



TEHRAN: An Iranian fan reacts after watching the Iran National team lose the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group B football match between the United States and Iran on November 29, 2022. — AFP

## Iran's loss triggers joy and despair

NICOSIA: For Iranians, their football team's World Cup loss against the United States was cause for either sadness or exuberant joy, depending on where they stand on a two-month-old protest movement. Caught between the clerical regime and calls to show solidarity with protesters, the national team pressed near-recklessly in the second half on Tuesday night but were unable to cancel out a 38th minute opener by the US, resulting in an early exit.

That prompted the extraordinary spectacle of Iranians cheering a defeat inflicted by the Islamic republic's arch-enemy often labeled the "Great Satan". "Who would've ever thought I'd jump three meters and celebrate America's goal!" tweeted Iranian gaming journalist Saeed Zafarany. Inside Iran, celebrations were especially marked in western Kurdistan province, the cradle of a movement sparked by the death of young Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in morality police custody after her arrest for allegedly infringing the nation's strict dress code for women.

A video shared online by Kurdish activist Kaveh Ghoreishi showed a Sanandaj city neighbourhood at night with sounds of cheering and horns blaring after the United States scored. That goal also prompted joy in Amini's hometown of Saqez, according to the London-based news website Iran Wire, which published images showing fireworks and sounds of people cheering.

Protesters also set off fireworks in Mahabad, Kurdistan, following Iran's loss, according to videos shared online, while Norway-based Hengaw human



DOHA: Iran's midfielder #16 Mehdi Torabi (left) fights for the ball with USA's defender #05 Antonee Robinson during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group B football match between Iran and USA on November 29, 2022. — AFP

rights group also reported celebrations there and in the city of Marivan. The scenes of joy were not confined to Kurdistan province, reflecting the nationwide nature of the protest movement. Videos on social media showed citizens celebrating in the capital Tehran and Ardabil, Mashhad, Kerman and Zahedan-many with people dancing and cheering in the streets amid long traffic jams.

### Contrasting scenes

It was a very different story in a hall in Tehran, where hundreds gathered to unreservedly cheer on their team-including women, in a country where

they often have difficulty accessing stadiums. "I'm so sad that Iran couldn't defeat the USA but anyway we are proud of our national team and its players," said Ali, a retiree. "They did their best and we are not angry with them."

In Qatar itself, supporters of the US and Iran mingled cordially before the crunch game. Crowds with the Stars and Stripes and the red, green and white colors of Iran's flag talked largely freely as they entered Al Thumama Stadium. Inside the ground, female Iranian fans sat-and often stood-proudly cheering their team without headscarves, some with the national flag daubed on their faces. — AFP

### Today's matches on TV

#### Today's matches on TV FIFA World Cup 2022

Canada v Morocco	18:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
beIN 4K HDR	
Croatia v Belgium	18:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	
Japan v Spain	22:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
Costa Rica v Germany	22:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	

## Fireworks! Iran Kurds celebrate US' victory

PARIS: Protesters in Iranian Kurdistan let off fireworks and celebrated after Iran lost to arch foe the United States in the World Cup on Tuesday, according to social media videos. The Islamic republic has deployed state security forces against what it labels "riots" that broke out after 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini died on September 16, three days after her arrest for allegedly breaching Iran's dress code for women.

Her hometown of Saqez, as well as other cities in the western province of Kurdistan, have been a flashpoint for protests against the clerical rule. "Saqez citizens have started to celebrate and use fireworks after America's first goal against Iran's football team," said the London-based Iran Wire website on Twitter.

It shared a video showing fireworks with sounds of cheering in the background. AFP could not immediately verify the content. Another video by Kurdish activist Kaveh Ghoreishi showed a neighbourhood at night in Sanandaj city with sounds of cheering and horns blaring after the United States scored what was the only goal of the match. Fireworks were also used in Mahabad, another city in Kurdistan, following Iran's loss, according to videos shared online. The Norway-based Hengaw human rights group said Iranian motorists celebrated the US victory by honking their horns in Mahabad. It said fireworks also lit up the sky in Marivan, another city in Kurdistan province where security forces have waged a deadly crackdown on the protests. Fireworks and cheering were also heard in Paveh and Sarpol-e Zahab, in Kermanshah province, it added. — AFP

## Tunisia claim a famous win over WCup holders France

### Tunisia out despite shock win over France

DOHA: French-born Wahbi Khazri scored the only goal of the game as Tunisia claimed a famous 1-0 win over holders France at the World Cup on Wednesday, but it was not enough for them to reach the last 16. France coach Didier Deschamps, whose team were already through to the knockouts, made nine changes but they were a shadow of their usual selves and Khazri punished them in the 58th minute at Education City Stadium. Tunisia then had to hold on for the victory as an Antoine Griezmann goal in stoppage time was disallowed following a VAR review.

Khazri, who grew up in Corsica and plays in Ligue 1 for Montpellier, was one of six players in the Tunisian line-up who were born on French soil and he was capped by France at Under-21 level. There is a large Tunisian community in France who will savour the result, the country's first win against European opposition at a World Cup and just their third ever in 18 matches at the tournament.

However, they needed Australia to drop points in the day's other Group D game to stand a chance of reaching the last 16 for the first time. The Socceroos' 1-0 win over Denmark means it is they

who go through with France. The world champions and Australia finished level on six points, but France top the section on goal difference and will await the Group C runners-up in the last-16 on Sunday.

Les Bleus had been the first team to secure a place in the next round after winning their opening two games in Qatar so it was no surprise that Deschamps opted to make changes. Kylian Mbappe was one of those to drop out, with Eintracht Frankfurt's Randal Kolo Muani getting his first international start up front. There was also a start at right-back for Axel Disasi, the first outfield player to make his France debut in a World Cup match since 1966, while Real Madrid midfielder Eduardo Camavinga started at left-back.

#### Griezmann denied equalizer

France were unrecognizable as Deschamps repeated what he had done four years ago, when he made sweeping changes for the final group game against Denmark. The result then was a soporific 0-0 draw which did not ultimately stop France from winning the title.

This time France's second string performed as if

they had never played together before and Tunisia—with a partisan crowd behind them—sensed their chance as they looked to get beyond the group stage at a World Cup for the first time. The crowd erupted when Tunisia put the ball in the net just eight minutes in. Nader Ghandri diverted a Khazri free-kick past Steve Mandanda, but he was just off-side. Starting at this World Cup for the first time, captain Khazri also stung the palms of Mandanda with a volley in the 35th minute, while a shot that Kingsley Coman skewed well wide was as close as France came.

They were disoriented, and it was no surprise when Tunisia took the lead. France appealed in vain for a foul as Youssouf Fofana was dispossessed by Ellyes Skhiri, and Khazri ran through before slotting a shot past Mandanda. Deschamps then sent on Mbappe as well as Griezmann and Ousmane Dembele in an attempt to avoid France's first World Cup group-stage defeat since their disastrous 2010 campaign. Griezmann thought he had equalised deep into injury time when he volleyed home inside the box, but the referee disallowed the goal for off-side after a lengthy VAR review. — AFP



France's midfielder #08 Aurelien Tchouameni, Tunisia's midfielder #17 Ellyes Skhiri and Tunisia's forward #25 Anis Ben Slimane eye the ball during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match on November 30, 2022. — AFP photos



Tunisia supporters cheer during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between Tunisia and France at the Education City Stadium in Al-Rayyan.



A fan of France waits on the stands during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between Tunisia and France on November 30, 2022.



Australia supporters check their mobile phones during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between Australia and Denmark on November 30, 2022.



DOHA: Tunisia's forward Wahbi Khazri celebrates with teammates after scoring his team's first goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between Tunisia and France at the Education City Stadium in Al-Rayyan on Nov 30, 2022. — AFP

## Australia book WCup last 16; Denmark out

DOHA: Australia reached the last 16 of the World Cup for only the second time in their history with a 1-0 win over a disappointing Denmark on Wednesday. Winger Mathew Leckie scored the winner on the hour with a smart run and finish to end Denmark's Qatar hopes at the group stage. Australia, who made the knockout rounds in 2006 when they had Harry Kewell, Tim Cahill and Mark Viduka in their ranks, have now won back-to-back World Cup games for the first time.

They progressed to the knockouts in second place behind holders France in Group D and will play the winners of Group C. Poland are top of that group going into the final round of matches. This Socceroos do not have the stars of yesteryear but they make up for it with spirit and hard work, and showed flashes of quality in a strangely subdued encounter.

Australia's substitutes all had their arms around each others' shoulders for the pre-match national anthem, a sign of the togetherness that had taken them to the brink of the knockouts. European semi-finalists Denmark, who had to win to stand any chance of going through, were on top in the early stages. Australian defender Milos Degenek, the only change from the team that beat Tunisia 1-0, denied an almost certain Denmark goal with a crucial block.

Denmark's Mathias Jensen, the Brentford midfielder, shot powerfully at goal and was denied by goalkeeper Mathew Leckie in the 11th minute when he probably should have passed. Socceroos captain Ryan was in the thick of it again soon after, frantically hacking the ball away with his feet after an incisive run

down the left by the dangerous Joakim Maehle. Riley McGree stung the palms of Denmark goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel on a rare Australian counterattack.

Australia were just about on top when a sterile first-half meandered to a goalless conclusion. Australia and Denmark both made one change at the break and spectators at Al Janoub Stadium would have been hoping it might trigger a bit more action in the second half. Jackson Irvine scooped over the bar shortly after the restart for Australia and then the shock news filtered through that Tunisia had taken a surprise 1-0 lead over a weakened France team.

Denmark coach Kasper Hjulmand had already decided to make a double substitution, bringing on forward Kasper Dolberg and attacking midfielder Mikkel Damsgaard. One minute after that, on the hour, Australia took the lead. Leckie found himself one on one with an exposed Maehle on the left and turned him inside out before ping-pong the ball into the bottom corner past Schmeichel. Cue pandemonium from the Australian bench. Denmark thought they had won a penalty in the 70th minute but there was an off-side and their World Cup hopes slipped away without much of a fight. — AFP



DOHA: Denmark's goalkeeper #01 Kasper Schmeichel lets in a goal by Australia's forward #07 Mathew Leckie during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between Australia and Denmark on November 30, 2022. — AFP



Denmark's defender #06 Andreas Christensen fights for the ball with Australia's forward #07 Mathew Leckie (left) during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match.



Denmark's goalkeeper #01 Kasper Schmeichel kicks the ball during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between Australia and Denmark.