

**2** Crown Prince receives chief of apparatus for illegal residents



**10** Ahli Capital rebrands as ABK Capital



**11** Egypt dusts off pyramids for fashion, pop and art shows



**16** Croatia reach quarters with shootout victory over Japan



## UAE leader congratulates Qatar Amir on successful World Cup

Sheikh Tamim welcomes Sheikh Mohamed on his first visit since blockade

### Kuwait Times remembers founder Yousuf Al-Alyan



KUWAIT: Monday marked the 15th anniversary of the death of Yousuf Al-Alyan, founder of Kuwait Times, the first English daily in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf. Alyan was one of the most influential people in Kuwaiti journalism and one of the founders of Kuwait Journalists Association. On December 5, 2007, Yousuf Al-Alyan passed away at the age of 75. (See Page 3)

DOHA: The United Arab Emirates' president on Monday began his first visit to Qatar since the end of a nearly four-year regional blockade that put ties in the deep freeze. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan was greeted by Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani at the airport, officials said, in a trip that coincides with the ongoing football World Cup in Qatar.

It is the first state visit since January 2021, when a Saudi-led boycott of the gas-rich peninsula that started in June 2017 finally came to an end. The visit, on the invitation of Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim, "builds on the existing brotherly relations between the two nations and their people", the UAE's official WAM news agency said.

Photos showed Sheikh Mohamed smiling with Sheikh Tamim and even riding in a white Bentley Bentayga SUV with Qatar's Amir driving. "I congratulate my brother Tamim bin Hamad and the people of Qatar on hosting the FIFA World Cup and wish them continued success," Sheikh Mohamed said in an online statement.

Sheikh Tamim similarly referred to Sheikh Mohamed as "my brother". His "visit allowed us to discuss ways to strengthen brotherly relations between our two countries, and to exchange views on regional and international issues of common concern, foremost of which are ways to support

Continued on Page 6



DOHA: Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani welcomes UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on Dec 5, 2022. — AFP

### News in brief

#### KNet ready for Apple Pay

KUWAIT: Shared Electronic Banking Company (KNet) has completed preparing devices with near field communication (NFC) technology to receive payments using Apple Pay, which banks are expected to start activating for their customers from Tuesday. Customers who have accounts in Kuwaiti banks that have activated this service can use Apple Pay to pay through any of the estimated 90,000 KNet point of sale devices around Kuwait.

#### MoI ends Egypt labor e-link

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah gave orders on Monday to suspend an electronic link with Egypt's labor systems, saying there is no longer a need to maintain an electronic link with any foreign party. A memo of understanding between Egypt and Kuwait was signed in Dec 2018 to link manpower systems to organize the transfer of workers.

#### Earthquake shakes Kuwait

KUWAIT: A magnitude-3 earthquake rocked Kuwait's southwestern Manaqeesh area on Monday, according to the Kuwait National Seismic Network (KNSN). The tremor took place at 10.51 am local time at a depth of eight kilometers, the network said. Head of KNSN Dr Abdullah Al-Enezi said the quake was very weak and few people felt it. He said Manaqeesh is prone to earthquakes at depths of 3 to 5 km.

### New rules for delivery companies; permits for new firms suspended

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah issued a decision to amend some rules regarding transportation and delivery activities on Monday. "The issuance of new licenses for motorized vehicles to companies and institutions that

practice or desire to engage in providing logistics services, deliver consumer orders or transport goods shall be suspended. It is permissible for companies and establishments that currently carry out these activities to replace vehicles that are out of service with new ones," the decision stated.

Establishments that already have approval from the traffic department before the issuance of this decision can practice this activity and register new motorized vehicles in accordance with the following conditions and controls: The establishment must have at least one branch in a location that does not obstruct traffic. The company or establishment must

own at least one of the following vehicles: One private car and five light transport vehicles (under two tons) or six motorbikes and one private car or one light transport vehicle. In all cases, the total number of the aforementioned vehicles must not exceed 90 in order to be approved.

The vehicles must not be more than three years old when registering and should go out of service seven years after their year of manufacture. Motorcycles must not be more than a year old when registering and should go out of service four years after their production date.

Continued on Page 6

### Zero-COVID policy eases as Chinese cities relax testing

BEIJING: Businesses reopened and testing requirements were relaxed in Beijing and other Chinese cities on Monday as the country tentatively eases out of a strict zero-COVID policy that sparked nationwide protests. Local authorities across China have begun a slow rollback of the restrictions that have governed daily life for years, encouraged by the central government's orders for a new approach to fighting the coronavirus.

In the capital Beijing, where many businesses have fully reopened, commuters from Monday were no longer required to show a negative virus test taken within 48 hours to use public transport. Financial hub Shanghai - which underwent a brutal two-month lockdown this year - extended this measure to most public places except medical institutions, schools, restaurants and bars, nursing homes and indoor entertainment venues, starting from Tuesday.

The city had already exempted parks and tourist attractions from the testing requirement a day earlier and what the latest rule change encompassed was unclear. Neighboring Hangzhou ended regular mass testing for its 10 million people, except those living in or visiting nursing homes, schools and kindergartens.

Continued on Page 6

### Australia starts building massive radio telescope

SYDNEY: Australia on Monday started building a vast network of antennas in the Outback, its section of what planners say will eventually become one of the most powerful radio telescopes in the world. When complete, the antennas in Australia and a network of dishes in South Africa will form the Square Kilometer Array (SKA), a massive instru-

ment that will aim to untangle mysteries about the creation of stars, galaxies and extraterrestrial life.

The idea for the telescope was first conceived in the early 1990s, but the project was plagued by delays, funding issues and diplomatic jockeying. The SKA Observatory's Director-General Philip Diamond described the beginning of its construction as "momentous". The telescope "will be one of humanity's biggest-ever scientific endeavors", he said.

Its name is based on the planners' original aim, a telescope that could observe a one-square-kilometer surface, but the current South African and Australian sections will have a combined collecting area of just under half that, according to the observatory. Both countries have huge expanses of

Continued on Page 6

### Covid-19 current confirmed symptomatic cases in mainland China



This handout photo shows an artist's impression of low-frequency stations forming the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) radio telescope, to be built in Western Australia. — AFP





## Local

## News in brief

## Customs to hire 500

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Customs announced it is about to issue decisions regarding the hiring of customs academy graduates next week, and they are expected to start their duties next Sunday. "The number of graduates that are going to be hired are 500 customs inspectors who are going to be distributed across different departments based on the needs of the customs management for their services," Kuwait Customs announced. "The reason for the delay in issuing hiring decisions is to ensure equality between all graduates and that hiring decisions are issued on the same day so that equality regarding seniority is achieved," customs explained.

## 'Shamel 8' exercise

**KUWAIT:** Fire Force's Chief Lt General Khalid Al-Mikrad chaired a meeting for the "Shamel 8" exercise at Fire Force headquarters in the presence of deputy chief for Fire Force Maj General Jamal Nasser and representatives from 34 government entities. The meeting dealt with the joint command scenario for managing crisis. Lt General Al-Mikrad welcomed participants. Maj General Jamal Nasser said Shamel 8 is an extension of previous exercises - which is aimed at improving the level of cooperation and coordination, exchange information and knowing the abilities of each entity.

## English graduates protest

**KUWAIT:** A group of Kuwaiti graduates who majored in English Literature held a sit in on Monday in front of the Education Ministry's building - demanding acceptance as English teachers in schools. "We are graduates from the Literature College in Kuwait University. While private university graduates have been interviewed and given an entry examination, we have been refused entry based on 'not passing the interview. Therefore, we request the education minister to interfere to end our suffering," some of the protesters said. The protestors held posters - reminding the officials about Kuwaitization plans in the workforce as well as encouraging local employees to work in the education sector.

## Medical specializations

**KUWAIT:** Trainees registered at Kuwait Board for Medical Specializations are in line for more financial bonuses for trainers, the country's Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi said on Monday, pointing out that the matter was thoroughly discussed at a board meeting. Such a measure is a token of appreciation for their efforts, which are instrumental in ratcheting up the quality of healthcare services Kuwait has to offer, added the minister.

## An engaging workshop

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's cultural body sponsored a workshop on Monday allowing a team of autistic children to put its senses into use through a vast array of activities, hailing the endeavor as an effort to assimilate them into society. Reaching out to disabled and autistic children is tantamount to a "humanitarian obligation," the team's leader Abeer Al-Safran told KUNA, emphasizing that children with disabilities are equally entitled to a life of prosperity and development. On the objectives behind assembling the team, she said it aims to provide autistic and disabled children the opportunity to hone their skills through academic and artistic activities, subsequently generating the media's attention on the importance of this endeavor. —From KUNA and Agencies

## Kuwaiti-French Science Exhibition kicks off

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti-French Science Exhibition kicked off activities of its 16th edition under the theme of artificial intelligence, organized by MILSET Asia for middle school students, held under the auspices of French Ambassador Claire Le Fleischer and Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for the Public Education Sector Osama Al-Sultan from Dec 5-7 at Ruqaya Intermediate School for Girls.

"MILSET, through this exhibition, sets an example and demonstrates the amount of scientific culture that requires exchange and openness with others. The exhibition is a great result of this initiative, and is part of the mission of the French Embassy. I hope this innovation will continue this cooperation," Le Fleischer said. "Seeing the students together exchanging their thoughts and opinions on artificial intelligence, which is a constantly evolving subject, is essential for the future. We live together in today's world and they are the ones who build their world for tomorrow, and I congratulate them on this beautiful French-Kuwaiti experience."

Sultan said the Ministry of Education in Kuwait is investing prominently and strongly in artificial intelligence, robotics and integrated science technologies through many projects that work to achieve the New

## Kuwait Crown Prince receives CARIRS CEO

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the CEO of the Central System for the Remedy of Situations of Illegal Residents (CARIRS) Saleh Al-Fadhala at Bayan Palace on Monday. Al-Fadhala expressed his gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Crown Prince for his great confidence in Al-Fadhala's effort to maintain the country's national identity. His Highness the Crown Prince wished Al-Fadhala continued success in serving Kuwait. — KUNA



## Zain holds workshop on digital innovation, entrepreneurship

Company hosts KU students at its Innovation Campus (ZINC)



Students and faculty members with Zain's team.



Zain's Innovation Campus (ZINC) hosted the workshop.

**KUWAIT:** Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, held a special workshop on digital innovation and entrepreneurship success for Kuwait University students. The company welcomed students and faculty members from the College of Life Sciences' Information Science Department at its Innovation Campus (ZINC). This initiative came in line with Zain's continuous joint efforts with the nation's various academic institutions from both the private and public sectors to contribute to developing the local education sector.

The company seeks to share the private sector's

expertise with students and graduates, especially within areas related to digital innovation, entrepreneurship, and tech startups. The Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) welcomed groups of students and faculty members from the College of Life Sciences' Information Science Department for a special workshop, which centered around the essentials of entrepreneurship and Zain's success stories in empowering digital innovation.

The workshop covered a variety of the most essential topics that are crucial to every new startup owner, including establishing startups, building teams, creat-

ing a brand, attracting investors, developing products and services, and much more. The students also took part in exercises to create value propositions and pitch their businesses to attract investments and achieve growth. Zain strongly believes in the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects. The company is committed to printing a positive impact through all its activities, and this has led it to embrace the most influential topics in the community like supporting the youth, entrepreneurship, and innovation, not only in Kuwait, but across the entire region.

## Kuwait aids victims of wars; calls for violence against women to end

**KUWAIT:** It is without a doubt that catastrophes and wars cause extreme woes and pains for people being afflicted with such calamities. To address such damage, it is very important to focus on the psychological impact on individuals who went through difficult experiences and therefore the notion of "psychological aid" is vital for the recovery of victims.

Kuwait, known for its humanitarian role worldwide, had provided those afflicted by misery with psychological aid to ease their sadness and help them through tough times. Social and psychological support is an integral part of the humanitarian aid, affirmed Othman Al-Asfour, head of the Tarahum-a Kuwaiti charitable team, which is part of the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO).

Al-Asfour noted that the IICO had assembled the Tarahum team consisting of scores of psychologists

and specialists to provide psychological aid and emotional support for victims of wars and crises. The team focuses its efforts on the three refugees-hosting nations of Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkiye, he added, saying that the ensemble was supported by 30 volunteers seven months on an annual basis.

Speaking on her experience, psychologist Dr Shereefa Al-Khamees affirmed that refugees were in much need of psychological aid as much as handouts and donations. The psychological landscape of the affected is very delicate and requires thorough psychological treatment and support, she noted. Refugee families, adults and children, require such aid and it is a humanitarian obligation to support them, Dr Al-Khamees affirmed.

On his part, member of the team Ahmad Al-Ruwaieh said that providing moral support and psychological aid was very much need for refugees. He added that volunteers and experts offered proper and well-studied programs and treatment to ease the pain of those who went through unspeakable events such as wars and natural disasters.

## Violence against women

Cases of violence against women are among the

most dangerous phenomena threatening our society. Acting Undersecretary of Kuwait Ministry of Social Affairs and Community Development Meslam Al-Subai said Monday. This came in remarks he gave during his participating as well as his accompanying delegation in the opening ceremony of the Arab Declaration for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women and Girls, held in Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Women play key and distinguished role in development of the societies, as their cases are of the most prominent at the international level, he affirmed. Kuwait is keen in offering all possible care to women that comes to reassure Kuwait's constitution principals, as the protection of women came at the top of Kuwait's priorities, he said. Kuwait is taking all required procedures and regulations that are responsible of guaranteeing the legal and social rights of women and girls in all fields and domains, he added. This venue kicked off earlier today in Abu Dhabi, headed by UAE Minister of Community Development Hessa Bint Essa Buhmaid, and the Secretary General of the Social Affairs Sector in the Arab League ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazaleh, as well as group of representatives of international organizations and relevant regional and national Arab bodies. — KUNA



French Ambassador during the Science Exhibition

experiences with their peers, while spreading the culture of fun learning," he added.

Meer noted that the exhibition, in its 16th edition, is attended by 20 middle-school boys and girls, with 40

male and female students presenting 21 projects, which includes 31 pavilions, in addition to the participation of the French school in four projects, and five projects of the MILSET Asia office.



# Kuwait Times remembers Yousuf Al-Alyan on his death anniversary



Yousuf Al-Alyan



January 1969 file photo shows Interior and Defense Minister HH Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah with Saud Al-Abdelrazzaq, Yousuf Al-Alyan and Baqir Khuraibet.

KUWAIT: Monday marked the 15th anniversary of the death of Yousuf Al-Alyan, founder of Kuwait Times, the first English daily in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf. Alyan was one of the most influential people in Kuwait's journalism and one of the founders of Kuwait Journalists Association. On December 5, 2007, Yousuf Al-Alyan passed away at the age of 75.

On September 24, 1961, Kuwait Times published its first issue, ushering in a modern era of Kuwait journalism. Established just after Kuwait's independence and the start of the country's development renaissance - coupled with a social movement, cultural diversity and the welcoming of Arab and foreign residents - Kuwait Times served as the first newspaper for non-Arabic-speaking residents in Kuwait, bringing them the news of the world and presenting Kuwait's news to the world. It represented the state abroad in front of the international community.

The late Yousuf Saleh Al-Alyan (may Allah bless his soul), was one of the pioneers of journalism in Kuwait and the Arabian Gulf. He served as Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times from its establishment in 1961 until he passed away in 2007. He was born and attended high school in Kuwait, then went to Britain and joined the prestigious University of London, where he obtained his BSc in Economics and Political Science in 1953.



Yousuf Al-Alyan with Jumaa Yaseen, Raouf Shahouri and Khalid Qatma in Lebanon during a ceremony in honor of Karam Melhem.

He was selected as honorary president of Kuwait Journalists Association in appreciation of his role in serving journalism, replacing the late dean Abdulaziz Al-Musaeed. He was one of the founders of KJA in 1964 as well as Editor-in-Chief of Al-Fajr Al-Jadeed. Alyan served as KJA President from 1978 until 1985 and from 1990 until 1992.



HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Yousuf Al-Alyan on board the aircraft during their return from Doha Khaleeji in this file photo.



Yousuf Al-Alyan with Jassem Al-Khorafi

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#### News in brief

##### 'Avoid shooting ranges'

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Army has called on campers, hunters and shepherds not to approach the Al-Adira Range area in northwest Kuwait in order to ensure everyone's safety. Regular shootings with live ammunition are carried out at the aforementioned area throughout the year, the army's Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations said in a statement on Monday.

##### KD 68.50 million tender

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Heavy Engineering Industries & Shipbuilding Co (HEISCO) said on Monday the Central Agency for Public Tenders has approved a tender worth KD 68.50 million (around \$207.5 million) awarded to the company. In a disclosure posted on the Boursa Kuwait's website, the company said the tender is an oil pipeline project for Kuwait Oil Company (KOC). Established in 1974 and listed on the Boursa Kuwait in 1984, HEISCO is active in shipbuilding and repair.

##### Commerce issues violations

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has issued two violations to two shops in Shuwaikh Industrial area. The garages were found repairing and reselling the same old tires. This is in violation of the law and their activities endanger lives.

##### Support for UNRWA

**CAIRO:** The Arab League has emphasized its support for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), pledging to continue such backing until the Palestinians' statehood aspirations come to fruition. The Cairo-based bloc will maintain a close rapport with the UN agency through further developing "joint work," it said in a statement, quoting the bloc's assistant secretary general for Palestinian affairs Saeed Abuali after talks joining the two bodies in the Egyptian capital. He went on to underline the necessity to ramp up financial aid for the cash-strapped UN agency, saying it was imperative to keep the services it provides the Palestinians afloat, particularly at this difficult juncture, added the official. — From KUNA

#### Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** The moon in its waxing gibbous phase, as seen from Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# KU emphasizes importance of Kuwait heritage conference

**KUWAIT:** The College of Social Sciences at Kuwait University emphasized the importance of heritage in highlighting the cultural diversity among societies around the world - stressing the need to preserve Kuwait's national heritage. "The College will organize a conference - Preserving cultural heritage in Kuwait - on December 12, in cooperation with the UNESCO office for the Gulf states and Yemen, and it will last for one day at Kuwait University," Acting Dean of the College, Dr. Maha Al-Sejari said in a press conference on Monday. "The organization of the conference coincides with the celebration of the World Day for

Audiovisual Heritage, an indication of Kuwait's insurance to preserve its national heritage through documented audio recordings, photographs and moving images, in addition to the establishment of many international agreements, local programs, educational curricula, the establishment of museums and the maintenance of historical buildings," Al-Sejari added.

On his part, Professor of Archeology and Anthropology at Kuwait University Dr Hassan Ashkanani said that the conference aims to shed light on the various aspects of cultural heritage and the state of its preservation as well as challenges that heritage preservation might face. "The conference will provide space for experts and workers to explore the opportunities and challenges related to cultural heritage in Kuwait, noting that it will discuss in particular its documentation heritage with a focus on audiovisual heritage as well as tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as well as its role in promoting innovation and creative industries," he explained.

"The conference will shed light on plans, strategies and agreements aimed at preserving the Kuwaiti cultural heritage and studying the risks fac-



**Maha Al-Sejari and Dr Hassan Ashkanani pose for a photo.**

ing different types of heritage," he added. Director of the UNESCO Office for the GCC and Yemen, Saleh Khaled, expressed his hope that this conference will help in strengthening networks and professional partnerships in order to ensure the preservation of the richness and diversity of cultural practices and forms of expression of the past for future generation. — KUNA

## International Day of Disabled Persons

**KUWAIT:** On the International Day of Disabled Persons, which falls on the 3rd of December of every year, the Head of the Committee for the Rights of Disabled Persons at the National Diwan for Human Rights, Dr Yousef Al-Sager stated that within the framework of the world's celebration of this occasion, it is important to draw attention to the most important needs of Disabled Persons in terms of empowerment and integration in the society and helping them to rely on themselves as much as possible.

Dr Al-Sager added that the Committee for the Rights of Disabled Persons mainly aims to spread awareness of integrating Disabled Persons and offer them various skills and knowledge that qualify them for positive and effective participation in society and the work environment by providing them with good opportunities. Also Dr Al-Sager called on all institutions, government and private sectors in Kuwait to provide all opportunities and overcome difficulties in integrating Disabled Persons into the work environ-



**Dr Yousef Al-Sager**

ment and to secure all means to ensure the effectiveness of their positive participation.

Emphasizing the most important thing that Disabled Persons may acquire from these opportunities to integrate into work environments, in particular life and professional skills, such as work skills, decision-making and self-independence

due to its importance in ensuring a decent life, increasing self-confidence for them and enhance their opportunities for social interaction among community members.

In conclusion, the National Diwan for Human Rights, representing the Committee for Disabled Persons, stressed on the need to make more efforts to enable them to enjoy all their human rights in the first place, in order to implement Kuwait's international obligations and of its national legislations in this matter.

## Kuwait International Fair Company to hold Jewelry Exhibition

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait International Fair Company announced on Monday the 18th International Gold and Jewelry Exhibition as well as a construction material exhibition this month. The company's Executive Director for marketing and sales Basama Al-Dihim told KUNA that the exhibitions were important during the current season, saying that a variety of valuable products would be offered during the event.

The Gold and Jewelry Exhibition would be held

on December 14-19 at Hall Four, while the Construction materials exhibition would be held between December 19-24 at halls five and six, she added. Some 220 participants from Kuwait and abroad would be offering their products at the events, indicated Al-Dihim. The Kuwait International Fair Company was established in 1971 in Mishref area. Annually, the company hosts around 45 events including the Kuwaiti international book fair. — KUNA



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South Africa's ANC debates embattled president's future

## In El Salvador, soldiers patrol where gangs once ruled



TEHRAN: A woman walks past a bakery along Enghelab Square in Iran's capital Tehran on December 5, 2022. —AFP

## Activists dismiss Iran move on morality police

### Scrapping the units would be 'probably too little too late'

PARIS: Campaigners backing Iran's protest movement on Monday dismissed a claim that the Islamic republic is disbanding its notorious morality police, insisting there was no change to its restrictive dress rules for women.

There were also calls on social media for a three-day strike, more than two months into the wave of civil unrest sparked by the death of Kurdish-Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, 22, after her arrest by the morality police in Tehran.

Amini was accused of flouting Iran's strict dress code demanding women wear modest clothing and the hijab headscarf, and her death sparked protests that have spiralled into the biggest challenge to the regime since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Iran's Prosecutor General Mohammad Jafar Montazeri, in a surprise move at the weekend, was quoted as saying that the morality police units — known as gasht-e ershad (guidance patrol) — had been closed down.

But activists were sceptical about his comments, which appeared to be an impromptu response to a question at a conference rather than a clearly signposted announcement on the morality police, which is run by the interior ministry.

Moreover, they said, their abolition would mark no change to Iran's headscarf policy — a key ideological

pillar for its clerical leadership — but rather a switch in tactics on enforcing it.

Scrapping the units would be "probably too little too late" for the protesters who now demand outright regime change, Roya Boroumand, co-founder of the US-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center rights group, told AFP.

"Unless they remove all legal restrictions on women's dress and the laws controlling citizens' private lives, this is just a PR move," she said, adding that "nothing prevents other law enforcement" bodies from policing "the discriminatory laws".

#### 'Civil disobedience'

The guidance patrols have been a familiar sight on Tehran's streets since 2006 when they were introduced during the presidency of the ultra-conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. But the clerical leadership had been strictly enforcing the rules, including the headscarf, well before then.

Under the last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, women had been free to dress as they wished with fashions little different from Western countries in secular areas of Tehran. His father Reza Shah had gone a step further in an edict issued in 1936, seeking to ban all Islamic veils and headscarves.

It was anger over the obligatory headscarf rule that

sparked the first protests over the death of Amini, who died from what her family says was a blow to a head sustained in custody. The authorities dispute this.

But the movement, fed also by years of anger over economic grievances and political repression, is now marked by calls for an end to the Islamic republic led by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Reports from Tehran have suggested the feared vans of the guidance patrols had already become much less common or even vanished after the protests broke out.

Images have also shown women smashing decades-long taboos by attending protests or even carrying out daily tasks like going shopping without headscarves.

#### 'Pillar of Islamic republic'

The authorities have meanwhile been concentrating on battling the protests themselves in a crackdown that has left at least 448 people dead, according to Norway-based group Iran Human Rights.

"The alleged suspension of Iran's morality police doesn't mean anything as it had already become irrelevant due to the massive level of women's civil disobedience and defying hijab-related rules," said Omid Memarian, a senior Iran analyst at Democracy for the Arab World Now.

He described the mandatory headscarf as "one of the pillars of the Islamic republic" and said that "abolishing those laws and structures would mean a fundamental change in the Islamic Republic's identity and existence".

Montazeri's declaration and the confusion the comments sparked were seen as a sign of the disquiet within the regime over how to handle the protests which are continuing across the country despite the crackdown.

Within Iran on Monday there appeared to be hesitancy over the meaning of the comments with only reformist dailies putting the issue on their front page and conservative media largely ignoring it.

"The end of the morality police," read a headline in daily Sazandegi. But the Sharq newspaper was more circumspect. "Is this the end of the patrols?" it asked, noting the police public relations had not confirmed it.

"We should not be fooled by deceptive moves the Islamic Republic employs at times of desperation, as they might come back with other restrictive policies and measures," said Memarian.

The hijab is "still compulsory", said Shadi Sadr, co-founder of the London based group Justice for Iran. While the protests started over the death of Amini, he predicted, "Iranians won't rest until the regime is gone." —AFP

## UK's Labour vows to abolish House of Lords

LONDON: Britain's opposition Labour party vowed on Monday to scrap the unelected and "indefensible" House of Lords as part of a constitutional revamp to redistribute economic growth after Brexit.

Labour looks set to take power in the next election, due by January 2025, streaking far ahead of the governing Conservatives in opinion polls after a tumultuous period politically and economically.

Labour leader Keir Starmer promised "the biggest ever transfer of power from (the UK parliament in) Westminster to the British people", arguing that many voters in 2016 opted to quit the European Union because of a sense of lack of democratic control.

The party's blueprint for reform, drafted by former prime minister Gordon Brown, envisions new devolution to the UK's regions and countries including Scotland, where the nationalist government is pressing for a new referendum on independence.

Brown, who led the successful 2014 campaign for

his fellow Scots to stay in the United Kingdom, proposed greater devolution, with the Edinburgh parliament included in international agreements that involve Scottish areas.

Addressing an audience in Leeds, northern England, Starmer said a "failure of economic growth over the past 12 years" under Conservative rule was caused in part by the UK failing as a whole to power growth, relying too much on London and southeast England.

The blueprint is not yet Labour policy. It now goes to a public consultation, with agreed changes set to be incorporated into the party's next election manifesto. Starmer said he hoped to push through the eventual reforms within the first five years of a Labour government, possibly including the redeployment of 50,000 civil service jobs out of London.

Tackling widespread public disgust with perceived malpractice in parliament, the proposals would clamp down on MPs holding second jobs and create a new anti-corruption commissioner. The 40-point plan's centrepiece is to scrap the upper house of parliament in its current guise—which is a mixture of political appointees, hereditary peers and Church of England bishops.

"I think the House of Lords is indefensible. Anybody who looks at the House of Lords would



LONDON: Photograph released by the UK Parliament shows Britain's Opposition Labour Party Leader Keir Starmer speaking at the Despatch box during Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons in London. —AFP

struggle to say that it should be kept," Starmer told BBC television. "So we want to abolish the House of Lords and replace it with an elected chamber that has a really strong mission." Brown proposed a new assembly comprising members drawn from the UK's regions and countries—a "smaller, more representative and democratic" chamber, although details will be left to the consultation. —AFP

## More flee after eruption of Mount Semeru

LUMAJANG, Indonesia: Rescuers evacuated more people Monday from nearby villages after the eruption of Indonesia's Mount Semeru, with officials warning of danger from cooling lava despite less activity from the volcano.

More than 2,400 villagers have now fled their homes and taken shelter in 11 evacuation centres after the highest mountain on the country's main island of Java erupted early morning Sunday.

"The military, police, local disaster and village officials keep evacuating people in Curah Kobokan where the hot ash cloud and cold lava might travel," Abdul Muhari, a spokesman for Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency, told local television.

"So far the total number of evacuees is 2,489." Officials have announced a state of emergency for the next two weeks and authorities have been dis-

tributing free masks to protect against ash in the air while setting up public kitchens for evacuees.

On Monday morning, dozens of evacuees in Lumajang district where Semeru is located ventured back to their ash-covered homes to retrieve important belongings, before returning to shelters, according to an AFP journalist.

Some shepherded livestock while others carried appliances such as TVs and refrigerators as the volcano spewed ash in the background.

Muhari said visual observation of Semeru on Monday morning indicated less intense volcanic activity but he warned of potential danger from lava flows that had cooled after heavy rain.

"What we worry about is economic activities such as sand mining. We want to make sure the route where the hot ash cloud and the cold lava might travel is completely free of activity," he said.

The government's alert status indicating danger from the volcano was raised to its highest level Sunday. It had previously been at its second-highest level since a major eruption last December.

Last year's eruption killed 51 people and damaged more than 5,000 homes while forcing nearly 10,000 people to seek refuge.



LUMAJANG, Indonesia: Members of a search and rescue team check the situation at the Kajar Kuning village in Lumajang on December 5, 2022. —AFP

Many of the victims from that disaster were sand miners working high on the slopes of the volcano.

Indonesia sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" where the meeting of continental plates causes substantial volcanic and seismic activity. The Southeast Asian archipelago nation has nearly 130 active volcanoes. —AFP

## Trump talk of ending constitutional rules draws sharp rebukes

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's suggestion that the United States disregard rules and regulations including "those found in the Constitution" drew scathing rebukes this weekend from politicians of both parties, with a top Democrat calling it "a danger to our democracy." What many saw as a bizarre proposal from a singularly unconventional former president came in his latest social media post hammering away at baseless conspiracy theories about the 2020 election, which he lost to Joe Biden.

Given what he claimed was "massive and widespread fraud and deception" involving technology companies and the Democratic Party, "do you throw the Presidential Election Results of 2020 OUT and declare the RIGHTFUL WINNER, or do you have a NEW ELECTION?"

"A Massive Fraud of this type and magnitude allows for the termination of all rules, regulations, and articles, even those found in the Constitution," he said on his Truth Social platform. Even by Trump's unorthodox standards, the suggestion of ignoring the Constitutional standards that form the foundation of the American political system was stunning.

"Attacking the Constitution and all it stands for is anathema to the soul of our nation and should be universally condemned," said a White House statement, adding, "You cannot only love America when you win." Politicians of both parties took to Twitter to express their agreement. "He's calling for an end to America's constitutional democracy," Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer said. "He's out of control and a danger to our democracy."

Congressman Ted Lieu, a Democrat of California, called Trump's proposal "anti-American and fascist." And Representative Don Beyer, a Virginia Democrat, said Trump had "openly declared himself an enemy of the Constitution, and Republicans must repudiate him." Some did.

Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, one of a few Republicans to vote to impeach Trump for inciting the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol, said that now "not a single conservative can legitimately support him," adding, "This is insane." —AFP



## International

# In El Salvador, soldiers patrol where gangs once ruled

## More than 140 gang members arrested inside the siege in two days

**SOYAPANGO, El Salvador:** Mauricio Gonzalez, an Evangelical pastor in a Salvadoran city overrun with violent street gangs, says life there used to be terrifying. In his La Campanera neighborhood of the city of Soyapango, on the outskirts of San Salvador, gangsters threatened to kill him for preaching to young people.

"The gang would not tolerate it. So I left and did not come back," said Gonzalez, carrying a Bible in his hand. He said that for a decade now, no one from his church has dared venture into La Campanera, which is home mainly to factory workers.

But that changed this weekend as 10,000 soldiers and police, many armed with assault rifles, surrounded the city and started patrolling its streets, going from house to house to arrest suspected gang members.

President Nayib Bukele announced on his Twitter account on Sunday that "more than 140 gang members have been arrested inside the siege" in two days. Here, the gang that runs things is called Barrio 18, "barrio" meaning neighborhood. It is one of the most violent gangs in El Salvador.

"Before, not even God could save us from the gangsters. Today is different, said Gonzalez, who is 52. Indeed, on Sunday, Gonzalez came to La Campanera with about 30 members of his church to preach.

The huge security operation that began Saturday was part of a state of emergency declared by Bukele this spring following a surge in gang violence. The president had announced last month a plan to use troops to surround cities while house-by-house searches are conducted for gang members. Soyapango is the first city subjected to that approach.

### A big change for the better

By Saturday, authorities had reported only 12 arrests in the operation in Soyapango before Bukele reported richer results from the siege. Police also said on Sunday they had arrested a major Barrio 18 figure. They identified him as Guillermo Alexander Pineda, alias "Lazy," and said he had ordered killings and extortions nationwide.

A group of soldiers took up position on the only street leading into La Campanera on Sunday, searching everyone entering or leaving either on foot or in cars. Others patrolled in armored cars rumbling through narrow streets of cement homes in this working-class area.

Residents walked about looking relaxed and shopped at sidewalk stands. Before, there were many fewer such vendors, as merchants could not afford the extortion payments that gangsters demanded.

"Only someone who has not lived here would not realize how different things are now," said Etelevina Rosas, 36, who was selling fruit. "Today everything is safer. People are daring to do business. You don't see the young guys in the streets," she said, referring to gang members.

She said she has had to pay off the gangs several times. Since Bukele declared the state of emergency in March, more than 58,000 suspected gang members have been arrested, the government says, although humanitarian groups have questioned what they say can be heavy-handed tactics. The nationwide state of emergency, which allows detention without court order, followed a surge in violence that claimed 87 lives between March 25 and 27. Despite opposition from humanitarian groups, the emergency order was extended by Congress to mid-December.

Soyapango Mayor Nercy Montano said last week that government actions in the city had brought a huge improvement in safety.



SOYAPANGO, El Salvador: Police and soldiers escort people captured during an operation against gang members in Soyapango, El Salvador. —AFP

### War zone

On the road leading to La Campanera there is a settlement called Las Margaritas, which historically is controlled by a gang called Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, which is the arch enemy of Barrio 18. At least six armored cars were visible Sunday on one of the streets in Las Margaritas.

"Our orders are to not leave a single terrorist in Soyapango," a soldier who declined to give his name

told AFP. Gangs in El Salvador, called maras in Spanish, normally paint walls with distinctive graffiti to mark off territory, but in Las Margaritas the authorities have erased those writings.

Mirna Polanco, a 24-year-old university student, said as she walked along the road that connects Las Margaritas and La Campanera that this used to be a war zone because of the gun battles the two gangs would wage. —AFP

## Blinken warns Netanyahu on annexation

**WASHINGTON:** US Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed Sunday to oppose Zionist entity's settlements or annexation in the West Bank, but promised to judge Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's incoming government by actions and not personalities.

Netanyahu is expected within days to return to power after sealing a coalition deal with extreme-right movements including Religious Zionism, which is set for a post in charge of settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Speaking to J Street, a left-leaning pro-Zionist US advocacy group, Blinken offered congratulations to the veteran Zionist leader, who has clashed with previous Democratic administrations in Washington. "We will gauge the government by the policies it pursues rather than individual personalities," Blinken said.

But he said President Joe Biden's administration would work "relentlessly" to preserve a "horizon of hope," however dim, for the creation of a Palestinian state. "We will also continue to unequivocally oppose any acts that undermine the prospects of a two-state solution, including but not limited to settlement



Benjamin Netanyahu

expansion, moves toward annexation of the West Bank, disruption to the historic status quo of holy sites, demolitions and evictions, and incitement to violence," Blinken said.

Speaking before Blinken's remarks, Netanyahu pointed out that the outgoing government led by Yair Lapid relied on support from an Arab Zionist party with Islamist roots and said he "didn't hear a word from all the chorus of critics" about it.

Religious Zionism's leader Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is expected to play a key role, is a staunch advocate of Jewish settlements. Until a few years ago, he had a portrait in his living room of Baruch Goldstein, who massacred 29 Palestinian worshippers at a Hebron mosque in 1994. —AFP

## Gaza fishermen rejoice at finally fixing their boats

**GAZA CITY:** Wearing sky blue overalls near Gaza's port, technician Mohammed Jerboa celebrates the chance to finally repair fishing boats after a 15-year Zionist entity ban on vital materials.

It's a "great achievement", he said after sanding down the faded paint as part of a team of workers patching up rickety boats with sheets of newly imported fibreglass.

The material has been prohibited from entering the Palestinian enclave since 2007, as one of scores of items Zionist deems could be used for military purposes by Gaza militants.

The measures have left fishermen struggling for years to pursue their livelihood due to the state of the boats — until the United Nations brokered a deal that allows fibreglass to reach a supervised workshop.

"I started working at this workshop two weeks ago... for the fishermen and for us as technicians, this provided a job opportunity," said Jerboa.

Gaza has one of the world's highest unemployment rates at nearly 50 percent, according to World Bank data. Dust flies as the team gets to work, with-

in view of a security camera, while the smell of fresh paint drifts across the fenced yard from a recently refurbished boat.

Rows of unseaworthy vessels rest in the sand nearby, with rusty parts and covered in scratches, laying bare the scale of the task at hand. Manal al-Najjar, a coordination officer at the United Nations Office for Project Services — which handles infrastructure projects — said there are still some 300 boats to be fixed.

After months of negotiations with Palestinian and Zionist entity officials, the UN reached a deal which allows enough fibreglass for 10 boats to enter Gaza at a time.

"The repair process takes two weeks to a month for every 10 boats," Najjar said. With the first repaired boats hitting the water, she added that fishermen so far are happy with the project as "the price is very reasonable and the quality of the materials is high".

Standing near piles of nets at the port, fisherman Saleem al-Assi was one of the first to be selected for the project and agreed the costs were low.

"I've had boats out of action for eight years and they need a lot of fibreglass," said Assi, who has around 50 relatives working in the fishing trade.

"Hundreds of fishermen applied to the project, but the project can't cover everyone," he added. In addition to the difficulty to obtain materials, the fishing industry has been hit by restrictions at sea. —AFP

## UAE leader congratulates...

Continued from Page 1

security and stability in the region," he said in an online statement, also congratulating the UAE on the occasion of its 51st National Day.

The first World Cup on Arab soil is taking place

## Australia starts building massive...

Continued from Page 1

land in remote areas with little radio disturbance — ideal for such telescopes. More than 130,000 Christmas tree-shaped antennas are planned in Western Australia, to be built on the traditional lands of the Wajarri Aboriginal people.

They have dubbed the site "Inyarrimanha Ilgari Bundara", or "sharing sky and stars". "We honor their willingness to share their skies and stars with us as we seek to find answers to some of the most fundamental science questions we face," said Diamond. The South African site will feature nearly 200 dishes in the remote Karoo region, according to the organization. Comparison between radio telescopes is difficult

less than two years after Saudi Arabia and its allies the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties, claiming Qatar supported extremists and was too close to Iran — allegations that Doha denied. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has already met the Amir during the World Cup, where he was pictured wearing a Qatar football scarf. Although this is the UAE president's first visit since the blockade, ties have been gradually warming. In May, the Amir flew to Abu Dhabi for the funeral of Sheikh Khalifa, Sheikh Mohamed's half-brother and predecessor as president. — Agencies

as they operate in different frequencies, according to SKA's planners. But they have said that the two sites will give SKA higher sensitivity over single-dish radio telescopes because its arrays are spread out, forming a much bigger "virtual dish". The project will help in "charting the birth and death of galaxies, searching for new types of gravitational waves and expanding the boundaries of what we know about the universe", said telescope director Sarah Pearce.

Danny Price from the Curtin Institute of Radio Astronomy said the telescope would be extremely powerful. "To put the sensitivity of the SKA into perspective, the SKA could detect a mobile phone in the pocket of an astronaut on Mars, 225 million kilometers away," he said. The SKA Observatory, headquartered at Jodrell Bank in Britain, has said the telescope should start making scientific observations by the late 2020s. The organization has 14 members: Britain, Australia, South Africa, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and The Netherlands. — AFP



This handout photo shows an artist's impression of low-frequency stations forming the Square Kilometer Array (SKA) radio telescope, to be built in Western Australia. — AFP

## New rules for delivery companies...

Continued from Page 1

All vehicles must have yellow license plates. The

## Zero-COVID policy eases as Chinese...

Continued from Page 1

The testing requirement for public transport had been scrapped on Sunday in the central city of Wuhan, where the coronavirus was first detected in late 2019, as well as in Shandong province.

And Zhengzhou — home to the world's largest iPhone factory — on Sunday said people would be allowed to enter public places, take public transport and enter their residential compounds without a 48-hour negative test result too. But as officials have dismantled testing facilities, long queues have appeared around those that remain, forcing residents to wait in cold temperatures to get tests that remain obligatory across much of China.

"Students can't go to school without a 24-hour negative test," wrote a user on China's Twitter-like Weibo. "What's the point in closing testing booths before dropping the need to show test results completely?" another asked. In the northwestern city of Urumqi, where a fire that killed 10 people became the catalyst for the recent anti-lockdown protests, supermarkets, hotels, restaurants and ski resorts reopened on Monday. The city of more than four million in the far-western Xinjiang region endured one of China's longest lockdowns, with some areas shut from August until November.

The demonstrations last week were the largest in decades as public anger at prolonged virus restrictions boiled over, with many university campuses involved. China's vast security apparatus has moved

driver of the vehicle is obligated to wear a company or institution-specific vest, whose specifications are determined by the Technical inspection department of the general traffic department.

Lights and reflective tapes should be affixed to the attached box of motorbikes. Drivers of motorbikes must wear a helmet while driving, and it must be of a phosphorescent color. Motorbikes cannot be driven on highways and ring roads.

swiftly to smother the rallies, deploying a heavy police presence while boosting online censorship and surveillance of the population. But sporadic localized clashes have continued to flare up.

Hundreds of students at Wuhan University in central China staged a protest Sunday evening, according to footage on social media and an attendee. At least 300 protested in front of the university's main administrative building, but there was no violence, only students chanting slogans together, an anonymous witness told AFP. Students were unhappy with the university's examination arrangements and school holiday dates, he said. The university announced Sunday that it would gradually resume in-person teaching and "optimize campus epidemic control measures" from Monday, but students and staff could not leave campus without approval.

Chinese state media, which previously focused on highlighting the dangers of COVID-19, has shifted tone as measures have been relaxed. Authoritative business news outlet Yicai on Sunday quoted an unnamed health expert arguing that officials should dial down strict virus rules. "Most infected people are asymptomatic... and the fatality rate is very low," the expert said.

China's central National Health Commission (NHC) categorizes infectious diseases based on how fatal and infectious they are. Since January 2020, it has managed COVID under Category A protocols, giving local governments the power to enforce snap lockdowns and put patients and their close contacts into quarantine. That approach was now "obviously not in line with science" given the changing circumstances, the expert told Yicai, calling for a "downgrade". Chinese authorities on Monday reported 29,724 new domestic COVID cases. — AFP



## International

# South Africa's ruling ANC debates embattled president's future

## Country marked ninth anniversary of Mandela's death

**JOHANNESBURG, South Africa:** The top leaders of South Africa's ruling party went into talks on Monday to discuss the fate of embattled President Cyril Ramaphosa on the eve of a parliamentary vote that could lead to his impeachment. Ramaphosa insisted at the weekend that he would not resign after a special panel reported on an alleged coverup of a cash robbery at his farm, but his political future remains uncertain.

On Monday morning the president arrived at the venue where the African National Congress' highest body — the National Executive Committee (NEC) — was meeting to discuss the crisis. He left shortly afterwards, smiling and waving to the media.

ANC spokesman Pule Mabe said the president was recused from the meeting, in line with standard practice for a person under discussion. "We convened the meeting because we want to seek the wisdom of the collective," said Mabe. Forged by Nelson Mandela into the weapon that led the fight against apartheid, the ANC has been deeply divided by the affair, but after a pendulum swing a majority now seems to be backing the president.

The country marked the ninth anniversary of Mandela's death on Monday. "In remembering him we are going to make sure that the (NEC meeting) concludes being united," said Mabe. A small group of demonstrators, some supporting the president, others calling for him to go, gathered outside the meeting in the Johannesburg area of Nasrec. "The right thing is to tell Cyril Ramaphosa that he must step down," said ANC member Carl Niehaus, 63, a former spokesman to Mandela and critic of his successor.

He wore an ANC T-shirt and holding a framed sign reading "Ramaphosa must go". But Ramaphosa supporter Maropeng Serakwana, 40, warned against any

leap to judgement. Ramaphosa "must be treated fairly like any other citizen in this country," he said.

The bombshell report was submitted last week to parliament, which will debate it on Tuesday — a step that could lead to a vote on forcing Ramaphosa from office. For him to be forced out, two-thirds of the assembly must vote in favour of the removal motion. The ANC has 230 out of 400 seats.

### 'Phala Phala'

The scandal has become known as the Phala Phala affair, named after Ramaphosa's farm in the northeast of the country. It began in June, when South Africa's former spy boss filed a complaint with the police alleging that Ramaphosa had concealed the theft of a huge haul of cash from the farm. He accused the president of having organised for the robbers to be kidnapped and bribed into silence.

Ramaphosa, in submissions to the three-person investigative panel, denied any wrongdoing. He said the cash — more than half a million dollars, stashed beneath sofa cushions — was payment for buffaloes bought by a Sudanese businessman. But his explanations did not convince the panel, which raised questions about the source of the cash and said he "may have committed" serious violations and misconduct.

A police inquiry is ongoing, but he has not so far been charged with any crime. The scandal comes at the worst possible time for Ramaphosa. On December 16, he will contest elections for the ANC presidency — a position that also holds the key to staying on as the nation's president. A former mine union president who made a fortune in business in post-apartheid era, Ramaphosa came to office in 2018 riding on a graft-free image after the corruption-tainted presidency of Jacob Zuma.



JOHANNESBURG, South Africa: South African President Cyril Ramaphosa (R) leaves the NASREC Centre in Johannesburg, on December 05, 2022 after a National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting of the Africa National Congress (ANC) to discuss the fate of the President. — AFP

### 'Flawed' report

In his weekly newsletter on Monday, Ramaphosa did not address the scandal directly, but flaunted the government's anti-corruption work. "Now that we see that progress is being made, we must do everything we can to ensure that this work continues unhindered," he wrote. His spokesman, Vincent Magwenya, on Saturday said Ramaphosa would not resign on the basis of a "flawed" report and would contest the document in court. Julius Malema, an ex-ANC youth leader and now opposition Economic Freedom Fighters president

called for Ramaphosa to "be arrested — he committed crime, he committed corruption."

But the ANC's overwhelming majority in the National Assembly means that it is not even certain that parliament will vote to launch the procedure of removal. As well as Ramaphosa, some legal experts have outlined flaws in the report. They argue that without recourse to the ongoing criminal investigation, the document is based largely on hearsay, Ramaphosa's statements and the initial complaint lodged by an opponent of the president. — AFP

## Kabul arrests 'IS member' for Pakistan embassy attack

**ISLAMABAD, Pakistan:** A foreign member of the Islamic State (IS) group has been arrested in connection with an attack last week on Pakistan's embassy in the Afghan capital, the Taliban's chief spokesman said Monday.

A security guard was wounded by shots fired at the embassy in Friday's attack, which Islamabad described as an assassination attempt against the head of the mission. No country officially recognises Afghanistan's Taliban government, but Pakistan kept its embassy open even as the hardline Islamists took over in August last year, and maintains a full diplomatic mission.

Afghan government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said Monday that special forces had arrested the person responsible for the embassy attack. "This person is a citizen of a foreign country and a member of IS," he said.

"The investigation revealed that this attack was jointly organised by IS and rebels. Some foreign malicious circles are behind the attack and the aim was to create distrust between the two brotherly countries," Mujahid declined to say what nationality the suspect was, or if it was the same person other officials reported had been arrested hours after the incident. Pakistan has complicated relations with the Taliban, with Islamabad long accused of supporting the Islamists even while backing the US-led invasion of Afghanistan that toppled them following the 9/11 attacks.

Pakistan is home to more than a million Afghan refugees, and the porous border they share is frequently the scene of clashes. The Taliban have banned public protests, but Afghans have staged small demonstrations against Pakistan following such incidents.

Pakistan's foreign ministry said Monday that the ambassador, Ubaid ur Rehman Nizamani, was now in Islamabad "for consultations", but said there were no plans to close the embassy or withdraw staff. The Taliban are at pains to portray Afghanistan as safe for diplomats, but two Russian embassy staff members were killed in a suicide bombing outside the mission in September in another attack claimed by IS.

Last month a gunman shot dead a Pakistan security guard at the Chaman border crossing, leading to its closure for a week. Pakistan's separate home-grown Taliban — whose leaders and fighters have long operated from Afghanistan — last week said they were ending a shaky ceasefire with Islamabad.

Since returning to power the Afghan Taliban have insisted they would not allow foreign militant groups to operate from home soil. — AFP

## Sudan's military, civilian factions seek to end crisis

**KHARTOUM, Sudan:** Sudan's military and civilian leaders signed Monday an initial deal aimed at ending a deep crisis that has gripped the northeast African country since a coup a year ago. Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan seized power in October 2021, derailed a rocky transition to civilian rule that began after the 2019 ouster of veteran autocrat Omar al-Bashir.

The past year has seen near-weekly protests and a crackdown that pro-democracy medics say has killed at least 121, a spiralling economic crisis and a rise in ethnic violence in several remote regions. Divisions among civilian groups have deepened since the coup, with some urging a deal with the military while others insist on "no partnership, no negotiation".

Monday's deal was signed by Burhan, paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo and multiple civilian groups, most notably the Forces for Freedom



ABUJA, Nigeria: Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Cui Jianchun (L), Nigeria President Muhammadu Buhari (2nd L), Guinea Bissau and outgoing ECOWAS President, Umaro Sissoco Embaló (2nd R), and Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio (R), pose at the construction site of the headquarters of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) during the ground-breaking ceremony at the 62nd Ordinary Session of ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in Abuja. — AFP

## West African leaders agree to create regional force

**ABUJA, Nigeria:** West African leaders agreed on Sunday to create a regional force to intervene against jihadism and in the event of coups, a senior official said. Leaders of the Economic Community of West African States had decided to act to "take care of our own security in the region", Omar Aliou Touray, president of the ECOWAS commission, told journalists at a summit in Nigeria.

They are "determined to establish a regional force that will intervene in the event of need, whether this is in the area of security, terrorism and restore constitutional order in member countries," he added.

Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso have all been hit by military coups in the last two years. Several countries in the region are also suffering from the spread of jihadism, including Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, and southwards to the Gulf of Guinea.

National armies, largely powerless against the jihadist forces operating across borders, have been cooperating with external actors such as the UN, France and Russia. But Touray said this decision would "restructure our security architecture".

The modalities of the planned regional force will be considered by defence chiefs in the second half of

and Change — the main civilian faction that was ousted in the coup. "The ceremony today is a culmination of the sustained efforts of Sudanese stakeholders over the past year to find a solution to the political crisis and restore constitutional order," said UN special representative Volker Perthes. Other signatories included the Islamist Popular Congress Party, a faction of the Democratic Unionist Party, and some ex-rebel groups who signed a 2020 peace deal. During the ceremony, Dagalo reiterated the military's purported commitment to exit the political scene, saying "it is essential to build a sustainable democratic regime."

### Thorny issues ahead

The deal — based on a proposal by the Sudanese Bar Association — was negotiated in the presence of officials from the United Nations, Western diplomats as well as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, according to the FFC.

On Friday, the FFC said the "framework agreement lays the groundwork for establishing a transitional civilian authority." A final deal tackling issues including transitional justice and reforms to the military should be completed "within weeks," it said.

Perthes urged Sudanese factions to "immediately"

January, 2023, Touray said. The funding of the force must also be decided, but the ECOWAS official stressed that such an operation could not be solely dependent on voluntary contributions.

### Pressure on Mali

Addressing another regional problem, the West African leaders told Mali's ruling junta to release 46 Ivorian troops it has held since July. "We ask the Malian authorities to release the Ivorian soldiers by January 1, 2023 at the latest," said Touray, at the Abuja summit. The Gambian diplomat said the West African bloc reserved the right to act if the soldiers were not released by January 1. If Mali fails to do so, ECOWAS will impose sanctions, a West African diplomat told AFP.

Togolese President Faure Gnassingbe, who has been mediating between Mali and Ivory Coast on the issue, will travel to Mali to "demand" the release of the soldiers, the diplomat added. The Ivorian troops were arrested on July 10 on their arrival at the airport in Mali's capital Bamako.

Ivory Coast says the troops were sent to provide backup for the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, MINUSMA, and are being unfairly detained. Mali says the troops are mercenaries and has placed them in custody on charges of attempting to harm state security. ECOWAS had decided at an extraordinary summit in September to send a high-level delegation to Mali to try to resolve the crisis. But no progress was reported from this mission. — AFP

start the second phase to resolve the outstanding issues and reach a comprehensive deal. However, that part is far thornier, with observers questioning whether the military would be willing to give up economic interests and wider powers that it views as its privileged domain.

Phase one of the deal "is a very low level commitment on Burhan's part... allowing him to survive" politically, said Kholood Khair founder of the Confluence Advisory, a Khartoum-based think-tank.

But the signatories will likely face "a real political crisis as they start talking in earnest about security sector reforms, transitional justice (and) financial accountability," she added. Monday's signing comes months after Burhan pledged that the military would step aside and make way for factions to agree on a civilian government. Pro-democracy activists reject the latest effort and are calling for new street protests demanding the military return to barracks. Some of the former rebels who signed peace deals with Sudan in 2020 also voiced their opposition to the deal. Mohamed Zakaria, spokesman for former rebel group the Justice and Equality Movement, told AFP that it "will bring about dire consequences and further complicate the political scene". — AFP

## North Korea fires artillery barrage into buffer zone

**SEOUL:** North Korea fired a barrage of artillery shells into a maritime buffer zone on Monday, Seoul's military said, the latest in a series of launches by an increasingly belligerent Pyongyang. About 130 artillery rounds were simultaneously fired at 2:59 pm (0559 GMT) from two separate sites, one on North Korea's east coast and one on the west coast, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. Seoul's military said the barrage was a "clear violation" of the 2018 agreement between the North and South that established the buffer zone in a bid to reduce tensions. It said none of the shells crossed the Northern Limit Line, the de facto maritime border between the two countries.

The military said it had issued "several warnings" over the barrage, without giving any further details. "Our military is strengthening its readiness posture in preparation for emergencies while tracking and monitoring related developments under close cooperation between South Korea and the United States," it added.

North Korea, however, claimed the barrage was a "tit for tat warning" against what it described as multiple artillery firings by the South. A spokesperson for the General Staff of the North Korean People's Army said in a statement that "dozens of projectiles supposed to be the shells of multiple rocket launchers" had been fired by the South on Monday.

North Korea's army "will always take account of all provocative actions of the enemy and respond with resolute and overwhelming military action," added a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency. Seoul's military did not mention any exercises, but local reports said the South Korean and US militaries were conducting firing drills in the area.

### Buffer zones

At a summit in Pyongyang in 2018, former South Korean president Moon Jae-in and the North's Kim Jong Un agreed to establish buffer zones along land and sea boundaries in a bid to reduce tensions. But since talks collapsed in 2019, Kim has doubled down on his banned weapons programmes, and experts say he may now be testing South Korea by violating the buffer zone agreement. Pyongyang has fired artillery into the buffer zone repeatedly in recent months. It has also conducted a record-breaking blitz of missile launches in recent weeks, including its newest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) last month, the most powerful such test by the nuclear-armed country yet.

Pyongyang, which is banned from testing ballistic missiles by repeated UN Security Council resolutions, has claimed its weapons tests are a legitimate response to Washington's moves to boost the protection it offers to allies Seoul and Tokyo. Officials and analysts in Seoul and Washington say the launches may build up to a seventh nuclear test. — AFP



Undated picture shows North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (2nd R) and his daughter (R) greeting scientists and engineers from a defence science research institute, and workers at a munitions factory. — AFP



# Business

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2022

## Tunisians dream of moving to Germany as crisis bites

Germany has a huge need for workers in health, IT and hospitality sectors

**TUNIS:** Germany is becoming a key destination for disillusioned young Tunisians despite a language barrier and the North African nation's long history of ties with France. Europe's biggest economy, with its low birth rate, is crying out for labor, and many Tunisians, exhausted by years of economic crisis, see an opportunity for a legal path to emigration.

Numbers are still small but rising fast. Germany granted 5,474 work permits to Tunisians from January to October-up from 4,462 in the whole of last year and more than double the numbers for 2020.

The trend has been stimulated by the fact Germany has no quota restrictions for countries of origin and increasingly recognizes foreign diplomas. Germany "has a huge need for workers, not just in the health and IT sectors but also in hospitality, building, laying fiber-optic cables or driving heavy goods vehicles," said Narjess Rahmani, a Berlin-based Tunisian who heads the immigration agency "Get In Germany".

Some employers offer contracts to help ease the visa process and even pay for six months of language tuition to help their future workers. Yefth Benazzou, who runs a language school in Tunis, said demand for German classes has risen sharply since 2020.

"Before, I had groups of one or two people," he said. "Now it's gone up to six or seven." Yefth also teaches basic German cultural norms, including the line of advice that "punctlich ist schon spaet"- "being on time is already late".

### High prices, few jobs

Tunisia's history as a French colony means its people are used to foreign languages, Rahmani said. "We are also very open to other cultures, through

tourism and the cultural mix throughout our history." The language school's students are often highly qualified, thanks to one of the Arab world's most reputable education systems, but cursed by unemployment affecting 30 percent among young graduates.

Hydraulic engineer Nermine Madssia, 25, who wears a hijab, said she had chosen Germany over France, citing Islamophobia. She said she hoped to get "respect, consideration and a decent salary", in contrast to Tunisia where the average pay is just 1,000 dinars (around 300 euros and dollars) per month. Even highly sought-after IT technicians can expect to earn a maximum of 2,000 dinars early in their careers.

Like many who hope to leave Tunisia, Nermine has had help from her parents in financing German lessons and the visa application. "With the increase in the cost of living, a salary isn't enough to start and support a family," she said. Inflation topped 9.0 percent year-on-year in October and Tunisia has endured years of economic crisis, pre-dating even the 2011 revolution that toppled dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali.

With sluggish growth, vast public debt and many sectors closed off to new entrants, jobs are sparse, exacerbated by the COVID pandemic and fallout from the Ukraine war.

### Dangerous sea crossings

President Kais Saied's 2021 power grab, which has placed Tunisia's decade-long democratic transition in doubt, has done little to improve economic confidence. One in every two young people wants to leave, says the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights group.

Some leave legally-including more than 40,000 engineers and 3,300 doctors in the past five years-



TUNIS, Tunisia: Narjess Rahmani, a Berlin-based Tunisian who heads the immigration agency "Get In Germany", is pictured in the capital Tunis, on April 27, 2022. — AFP

while many thousands more attempt dangerous journeys to Italy in makeshift boats, some drowning on the way. Among the legal departees is Elyes Jelassi, 28, who packed a bottle of olive oil and some spices into his suitcase as he prepared for Germany.

As his family gathered in the town of Korba to wish him goodbye, he said he had never wanted to leave. But "after three years of studies and internships in several hospitals, I decided not to make a career in Tunisia," he said.

Jelassi already has a job contract as a senior

nurse in the German city of Wiesbaden, with free accommodation for the first six months. As well as a good salary, he said he expects to find better working conditions than in Tunisia, where the health system has been crippled by the pandemic and years of neglect. "Our hospitals suffer from a lack of equipment, which causes conflict with patients," he said. "It's really stressful." He chose Germany over Canada, France or the Gulf because he already has friends there and will easily be able to further his studies. But he probably won't stay there forever. "I'd like to come back when I'm 50," he said. —AFP

## Turkey inflation slows for first time since 2021

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey's inflation slowed in November for the first time since May 2021, official data showed on Monday, delivering a boost to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ahead of next year's election. The rate slowed to 84.39 percent, according to state statistics agency TUIK, down from 85.51 percent in October.

Turkey's inflation has risen steadily since reaching a low of 16.6 percent in May 2021. The emerging market's troubled economy has turned into a major stumbling block on Erdogan's path to a third decade in power in a presidential poll due by next June.

Erdogan's approval rating began to suffer when he set off on an unusual economic experiment last year that tried to bring down chronically high consumer prices by lowering borrowing costs. Conventional economic theory embraced by almost every other big nation pursues the exact opposite approach.

Turkey's lira began to drop in value almost immediately, as consumers rushed to buy up dollars and gold to try and protect their savings. The price of imports such as oil and gas soared, creating an inflationary spiral that the nominally independent central bank fed further by continuing to lower interest rates. Erdogan has maintained that his unwavering focus on economic growth at all costs-achieved through cheap lending and state support-will eventually pay off.

"We will witness the rapid descent of inflation soon and we will see together that the dirty scenarios built on this trouble are torn and thrown away," he repeated over the weekend. Erdogan has blamed inflation on outside factors such as the global spike in food and energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



ISTANBUL: People shop at a vegetable market in Istanbul. Inflation slowed for the first time since May 2021 in Turkey.

### Election strategy

Erdogan's much-criticized economic team hailed Monday's announcement as vindication of their approach. "As we have previously stated in various media, we have entered a downward trend in inflation, leaving the peak behind, unless there is an unexpected global development," Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati tweeted.

Most economists believe that Turkey's inflation rate will continue to slow but remain elevated for many months to come, unless Erdogan radically changes his approach. An accompanying inflow of funding from the Kremlin and Turkey's former rivals in the Middle East, which Erdogan secured through a major diplomatic reversal this year, will help the gov-

ernment prop up the lira, economists believe.

Erdogan's strategy aims at "keeping the lira relatively strong this side of elections with foreign money", Timothy Ash of BlueBay Asset Management said in a tweet. "But that will destroy competitiveness with massive real appreciation." Yet many also question Turkey's official statistics, which are produced by an agency whose leader has been replaced by Erdogan twice in the past year. According to a respected monthly study released by independent economists from Turkey's ENAG research institute, the annual rate of consumer price increases reached 170.70 percent in November.

A separate poll earlier this year showed the overwhelming major of Turks believing the ENAG figures over ones released by the government. —AFP

## Britain to allow staff to request flexible working

**LONDON:** UK workers will be able to request flexible employment from the first day of a job under government plans announced Monday. It comes after millions of mainly office workers continue to work from home, at least part of the week, in the wake of the COVID pandemic. "Millions of employees will be able to request flexible working from day one of their employment, under new government plans to make flexible working the default," a statement said.

"Flexible working doesn't just mean a combination of working from home and in the office-it can mean employees making use of job-sharing, flexitime, and working compressed, annu-

alized, or staggered hours." The Conservative government of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak added that a "raft of new measures will give employees greater access to flexibility over where, when, and how they work, leading to happier, more productive staff."

"Flexible working has been found to help employees balance their work and home life, especially supporting those who have commitments or responsibilities such as caring for children or vulnerable people," the statement added. TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady, while welcoming the news, said the change "should give workers the legal right to work flexibly from their first day in a job-not just the right to ask." Greater flexibility could meanwhile help women to earn higher salaries.

Data on Monday revealed that the gender pay gap remains at its widest for Britain's oldest workers.

"Caring responsibilities, the burden of which still falls disproportionately



LONDON: UK workers will be able to request flexible employment from the first day of a job under government plans announced Monday.

on women, means women can miss out on salary progression during their careers-which compounds as time goes on, widening the gender pay gap as we age," said Stuart Lewis, chief

executive of Rest Less, an organization that advises people aged over 50. According to Rest Less, men earn 31 percent more on average than women when both are in their fifties. —AFP

## Russian oil price cap put to the test

**MOSCOW:** The price cap on Russian oil agreed by the EU, G7 and Australia came into force on Monday. It aims to restrict Russia's revenue as punishment for its invasion of Ukraine, while making sure Moscow keeps supplying the global market. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday the measure would contribute to a destabilization of world energy markets and would not affect Russia's military campaign in Ukraine.

### Embargo and cap

The cap took effect alongside an EU embargo on maritime deliveries of Russian crude oil, which comes several months after an embargo imposed by the United States and Canada. Russia is the world's second-largest crude exporter and without the cap it would be easy to find new buyers at market prices. The measure means only oil sold at a price equal to or less than \$60 per barrel can continue to be delivered.

Companies based in the EU, G7 countries and Australia will be banned from providing services enabling maritime transport, such as insurance, with oil above that price. The G7 nations-Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Britain and the United States-provide insurance services for 90 percent of the world's cargo and the EU is a major player in sea freight.

This means they should be able to pass on the cap to the majority of Russia's customers around the world, making for a credible price cap. There is a transition period, and the cap will not apply to cargoes loaded before December 5, and a further cap on oil products will come into effect on February 5.

### Market impact

The West has adopted the cap of \$60, well above the current cost of producing oil in Russia, so Moscow will have an incentive to continue pumping crude. Russia will continue to earn revenue, even if it is reduced. "Russia must retain an interest in selling its oil" or risk reducing global supply and causing prices to soar, said one European official, who did not believe the Kremlin's threats to stop deliveries to countries complying with the cap.

The official said Russia would remain concerned about maintaining the state of its infrastructure, which would be damaged if production is halted, and keeping the confidence of its customers, including China and India. Experts are worried about a leap into the unknown and keeping a close eye on the reaction of the 23-nation OPEC+ group of oil-producing countries led by Saudi Arabia and Russia. —AFP



## Business

# Oil jumps on China easing of COVID curbs, Russia price cap

## Markets trade mixed after forecast-busting US jobs

LONDON: World oil prices rallied Monday after more easing of strict COVID containment measures in China and as a price cap on Russian crude agreed by the EU, G7 and Australia came into force. Main contracts Brent North Sea crude and WTI advanced more than 2.5 percent, also after OPEC and its Russia-led allies decided at a weekend meeting to maintain oil output levels.

Stock markets traded mixed after Friday's forecast-busting US jobs report that dented hopes that the Federal Reserve would take a softer approach to hiking interest rates in its battle against sky-high inflation. In currency trading, the dollar was mixed against its main rivals while China's yuan was among the best performers, breaking below the seven per dollar level for the first time in almost three months.

Higher oil demand is expected from China after businesses reopened and testing requirements were relaxed in Beijing and other cities as the country tentatively eases out of a strict zero-COVID policy that sparked nationwide protests. It has also seen major cities including Shanghai locked down for months, a decision blamed for a sharp slowdown in economic growth this year that sent shudders through financial markets.

"Uncertainty is coming in waves in energy markets as the choppy tides of supply and demand push up the oil price but keep a lid on big gains," noted Susannah Streeter, senior investment and markets analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. "There are expectations that there will be less crude available to buy as the \$60 cap on Russia oil takes effect."



HONG KONG, China: Pedestrians pass an electronic board showing the numbers for the Hang Seng Index in Hong Kong on December 5, 2022. — AFP

The Kremlin on Monday insisted the cap would not affect Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine.

The \$60-per-barrel price cap aims to restrict Russia's revenue while making sure Moscow keeps supplying the global market. "From the OPEC+ perspective, it can't be easy to make reliable forecasts against that (Russia) backdrop and the constantly evolving COVID situation in China, which currently looks far more promising from a demand perspective," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at Oanda trading group.

Major oil-producing countries led by Saudi Arabia and Russia on Sunday agreed to maintain their current output levels in a climate of uncertainty. The prospect of China, the world's number-two economy, kicking back into gear helped traders overcome data on Friday showing far more jobs than expected were created in the United States in November.

A big jump in wages added to concerns that the economy remained hot, meaning the Fed still had plenty of work to do to get inflation down to its two percent target. — AFP

## CBK bonds and related Tawarruq

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the most recent issues of CBK bonds and related Tawarruq at a total value of KD 230 million for six months with a rate of return at 4.250 percent.

## Taiwanese iPhone maker seeks to restore production

TAIPEI: Taiwanese tech giant and key Apple supplier Foxconn said Monday it was hiring new workers and moving towards "restoring production capacity to normal" following violent clashes at its central China plant last month. Foxconn, also known by its official name Hon Hai Precision Industry, is the world's biggest contract electronics manufacturer and assembles gadgets for many international brands. Most of its factories are in China including the eastern city of Zhengzhou, where lockdowns were imposed last month as part of Beijing's zero-COVID policy after a spike in infections.

Violent protests by workers subsequently erupted over salaries and conditions at the plant, which Foxconn later blamed on a "technical error" in its payment systems. Hundreds of workers marched in Zhengzhou-dubbed "iPhone City" as the home of the world's biggest factory for the smartphone—with some clashing with riot police and health personnel in hazmat suits. Foxconn said in a statement Monday that it was working with the local government to ensure safe production and "making every effort to protect" the rights and interests of employees.

"At present, the overall epidemic situation has been brought under control, with November the most affected period," it said. It reported revenue in that month fell 11.4 percent on-year and 29 percent from October. "In addition to re-allocating production capacity to different factories, we have also started to recruit new employees, and are gradually moving towards the direction of restoring production capacity to normal." The company said the outlook for the final three months of the year was expected to be "roughly in line with market consensus" but did not give figures. Foxconn earlier said it was revising down its outlook for the last quarter. Some analysts have predicted sales could drop as much as 20 percent.—AFP

## Ex-Wirecard CEO goes on trial over 'unparalleled' fraud

FRANKFURT: Ex-Wirecard CEO Markus Braun goes on trial in Munich this week for his role in the collapse of the once celebrated payments firm, brought down by the biggest accounting fraud scandal in German corporate history. Austrian-born Braun and two other former Wirecard executives will appear in the dock from Thursday on charges of commercial gang fraud, breach of trust, market manipulation and accounting manipulation. The Munich district court has scheduled 100 court dates for the mammoth trial. Wirecard, once hailed as a standard-bearer for the German tech industry, imploded spectacularly in 2020 after admitting that 1.9 billion euros (\$2 billion) missing from its accounts probably didn't exist.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who was finance minister at the time, described the scandal as "unparalleled" in post-war Germany. Braun, who has been in custody for over two years, denies any wrongdoing.

The 53-year-old has pointed the finger at Wirecard's fugitive former chief operating officer, Jan Marsalek, a shadowy figure with alleged ties to foreign intelligence agencies.

## Thousands protest graft, inflation in Mongolia

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia: Thousands gathered in freezing temperatures in Mongolia's capital on Monday to protest alleged corruption in the country's coal industry and soaring inflation, an AFP journalist said. Protesters, many of them young people, rallied in Ulaanbaatar's central Sukhbaatar Square in minus 21 degrees Celsius (minus six degrees Fahrenheit), demanding "justice" against corrupt officials and calling for the country's parliament to be dismissed.

Two herders told AFP they had travelled to the capital to join Monday's protests.

Police urged the protesters to disperse by 9 pm local time (1300 GMT). Protesters are frustrated with the country's ailing economy, with inflation soaring to 15.2 percent in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But public outrage has also been stoked by claims by whistleblowers that billions of dollars worth of coal have been stolen by a so-called "coal faction" of lawmakers with ties to the industry.

In mid-November, Mongolia's anti-corruption authority announced that over 30 officials — including the CEO of the state-owned coal mining company Erdenes Tavan Tolgoi — were under investigation for embezzlement. The firm controls the Erdenes Tavan Tolgoi deposits, which contain 7.5 billion tons of coking

coal and represent a key component of Mongolia's state budget revenue. It is yet to comment on the allegations.

The implicated lawmakers are alleged to have leveraged their ownership of coal mines and transportation companies that move the fossil fuel across the border into China to make illegal profits. "6.4 million tons coal is not registered by Mongolian customs officials but recorded by Chinese customs, since 2013," Dorjhand Togmid, an MP, told a press conference at the parliament in November.

Whistleblowers have also alleged that corrupt customs officials did not register coal-loaded trucks as importing goods, but instead as regular passenger vehicles, when they crossed the border to China. Mongolia sends 86 percent of its exports to China, with coal accounting for more than half the total, and is upgrading its infrastructure in the hopes of selling even more to its southern neighbor. Monday's rally comes a day after several hundred protesters gathered in the capital, the US embassy in Ulaanbaatar said. Protesters then attempted to march on Ikh Tenger — the official residence of the President and Prime Minister — "where they were stopped by a police barricade," it added.

The landlocked country, wedged between China and Russia, has struggled with political instability since it became a democracy. Its first constitution was passed in 1992 after decades of communist rule. Incumbent President Khurelsukh Ukhnaa was forced to resign as Prime Minister last year after protests and public outrage over the treatment of a COVID-19 patient and her newborn baby. He was then elected head of state with nearly 70 percent of the vote just months later. — AFP



ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia: Thousands rally in freezing temperatures in Mongolia's capital on Monday to protest alleged corruption in the country's coal industry and soaring inflation.

Marsalek was reported earlier this year to be hiding out in Russia. A senior Wirecard employee, however, told a German parliamentary inquiry last year that nothing happened at Wirecard without Braun's knowledge. "The group was shaped by Markus Braun, and so was the corporate culture. He decided everything, he dictated everything," Rainer Wexler told lawmakers.

### 'Incorrect' accounts

On trial alongside Braun are Oliver Bellenhaus, the former head of Wirecard's Dubai subsidiary, and ex-



BERLIN, Germany: This November 19, 2020 file photo shows Ex-Wirecard CEO Markus Braun waiting to face a public grilling by German lawmakers over the massive accounting fraud that brought down his firm. — AFP

accounting boss Stephan von Erffa. They face several years in prison if convicted.

Bellenhaus has admitted wrongdoing and will serve as a key witness for the prosecution. It took German investigators more than 20 months to unravel the complex web of fraudulent transactions implicating Wirecard subsidiaries and third-party companies across the globe.

Prosecutors say the accused presented "incorrect" financial results from 2015 to 2018, by including fabricated revenues and profits from partner companies in Dubai, the Philippines and Singapore, and using forged documents to make Wirecard appear more successful than it was. Among the victims of the fraud were banks that had provided credit of 1.7 billion euros to Wirecard. Bonds worth 1.4 billion euros were also issued and are unlikely to be repaid.

Founded in 1999, the Bavarian start-up Wirecard started out processing payments for porn and gambling sites and grew into a respectable electronic payments provider that edged traditional lender Commerzbank out of the blue-chip DAX index. Rumors about possible cheating at Wirecard surfaced now and again over the years, including from short-sellers doing research on companies they suspected might be overvalued. But Wirecard's problems began in earnest with a series of Financial Times articles in 2019 alleging irregularities in its Asian division, based on revelations from former employees and leaked documents.—AFP

## Putin ally Kudrin joins tech giant Yandex

MOSCOW: A long-time ally of President Vladimir Putin, Alexei Kudrin, said Monday he will be joining Yandex as the Kremlin seeks to tighten its grip on Russia's top technology giant. The announcement from the former finance minister comes after months of instability at the internet company, with employees fleeing due to the military offensive in Ukraine and its founder hit by Western sanctions.

Russia's top internet company and most popular search engine is being divided into Russian and international businesses because of Western penalties. Analysts say that the move will cement government control over what was once seen as one of Russia's top success stories. Last week Kudrin announced he was stepping down as head of Russia's Audit Chamber to focus on private initiatives with "significant impact on people". "I accepted an offer from Yandex to become a corporate development adviser," Kudrin said on Monday.

He added that in his role he will work to "ensure the long-term and sustainable development of the company on all markets, including international ones". Kudrin is expected to oversee the operations of the restructured company, while its founder, Arkady Volozh, who was hit by EU sanctions in June, will develop a number of Yandex businesses outside Russia.



MOSCOW: In this file photo taken on March 23, 2021 Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with the Audit Chamber head Alexei Kudrin at the Kremlin in Moscow. — AFP

In recent years Russian authorities have steadily ramped up control over the internet—once considered the last bastion of free speech. All major media organizations are already either state-owned or closely toe the Kremlin line.

### Staff exodus

In August, Yandex sold its news feed Yandex News to state-affiliated rival VK, the owner of Russia's largest social network. "The state has decided to speed up the creation of purely Russian services and increasingly limit the access of Russians to foreign services," economist Sergei Khestanov told AFP, referring to the authorities' growing control over the internet in Russia. He said that with Kudrin at the helm of Yandex authorities could create an internet "firewall" to shield the government from criticism.

In March, Russia banned Facebook and Instagram for "extremist activity" as part of efforts to clamp down on social media during Moscow's assault on Ukraine. Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine triggered an exodus of Russians from the country, including many from Yandex and the IT sector. Brussels describes Yandex as "promoting state media and narratives in its search results."

The EU said that Volozh, 58, was "supporting, materially or financially" the Russian government in its assault on Ukraine. When the sanctions were announced Volozh immediately stepped down as CEO and resigned from the board of directors to avoid the firm also being hit by sanctions. The Bell, a respected Russian-language media outlet, reported earlier that Volozh turned to Kudrin for help in securing Putin's support for the restructuring plan.

### 'Too close to Putin'

Kudrin served as finance minister between 2000 and 2011 and was famously fired by then-president Dmitry Medvedev for insubordination in 2011 and later appointed chairman of the Audit Chamber.

The 62-year-old was seen as one of the government's most prominent liberals in the earlier years of Putin's rule and he supported opposition protests against widespread claims of election fraud in 2011-2012. For Kudrin, Yandex offers an opportunity to distance himself from the government after Putin sent troops to Ukraine, said Tatiana Stanovaya, founder of the R Politik political analysis firm.

"He has nowhere to go," Stanovaya told AFP before the announcement was made. "He is too close to Putin. His departure would be seen as an act of betrayal." The Bell, citing sources, reported that Kudrin will have to "guarantee" to the Kremlin that Yandex and its technologies remain Russia-based. But at the same time, the sources said, he will have to make sure that the company does not become another state-run behemoth, like technologies conglomerate Rostec.

Last month, Yandex confirmed plans to overhaul "the group's ownership and governance in light of the current geopolitical environment." The company said this could include developing some of its services—including self-driving technologies, cloud computing and data labeling—"independently from Russia." — AFP



## Business

## Ahli Capital rebrands as ABK Capital

## ABK Capital to leverage its team in asset and wealth management fields

KUWAIT: Ahli Capital, the investment arm of Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), announced the launch of its new brand 'ABK Capital'. This comes in line with the company's strategy to enhance the experience of its clients, and integrates perfectly with the larger transformation process taking shape across the ABK Group. ABK Capital intends to leverage its team of highly qualified and experienced professionals in the fields of asset and wealth management to offer new innovative solutions and services. This will further enrich its clients' investment journey and aims to build even stronger long-term ties with them.

On this occasion, Yasmine Salamah, the Vice Chairperson of ABK Capital, stated: "We aim to continue building on ABK Capital's presence as a prominent and reputable investment company in Kuwait, which has consistently, over the last 16 years since its establishment, delivered value to our clients and put their financial needs at the forefront



**Yasmine Salamah:**  
Strengthening the position of the company in Kuwait



**Dr Husayn Shahzur:**  
We are our clients' local partner for a global investment reach



investment advisory services. Established in 2006, it is a Kuwaiti Shareholding Closed Company (K.S.C.C) regulated by the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) in Kuwait. As a subsidiary of Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), ABK Capital is part of its growing regional footprint spanning across Kuwait, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates. ABK Capital prides itself on extending the same level of transparency, proficiency, and dedication to all its clients, and delivers a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services.

of our priorities. We aspire to strengthen ABK Capital's position as a top tier leading investment company in Kuwait."

Dr Husayn Shahzur, CEO of ABK Capital commented: "We are our clients' local partner for their global investment reach and entirely focused on meeting their expectations and aspirations. We offer our clients a full range of products and serv-

ices, through traditional and alternative investment solutions. We also provide them with the opportunity to invest in local, regional, and global markets with complete ease and convenience. The launch of our new brand only adds to our drive towards delivering greater achievements."

ABK Capital is a leading regional investment firm, providing asset management solutions and

## Ghana offers local debt swap as part of IMF talks

ACCRA: Ghana offered investors a domestic debt swap on Monday to ease a crunch in payments as the government negotiates an IMF bailout during its worst economic crisis in decades. The West African state is in talks for up to \$3 billion in credit from the International Monetary Fund to help shore up its public finances. Inflation is at more than 40 percent and the cedi currency has lost 50 percent in value this year, helping push up debt by \$6 billion in 2022.

As part of IMF negotiations, Ghana's government is seeking to make its debt more sustainable after facing warnings about the risks of it defaulting on obligations. Finance Minister Kenneth Ofori-Atta said in a recorded statement late on Sunday on social media the debt exchange starting Monday would swap current debt for four new bonds maturing between 2027 and 2037.

"Our commitment to Ghanaians and the investor community, in line with the negotiations with the IMF is to restore macroeconomic stability in the shortest possible time," he said.

A foreign debt restructuring program would be presented later, he said. Ghana, a top cocoa and gold producer, has oil and gas reserves but its debt payments are high and its revenues weak. Like the rest of Africa, it has been hit by economic fallout from the global pandemic and the Ukraine war. Ofori-Atta said the government had worked to minimize the swap impact on investors holding government bonds, especially small investors and other vulnerable groups.

There will be no "haircuts" on principle value of bonds, he said. The minister said the government recognized banks and financial institutions hold a large amount of local government debt, but regulatory agencies and the central bank would help ease the impact on them.

"These are difficult times and we count on the support of all Ghanaians and the investment community to make this exercise successful," he said. President Nana Akufo-Addo and his economic team have come under growing pressure over the crisis, after the government earlier this year did a U-turn and said it would go to the IMF for help. Lawmakers have moved to censure Ofori-Atta over his economic performance and parliament is still reviewing that motion.

Last month, Akufo-Addo fired the government's junior finance minister, Charles Adu Boahen, over corruption allegations after he appeared in a documentary on illegal gold mining. —AFP

## Moroccans protest high cost of living

RABAT: Protesters turned out in force to march in Morocco's capital Rabat Sunday to denounce the "high cost of living and repression", amid surging inflation and rising social discontent.

"The people want lower prices... The people want to eliminate despotism and corruption," chanted the crowd, estimated by journalists to be around 3,000 people, the largest such rally in recent months. Police put the turnout at between 1,200 and 1,500 people. "We came to protest against a government that embodies the marriage of money and power," said Younes Ferachine, a coordinator from the Moroccan Social Front (FSM) group of political parties and left-wing trade unions that organized the rally. People converged from across Morocco for the protest, which was also called to highlight the cases of several jailed bloggers and journalists.

Hit by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation, poverty levels are back to where they were in 2014, the government's High Commission for Planning said in a recent report.

Consumer price inflation was 7.1 percent year-on-year in October, due in large part to surging food prices triggered partly by an intense drought that has hit farmers. Faced with the recent protests, Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch has lately promoted expanding medical coverage, with more than 10 million low-income Moroccans enrolling in recent weeks. —AFP



## Al-Sayer unveils all-new Toyota GR86 coupe 2023

KUWAIT: Sports car enthusiasts in Kuwait can look forward to an exciting addition to Toyota's GR collection as Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Est Co launched the all-new Toyota GR86 during GulfRun Grand Prix held in Kuwait Motor Town recently. The sleek and stylish coupe provides an entry point to Toyota's GR range, bringing the rewards of sports-focused handling and performance to a wider audience.

The new GR86 is an evolution of the previous GT86: the model launched a decade ago that signaled Toyota's renewed commitment to sports car engineering. The coupe retains the classic configuration of a front-mounted engine with rear-wheel drive and is designed to spread the joy of a fun driving experience, while inheriting the culture of the previous model. The development of Toyota's ever-growing GR models by the TOYOTA GAZOO Racing team fulfills the company's mission to use the experience and know-how gained from participation in motorsport to build 'ever-better cars.'

Yasunori Suezawa, chief engineer in charge of the vehicle's development, commented: "The GR86's mission is to open up the world of GR, enabling it to be enjoyed by more and more people. When you get behind the wheel, it is guaranteed to put a smile on your face. For that reason, we set 'smile behind the wheel' as our key development goal. Our objective was to develop a powerful yet fun-to-drive vehicle that would bring happiness to sports car fans. I believe we have achieved this and more: the new GR86 provides direct and satisfying performance that truly embodies the GR spirit."

Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, commented: "We are very excited to bring the new GR86 to our customers in the Middle

East. Designed for enthusiasts by enthusiasts, the latest addition to our GR range offers true sports car performance with a focus on added stability, power, and improved aerodynamics. Importantly, it is not simply for purists and those with high levels of experience: its rewards can be discovered day-to-day on the open road as much as on the track."

Fujita continued: "We are confident this latest addition to Toyota's GR range will give more people opportunities to experience the pure joy of driving. I would like to thank all our customers in the region for their endless support, which continuously inspires us on our journey to make 'ever-better cars.'"

The GR86 inherits the front-independent MacPherson struts and rear double-wishbone suspension system featured on the GT86, with a performance tuned for an even higher level of response and stable handling. The successful lowering of the center of gravity is central to the car's superior handling and exhilarating driving experience. As for the overall dimensions of the new GR86, they are close to those of its predecessor, yet, the height has been lowered by 10 mm (to 1,310 mm), while 5 mm has been added to the wheelbase (2,575 mm).

With its wide stance, the rear-wheel-drive coupe's handling changes come in the form of front and rear-frame reinforcements that increase rigidity. Functional exterior air vents were also added to further support steering stability. In addition, weight-shaving details, such as aluminum roof panels and fenders, ensure a nimble curb weight of just over 1,270 kg.

The 2.4L naturally aspirated, horizontally opposed four-cylinder boxer engine brings a significant power upgrade, increasing from 205 to 233 hp and 212 to 250 nm of torque. The power boost stems from a series of tweaks, including increased bore size, changes to the intake and exhaust systems, and optimization of the Toyota D-4S dual injection technology. These deliver a responsive and powerful driving experience, particularly when coming out of curves onto straight roads. In addition, drivers can choose between a 6-speed manual (MT) or automatic transmission (AT). The bigger engine also improves zero-to-60 times, from 7.0 to 6.3 seconds for the MT and from 8.0 to 6.9 seconds for the AT.

With a refined, aerodynamic profile, the new



GR86 boasts a sleek and assertive look with a long hood and short rear deck highlighting its racing-inspired proportions. The front of the vehicle features a GR-specific Functional MATRIX 'G Mesh' Grille, which fuses performance and expressiveness. Its angular LED headlights complement the aerodynamic front air dams and vents, with side sill spoilers to aid steering responsiveness and stability. The tightened wheel arches at the vehicle's rear express a wide stance, while arch fins control airflow. Aerodynamic fins have also been added to the lower rear bumper to further enhance stability.

The 2023 GR86's driver-focused cockpit is designed to elevate the daily driving experience while also offering a simplicity that keeps drivers squarely focused on the road. It features a 7-inch Thin Film Transistor (TFT) screen, which displays all-new three-mode digital instrumentation, including Normal, Sport, and Track modes. While in Track mode, drivers receive real-time readouts of gear position, engine speed, water temperature, and oil temperature. The horizontally configured instrument panel now has LCD toggle displays with silver trimmed dials that give the cabin a modern, race-inspired feel. Standard sport front bucket seats with side bolster firmly hold drivers in place around each corner. The GR86 also brings everyday usability with 2+2 seating that offers the versatility of fold-down rear seats.

## Vodafone CEO to step down after four years at helm

LONDON: Vodafone chief executive Nick Read is stepping down, the British telecoms group said Monday, after a four-year tenure marked by a steep fall in the company's share price. Read will leave his role at the end of December following more than 20 years at the group, a statement said.

He will be replaced on an interim basis by Vodafone's chief financial officer Margherita Della Valle, who will continue her current role while Vodafone seeks out a permanent replacement.

His surprise resignation comes after Vodafone recently announced flat earnings for its first half and follows a near 20-percent drop in its share price this year. "I agreed with the board that now is the right moment to hand over to a new leader who

can build on Vodafone's strengths and capture the significant opportunities ahead," Read said in the statement.

He departs with Vodafone in talks over merging its UK operations with rival Three UK, owned by Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison. Vodafone believes a combination would accelerate the rollout of 5G telecoms technology in the UK, which has been partly hampered by Britain banning Chinese giant Huawei from involvement in the technology offering faster downloads than 4G.

Vodafone's share price was flat at 91 pence following Monday's announcement. "With the shares languishing at their lowest levels in more than 20 years it is hard to describe departing Vodafone CEO Nick Read's tenure as anything other than a disappointment," noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell. "Read's final set of results last month did him absolutely no favors, as Vodafone downgraded full-year guidance."

He also came under pressure from major activist investor Cevian Capital, which recently slashed its stake in Vodafone. However, Read "helped to steer the telecoms giant through the challenges of the

by the Glencore Group between 2007 and 2018.

The settlement with DRC is related to investigations by the country's authorities and the US Department of Justice, Glencore said. "Glencore is a long-standing investor in the DRC and is pleased to have reached this agreement to address the consequences of its past conduct," Glencore chairman Kalidas Madhavpeddi said. Glencore disclosed in 2018 that the US Justice Department had launched a corruption investigation linked to the group's business in Nigeria, Venezuela and DRC.

A year later, Britain's Serious Fraud Office said it was investigating suspicions of bribery by the Glencore group of companies and staff in DRC. Brazil also opened a probe in 2018 into Glencore



BARCELONA, Spain: In this file photo taken on February 25, 2019, Vodafone chief executive officer Nick Read speaks at the Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona. —AFP

pandemic, aiding connectivity when individuals and households were forced to stay home during strict lockdowns", said Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor. —AFP

and trading groups Vitol and Trafigura over alleged bribery of employees at state-run oil company Petrobras. In May, the group reached a settlement with Brazilian, British and US authorities, pleading guilty to corruption in Africa and South America.

Glencore agreed to pay a \$700 million fine to the United States for fraud and corruption in Brazil, Cameroon, Nigeria and Venezuela, and misappropriation of confidential information in Mexico.

The company was also hit with \$486 million in fines and forfeitures for oil price contract manipulation. Last month, a UK court ordered Glencore to pay £280 million (\$313 million) following an investigation into bribes paid to gain preferential access to oil in several African countries. —AFP



Lifestyle | Features

Egypt is using the ancient grandeur of its pyramids as a backdrop for modern pop concerts and fashion shows, hoping to boost its image, tourism and the luxury brand sector beloved by its moneyed elite. French fashion house Dior debuted its latest collection Saturday at the Giza pyramids, after Italian designer Stefano Ricci held a show at Luxor's dramatic Temple of Hatshepsut in October. Dior CEO Pietro Beccari told AFP the fashion house chose the pyramids as far more than "just a useless background", drawing on Egyptian astrology for the collection named "Celestial".

Before that, American pop bands Maroon 5 and the Black Eyed Peas performed at the Giza Necropolis, where contemporary art was also recently shown at the latest Art d'Egypte exhibition. The modern cultural push is a new direction for Egypt's image. Long a cultural powerhouse in the Arab world, with wildly popular singers and movie stars especially in its heyday in the 1950s-70s, Egypt has set its sights on its ancient heritage to attract the global spotlight once more.

A harbinger of the new embrace of ancient culture and history was a "golden parade" last year of 22 pharaohs that crossed Cairo from an old to a new museum in a carnival-style grand spectacle. It was part of a push by President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's government to revive tourism, which accounts for 10 percent of GDP and some two million jobs but has been hammered by political unrest, economic upheaval and the Covid pandemic.



(From left to right) The Pyramid of Menkaure (Menkheres), the Pyramid of Khafre (Chephren), and the Great Pyramid of Khufu (Cheops) are illuminated as a band plays at the Christian Dior fashion show at the Giza Pyramids Necropolis on the outskirts of the twin city of Egypt's capital.

'Vital' glamour

Showcasing Egypt's heritage in a new context "will encourage other brands and international cultural figures to come to Egypt," said art historian Bahia Shehab. Fashion photographer Mohsen Othman agreed that such glamorous events are "vital". Big brands like Dior "come in with a huge budget," employ local talent and "support young creators who can put



Visitors pose by the "Orb: Under the same Sun" installation by Madrid-based international artist SpY.

Egypt on the global fashion map". Iman Eldeeb, whose agency cast two Egyptian models for Saturday's show, told AFP it was a "long-awaited step for the fashion world in Egypt".

brands. The boutiques in the shopping centers of Cairo's chic new satellite cities, she said, are "up to the standards of international luxury brands".

'Young creative talent'

Egypt's bubble of super rich has helped create a home-grown fashion design scene whose pioneers have recently ventured onto the catwalks of Milan and Paris. At this year's Paris Fashion Week, Cairo-based luxury brand Okhtein showed a resin-made bustier that evoked Egyptian alabaster at French fashion house Balmain's show.

It was a rare success story for Egypt's creative sector, where "most people are self-taught, working hard with scarce resources to try and meet international standards," said Othman, the photographer. Ismail said the country's luxury clothing and jewelry market "has gone from under 100 Egyptian brands to more than 1,000 today", fuelled by "a huge pool of young creative talent". International events offer rare exposure, but getting them to the country is still a challenge.

"It is a big step for the government to authorize Art d'Egypte and Dior to organize events at the foot of the pyramids," the art show's curator, Nadine Abdel Ghaffar, told AFP. Red tape and tight restrictions can still get in the way, she suggested, conceding that "the legislative framework

is complicated".

Timeless marvels

But "promoting the country's culture" must be a priority, added Abdel Ghaffar, who believes a dedicated government body could better promote exhibitions, concerts, shows and even film production. Shehab, the art historian, said many realize that Egypt, known for its timeless architectural marvels in the desert, needs to project an updated image of itself. "There's more and more awareness about the need for soft power and for culture as a representation for the country," she said,

cautioning however that Egypt still requires "better infrastructure" to make this happen.

She even dared dream that Egypt could draw in Hollywood productions, if it only starts granting permits. "We have lost count of the number of international productions that have resorted to shooting in Morocco, Jordan or Saudi Arabia," she said. The latest Egypt-themed production was a Disney+ TV miniseries, Marvel Comics' "Moon Knight," for which two entire Cairo city blocks were built from scratch on a set in Budapest. — AFP



In this file photo models present creations by Italy's iconic fashion house Stefano Ricci at the temple of the Ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Hatshepsut on the west bank of the Nile river, off Egypt's southern city of Luxor. — AFP photos



This file photo shows a view of the sculpture "Spirit of Hathor" by British-American sculptor Natalie Clark.



This file photo shows a view of the installation "Dreams in Giza" by Cameroonian artist Pascale Marthine Tayou at the Giza pyramids necropolis during the second edition of the Art d'Egypte exhibition "Forever is Now".



This file photo taken on November 4, 2022, shows an installation dubbed "Secrets of Time" by Tunisian artist El Seed at the Giza pyramids necropolis during the second edition of the Art d'Egypte exhibition "Forever is Now".

'Wakanda' stays atop N America box office for 4th week

"Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" saw weekend ticket sales drop to an estimated \$17.6 million but still extended its rule of the North American box office for a fourth week, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. The Disney/Marvel sequel had taken in nearly \$46 million for the previous Friday-through-Sunday period. Still, its domestic total has now reached an impressive \$393.7 million on top of \$339 million in international ticket sales.

Universal's new holiday-timed "Violent Night" placed second for the weekend at \$13.3 million, "a solid opening for an action comedy," said David A. Gross of Franchise Entertainment Research. David Harbour of



"Stranger Things" fame stars as a cranky, sledgehammer-wielding Santa who comes to the rescue when bad guys invade a rich family's home on Christmas Eve. Gross said the film should play well until the December 16 release of much-anticipated "Avatar: The Way of Water."

Disney's computer-animated sci-fi film "Strange World" claimed third place while taking in just \$4.9 million. Given its \$180 million production budget, "the movie could lose more than \$100 million," according to HollywoodReporter.com. In fourth was Searchlight's horror-comedy "The Menu," at \$3.6 million. Ralph Fiennes plays a celebrity chef who serves up some dark surprises. And in fifth was Sony's "Devotion," an action movie about two US fighter pilots during the Korean War, at \$2.8 million.

- Rounding out the top 10 were:
- "I Heard the Bells" (\$1.8 million)
- "Black Adam" (\$1.7 million)
- "The Fabelmans" (\$1.3 million)
- "Bones and All" (\$1.2 million)
- "Ticket to Paradise" (\$850,000)—AFP

Acclaimed French author Dominique Lapierre of 'City of Joy' dies at 91

French writer Dominique Lapierre, the author of best-selling books on India like "Freedom at Midnight" and "City of Joy" and whose novels sold tens of millions of copies, has died. "At 91, he died of old age," his wife Dominique Conchon-Lapierre told the French newspaper Var-Matin on Sunday. She added that she is "at peace and serene since Dominique is no longer suffering". Born on July 30, 1931, in Chateaulillon, Lapierre has sold about 50 million copies of the six books he wrote in collaboration with the American writer Larry Collins—the most famous being "Is Paris Burning?"

The non-fiction book published in 1965 chronicled the events leading up to August 1944, when Nazi Germany surrendered control of the French capital, and was adapted for the silver screen by Francis Ford Coppola and Gore Vidal. His 1985 novel "City of Joy"—about the hardships of a rickshaw puller in Kolkata—was also a massive success. A movie based on it was released in 1992, starring Patrick Swayze and directed by Roland Joffe.

Lapierre donated the bulk of his royalties from "City of Joy" to support humanitarian projects in India. When he visited Mother Teresa in Kolkata in the early 1980s, he presented her with \$50,000, admitting it was "only a drop in the ocean of need". The Albanian nun reportedly replied: "If this drop did not exist, even the ocean would not".

In 2005, Lapierre said that thanks to his funding of humanitarian work, as well

as donations from readers, it became "possible to cure a million tuberculosis patients in 24 years (and) to care for 9,000 children with leprosy". "It's not enough to just be a best-selling author," said the adventure-loving novelist, who spoke fluent Bengali. "You need to fight against the injustices you write about in your books."

'Idol' in West Bengal

Born to a diplomat father and a journalist mother, Lapierre worked as a reporter for French magazine Paris-Match in the 1950s—a job that sent him around the world. In West Bengal, he

was "revered as an idol"—according to a 2012 article by Paris Match magazine—when he banged the drum for funding for humanitarian centres as donations dried up following the economic crisis in the United States and Europe. After "Is Paris Burning?", he continued his fruitful partnership with Collins.

The duo specialized in highly researched dramatizations of historical events, such as the creation of Israel ("O Jerusalem", 1972) and the Indian independence movement in the "Freedom at Midnight" (1975) — largely considered a moving and seminal account of the partition of India. Their success was credited to how they complemented each other—Lapierre had contacts in the French intelligence services while Collins worked with the CIA. Both authors also wrote in their respective languages, and translated each other's work. And if Lapierre's prose tended to the lyrical, Collins insisted on a firm grounding in facts.

They also co-wrote "Or I'll Dress You in Mourning", a biography of the Spanish bullfighter El Cordobes, and two fiction thrillers about terrorist plans to destroy New York—"The Fifth Horseman" in 1980 and "Is New York Burning?" in 2004. The first had Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi as the villain, and the second was inspired by the September 11, 2001 attacks by Islamic militants. For a long time, Lapierre lived near Collins in Saint-Tropez, their residences separated by a tennis court. —AFP



In this file photo French writer Dominique Lapierre gestures as he greets Indian President Pratibha Patil during the presentation of the 'Padma Awards 2008' at the President House in New Delhi. — AFP





This file photo taken on October 5, 1995 shows the cinema Le Grand Rex, in Paris. —AFP photos



Picture taken on October 5, 1995 of the cinema Le Grand Rex, in Paris.

# How Paris cinemas are surviving

Spinning once again, the sign above France's biggest cinema, the Grand Rex, is testament to how well Paris venues have weathered the twin threats of streaming and the pandemic. The 2,700-seat Art Deco venue reopened last week after a major facelift to mark its 90th birthday. It has reason to be hopeful: ticket sales in France are down just 10 percent on pre-COVID levels, compared to almost a third in the United States. That is partly due to the country's long-standing love affair with its cinemas, immortalized in 1960s New Wave classic "Breathless", in which Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg duck in and out of theatres along the Champs Elysees.



This file photo shows the main screening room of the Grand Rex cinema in Paris.

Lang was here. I'll never forget it!"

## Diversification

Paris authorities say there are 398 screens across 75 venues-up eight percent on 2000 — and down just slightly from 411 in 2019. Survival requires some creativity. To coax viewers off their sofas, the Grand Rex has been offering "event" screenings such as manga previews and film marathons that cater to the biggest fans. Its history has made it a popular choice for premieres, with Steven Spielberg next on the agenda for the launch of "The Fabelmans".

It also requires diversification. The Rex moonlights as a nightclub, escape game venue-and most importantly as a concert hall, featuring everyone from Madonna to Bob Dylan. "If we had to survive on the cinema alone, we would have closed the doors long ago," said manager Alexandre Hellmann. He added that 71 bigger halls have opened during the Rex's lifetime but none have lasted.

## 'Evolution'

While the overall picture is positive, the map of Paris cinemas is evolving. Next year will see the reopening of the Japanese-style La Pagode, another mythic venue. And in 2024, the Pathe Palace, billed as the most beautiful cinema in the world, will open next to the Paris Opera. But this shift is coming at the expense of other historic areas.

Rising rents are threatening many cinemas, particularly on the Champs Elysees, where the renowned Marignan will soon shut for good. "It was THE cinema district in Paris but it is disappearing, due particularly to the exorbitant rents," said Michel Gomez, who leads the city's "Mission Cinema" to support the industry. "It's hard to see cinemas close but cinema in Paris is a living fabric. It follows the sociological and geographical evolution of the city," he said. — AFP

## Scientists in Peru discover two new endangered plant species

A group of Peruvian and international botanists has discovered two new species of plant that are endangered by mining activity in the Peruvian Andes, the University of San Marcos reported Tuesday. The new species, named "Viola ornata" and "Viola longibracteolata," belong to the

Neo-andinium subgenus of Viola, which in Peru currently has 15 species.

"San Marquino botanists are publishing a study in which they reveal two new species of plants found in Arequipa and Moquegua, and which are in critical danger due to mining activity," the university said in a statement. This sub-

genus brings together species that are mostly found inhabiting the Andes, at extremely high altitudes, in remote areas little explored between 12,500 and 16,400 feet (3,800 and 5,000 meters) above sea level.

The new species are perennial herbs, quite hairy in appearance, that

grow in rosettes with small flowers, and their coloration and shape help them blend them with their environment. "The conservation status of both new species is critically endangered, mainly due to the decrease in the quality of their current and potential habitats, since these areas are seriously impacted by exten-

sive mining exploitation," the statement added. The plants were recently found in the high Andes in the Moquegua and Arequipa regions, in the south of the country. — AFP

## Meet the Spanish twin chefs who earned a third Michelin star

When they were just eight years old, Spanish twins Sergio and Javier Torres set a goal: they wanted to become chefs who were among the top in their field. To achieve this, they strategically split up to get training in different esteemed kitchens around the world, published books on cooking and presented a popular TV show. The plan worked.

Over four decades after they surprised their family by saying they wanted to be chefs, Sergio and Javier's Barcelona restaurant, Cocina Hermanos Torres, was awarded a third Michelin star



A meal getting prepared by the Spanish twin chefs, Javier and Sergio Torres in the kitchen of their restaurant 'Cocina Hermanos Torres'.

last month. "We developed a plan, that I think is a perfect plan," a smiling Javier, 51, said at the restaurant, one of only 13 in Spain and Portugal with the top three-star ranking from the prestigious French guide.

"When we started to go out of Barcelona, we thought that Sergio would take one path, I would take another, and we would never coincide until we were ready," he added. The journey took the twins—who grew up in a working-class Barcelona neighborhood - to different elite restaurants in Spain, Switzerland and France.

Before moving to Paris where he worked with top French chef Alain Ducasse, Sergio spent two years at the award-winning Le Jardin des Sens in Montpellier which is also run by twins-Jacques and Laurent Pourcel. "We were separated but every month we met up in a restaurant, ate well, we spent the little money we had and developed the next steps of our strategy," said Sergio as he sat beside his brother.

### Grandmother influence

Each brother specialized in different areas—one learned to cook meat and vegetables, the other fish and bread, he added. Both siblings credit their grandmother for their passion for cooking. She

was part of a wave of people who moved from the southern region of Andalusia to the more industrialized Catalonia in the northeast in search of a better life following Spain's devastating 1936-39 civil war.

"Our grandmother looked after us, and since she was in the kitchen all day we literally grew up in a kitchen," said Sergio. After earning two Michelin stars with their previous project "Dos Cielos" and becoming familiar faces thanks to their participation in a cooking show, they decided to open Cocina Hermanos Torres in 2018. The twins visited some 200 possible locations before settling on an industrial building near Barcelona's iconic Camp Nou football stadium.

They invested nearly three million euros to convert it into the restaurant, which seats a maximum of 50 people at tables with no wall separating them from the three workstations where staff prepare meals. "We wanted to reflect what we experienced in our childhood, which was a kitchen and a table, and everyone around the table," said Javier.

### 'Difficult road'

The tasting menu costs 255 euros (\$265), with another 160 euros if it is paired with wine, a stiff price in a country where the monthly minimum wage is around 1,000 euros. Praised for its creative and playful cuisine, among the dishes served is cured squid with poultry broth and an onion soup with Parmesan cheese and truffles. "You will experience flavors that you have never experienced before, because you will discover a cuisine where you will like what you don't like," said Sergio.

On a recent visit at noon, 50 staff members—many of them young—are busy at work finalizing details before customers arrive. "It seems like today a chef is like a 'super star'. It's a very difficult road, very difficult, with long hours and it's very hard to make it, it takes tremendous perseverance," said Sergio. "You have to risk it, go for broke, give it your all because if you don't, you are not living," he added with a smile. — AFP



Spanish twin chefs, Javier (right) and Sergio (third left) prepare some meals in the kitchen of their restaurant 'Cocina Hermanos Torres' after receiving the distinction of three-stars from the Michelin guide, in Barcelona.



Spanish chef, Javier Torres tastes a meal in the kitchen of his restaurant 'Cocina Hermanos Torres'.



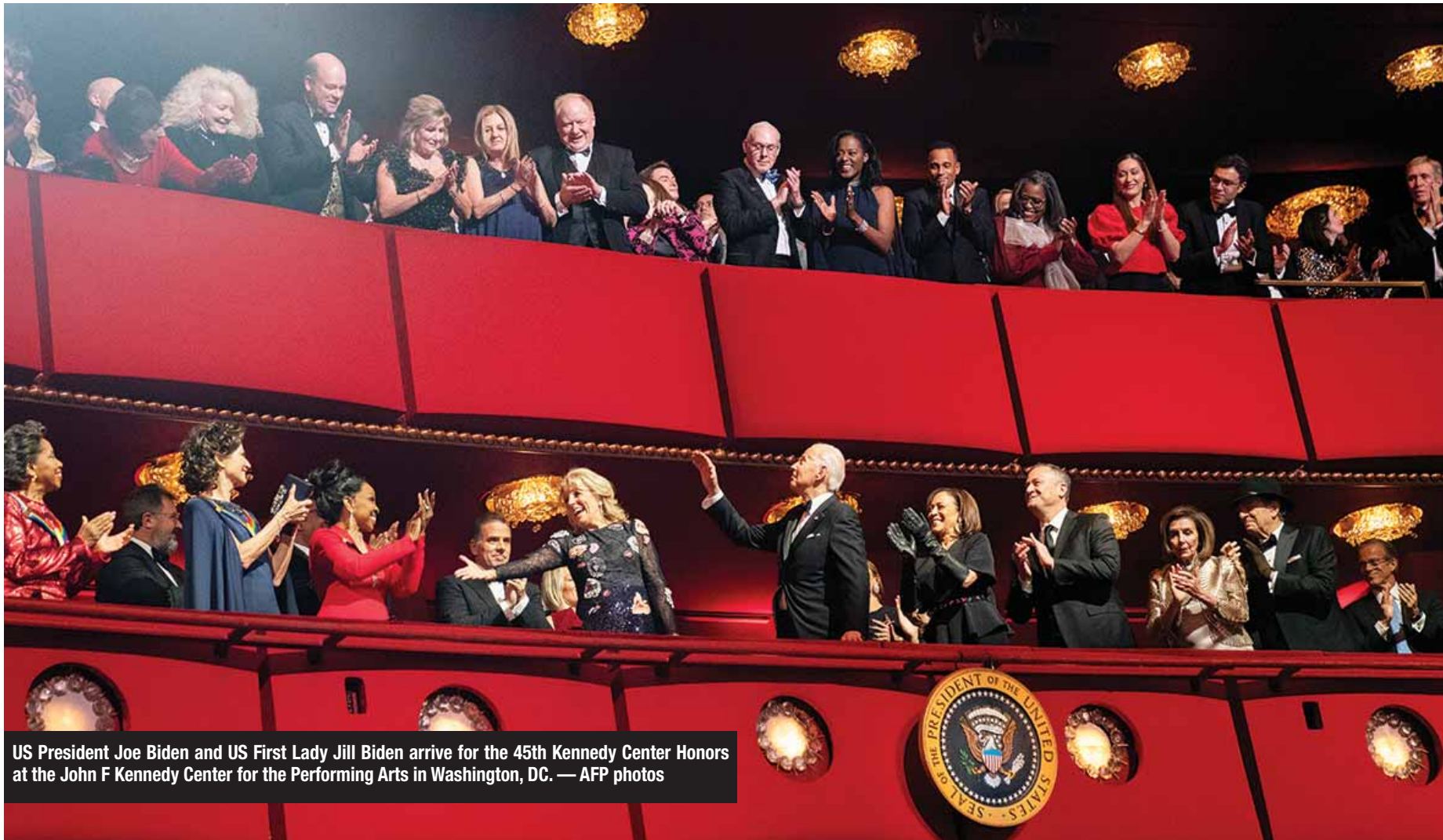
Spanish twin chefs, Javier (right) and Sergio (left) prepare some meals in the kitchen of their restaurant 'Cocina Hermanos Torres'.



Spanish twin chefs, Javier (left) and Sergio Torres pose in the kitchen of their restaurant 'Cocina Hermanos Torres' after receiving the distinction of three-stars from the Michelin guide, in Barcelona. — AFP photos



Lifestyle | Features



US President Joe Biden and US First Lady Jill Biden arrive for the 45th Kennedy Center Honors at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

# Glitzy Washington gala honors legendary artists including George Clooney, U2

Hollywood's finest joined politicians including President Joe Biden for a rare night of Washington glitz Sunday, celebrating the newest Kennedy Center honorees, including George Clooney and U2. Soul legend Gladys Knight, along with Cuban-born American composer Tania Leon and contemporary Christian pop artist Amy Grant rounded out the 45th annual class receiving the highest US arts honor, after the elite group of stars enjoyed a special weekend in the American capital honoring their illustrious careers.

journalists on the red carpet that the event, which he had grown up watching on television in small-town Kentucky, was "exciting."

Speaking at the traditional State Department dinner one night prior, Clooney, 61, joked that during his extensive travel, both as an artist and as a humanitarian, he was told one universal truth: "You sucked at Batman." The self-deprecating celebrity has an impressive list of films to his name, as an actor and as director and producer—"Michael Clayton," "Syriana" and "Ocean's Eleven"

### Trump jabs

Eddie Vedder of rock band Pearl Jam led a rollicking tribute to U2's vast songbook, singing the hit "Elevation" in his signature power warble, later bringing down the house with the ballad "One." And Ukrainian singer Jamala joined Brandi Carlile and Hozier for a rendition of the U2 track "Walk On," in support of Ukraine's ongoing fight against Russia.

Actor Sean Penn also praised bandmembers Bono, the Edge, Adam Clayton and Larry Mullen Jr, calling them "great musical poets for the ages" who manage to stay "consistently relevant" despite nearly half-a-century in the industry. And Sacha Baron Cohen-in character as his darkly humorous Borat-delivered a comedic tribute to the band that drew laughs, raised eyebrows and had actor Roberts cracking up as he twistedly speared Kanye West's recent outbursts of anti-Semitism and pretended to mistake Biden to ex-president Donald Trump. "Your pretty orange skin has become pale," he said to Biden, as First Lady Jill burst into laughter.

### Powerful women

Empress of Soul Knight earned heartfelt accolades including from LL Cool J, who praised her as foundational across genres including gospel, country, rock and hip hop. "I once heard Gladys sing the ABCs and I thought I was in church-true story," the rapper told the audience. Singers Ariana DeBose, Mickey Guyton and Garth Brooks delivered heart-pounding versions of some of her most beloved songs, including the standard "Midnight Train to Georgia."

Pulitzer Prize- and Grammy-award winning Leon, 79, has already won numerous recognitions for her pioneering, sweeping compositions and chamber works that followed her immigration to the United States from Cuba as a refugee at age 24. The moving program honoring her life's work brought the artist-herself a regular performer at the Kennedy Center to tears. Speaking prior to the show on the red carpet, Leon told AFP she was pleased the Kennedy Center was recognizing types of classical music outside the Western-oriented understanding of the genre.

"There's many, many classical pieces in the world, of different nations or difficult



(From left) Honorees U2 bandmembers Irish musicians Larry Mullen Jr, Adam Clayton, The Edge and Bono, US actor George Clooney and US singer Gladys Knight attend the 45th Kennedy Center Honors.

During the glamorous main event at the Kennedy Center-Washington's performing arts complex that serves as a living monument to slain president John F. Kennedy-the inductees were honored with seats in the opera house's presidential box. They joined the president and first lady as well as the vice president and second gentleman, along with other politicians including Nancy Pelosi and her husband, who was making a public appearance weeks after he was violently attacked and hospitalized when an intruder looking for the congresswoman broke into their California home.

Clooney-accompanied by his human rights lawyer wife Amal Clooney, who stunned in a glittering silver gown-told

among them.

"You must be someone pretty special in the arts, Mr. Clooney," joked Sesame Street children's TV icon Big Bird, a fellow Kennedy Center inductee. Julia Roberts donned a ballroom gown adorned with images of Clooney, her longtime friend and frequent collaborator, whom she called "the best combination of a gentleman and playmate." "Not only is he handsome, and talented in all mediums he chooses to tackle, he is profoundly present and attentive to the world around him," Roberts said of the actor. Roberts, along with Matt Damon, Richard Kind and Don Cheadle both razed and praised Clooney before the beloved actor's father Nick delivered a touching speech of his own.



Muppet character Big Bird and CBS anchor Major Garrett.



Honoree US actor George Clooney and his wife Lebanese-British barrister Amal Clooney.



English actor Sacha Baron Cohen and Australian actress Isla Fisher.

## Suspect charged with murder in shooting of rapper Takeoff

Houston police said they arrested and charged with murder a man suspected in the killing of rapper Takeoff, a member of the influential hip hop group Migos, who was fatally shot last month. Speaking at a press conference, Houston Police Chief Troy Finner said Patrick Xavier Clark, 33, was arrested on Thursday evening in connection with the death of Takeoff, who was one of three people shot November 1 at a bowling alley in Houston. One day previously Cameron Joshua, 22, was charged with unlawful carrying of a weapon.

Houston Police Sgt. Michael Burrow said that the shooting at a private party followed an argument over a "lucrative dice game," but that Takeoff was uninvolved and "an innocent bystander." He also said the investigation remained ongoing. "Gun violence everywhere, not just in the city of Houston, has to stop," said the city's mayor, Sylvester Turner, on Friday, calling the shooting a case of a "young man taking the life of another young man for no reason." "Pulling a firearm can have deadly consequences that you cannot undo."



Born in Lawrenceville, Georgia on June 18, 1994, Takeoff was best known for his membership in Migos along with Quavo, his uncle, and Offset, his cousin who is married to fellow rapper Cardi B. The Atlanta-based Migos soared to prominence off their viral 2013 song "Versace," which Drake remixed.

The trio later recorded "Walk It Talk It" with the Canadian superstar rapper. It was 2016's hit "Bad and Boujee" that first saw them hit number one, a song emblematic of their signature flow, a unique cadence of staccato lyrical bursts in triplet rhythm. The smash has been streamed 1.5 billion times in the United States alone. In the weeks following the shooting Quavo penned an emotional tribute to Takeoff, praising his relative's "REAL passion for music." "He created his triplet flow and the rest was HISTORY," Quavo wrote. "He never worried about titles, credit, or what man got the most shine, that wasn't him. —AFP"



Honoree Irish musician The Edge.

cultural backgrounds," she said. She voiced delight at having visited the White House, describing to journalists an endearing anecdote of the president



Kennedy Center honoree Bono of Irish band U2.

showing her the woodwork on his enormous desk. And stars including Sheryl Crow and the country supergroup the Highwomen-comprised of Carlile, Natalie Hemby, Maren Morris and Amanda Shires-turned out to honor Grant. The 62-year-old Grammy winner is the first contemporary Christian star the Kennedy Center has ever inducted, and said "never in my wildest dreams" did she envision receiving the honor. — AFP

## German archive acquires trove of works by poet Rilke

A huge collection of letters and manuscripts by modernist poet Rainer Maria Rilke has been handed over to the public German Literature Archive (DLA), the archive said Thursday. Known as the so-called Gernsbach collection, the biggest existing archive of Rilke's works and letters had been in private hands for almost 100 years, representatives from the DLA told journalists in Berlin. Sandra Richter, director of the archive located in Marbach, near Stuttgart, described the deal as the "acquisition of the century". "We now want to make Rilke's estate speak," she said, announcing a major exhibition in 2025 to mark the 150th anniversary of the poet's birth.



The collection was acquired for an undisclosed sum with funds from the federal government, the state of Baden-Wuerttemberg and various private foundations. As well as more than 10,000 handwritten pages with drafts of works and notes, it includes around 8,800 letters to and from Rilke. These include correspondence from his longtime lover, the Russian-born psychoanalyst Lou Andreas-Salome, and the French poet Paul Valery, a friend of his.

There are also more than 470 books annotated by Rilke, 131 drawings and more than 300 photographs from all phases of his life, according to the DLA. Rilke, who lived from 1875 to 1926, is considered one of the most important German-language writers of the modern era, along with Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann.

He lived in various European countries and maintained an extensive correspondence with the intellectuals of his time. Experts consider the Gernsbach collection to be one of the most important surviving legacies of a German-language poet. —AFP



## Sports

# Davis dazzles in Lakers' 130-119 victory over Washington Wizards

## Celtics trounce Nets; Suns rout Spurs

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis dazzled in the Los Angeles Lakers' 130-119 NBA victory over the Washington Wizards on Sunday, scoring 55 points with 17 rebounds in his 10th straight game of at least 20 points. Davis added three blocked shots as he followed up a 44-point performance in the team's triumph over the Milwaukee Bucks on Friday.

He said after that game he believed the team was turning a corner after a rocky start to the season. With injury troubles behind him, Davis said, he's finding his rhythm. "I've been feeling really good, confident in all my shots, playing with a great pace," said Davis, who connected on a blistering 22 of his 30 attempts from the floor.

That included two of three from three-point range, and he made all nine of his free throw attempts in a devastatingly efficient performance. He's the first Laker since Kobe Bryant in 2013 to record back-to-back 40-point games. "Guys are doing a great job of finding me," Davis said. "It's a team effort... all these guys are putting me in position to be successful. I think our entire team mindset is just coming out with effort on both ends of the floor."

Superstar LeBron James scored 29 points, Lonnie Walker IV added 20 and Westbrook added six points with 15 assists as the Lakers won their third straight and eighth in their last 10 games. It wasn't all smooth sailing, however, as the Lakers saw a 29-point lead midway through the third quarter dwindle to nine points with six minutes to play. "They were playing desperate basketball," James said. "They were just jacking it and getting up and down the floor, it caught us on our heels a little bit. But

we played a great game."

The Boston Celtics, whose scorching start to the season is a stark contrast to the Lakers', rebounded from an overtime loss to the Miami Heat with a 103-92 home win over the Brooklyn Nets. Jaylen Brown scored 34 points and Jayson Tatum added 29. Malcolm Brogdon scored 13 off the bench as the Celtics reserves outscored Brooklyn's bench 24-15. Kevin Durant led the Knicks with 31 points, seven rebounds, five assists, two steals and two blocked shots. Kyrie Irving added 18 but Brooklyn's four-game winning streak was halted.

In New Orleans, Pelicans guard Jose Alvarado drilled eight three-pointers on the way to a career-high 38 points in the hosts' 121-106 victory over the Denver Nuggets. The 24-year-old from Puerto Rico notched the most points by any player coming off the bench this season. Pels star Zion Williamson added 25 points as New Orleans withstood 32 points, 16 rebounds and eight assists from Denver's two-time defending MVP Nikola Jokic. Frustrated Nuggets coach Michael Malone was ejected with 2:03 remaining after jawing with an official.

### Suns rout Spurs

The victory put the Pelicans in second place in the Western Conference, one game behind the Phoenix Suns, who had little trouble in a 133-95 victory over the Spurs in San Antonio. Deandre Ayton scored 25 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and Devin Booker and Mikal Bridges scored 20 points apiece as the Suns notched their seventh win in eight games.

The Spurs dropped their 11th straight. The



WASHINGTON: Kyle Kuzma #33 of the Washington Wizards and LeBron James #6 of the Los Angeles Lakers battle for the ball in the fourth quarter of the game at Capital One Arena on December 04, 2022. —AFP

Portland Trail Blazers welcomed Damian Lillard back from a seven-game injury absence with a 116-100 victory over the Indiana Pacers. In Detroit, Memphis star Ja Morant enjoyed another big game, scoring 33 points in the Grizzlies' wire-to-wire 122-112 victory over the Pistons. In

Sacramento, the Kings withstood a 41-point performance from Chicago's Zach LaVine in a 110-101 victory over the Bulls. Malik Monk led the Kings with 20 points off the bench with seven Kings players—including all five starters—scoring in double figures. —AFP

## Browns down Texans, Eagles as Bengals win

LOS ANGELES: Deshaun Watson was less than impressive in his return from an NFL suspension Sunday, but Cleveland's defensive dominance saw him win his Browns debut 27-14 over the Houston Texans. With playoff races heating up around the league, there was little riding on the contest in Houston. But the first game in almost two years for quarterback Watson - who was suspended for 11 games after more than two dozen women accused him of sexual assault and inappropriate conduct during massage sessions - put the game in the spotlight.

Watson had already missed all of the 2021 season for the Texans before the Browns controversially acquired him. On Sunday he was booed by Houston fans on every snap and clearly showed the effects of his time off. "I'll just say I felt every one of those 700 days," said Watson after the Browns offense generated just six points - on field goals from Cade York.

Donovan Peoples-Jones took a punt return 76 yards for a Cleveland touchdown, cornerback Denzel Ward had a four-yard fumble return for a touchdown, and linebacker Tony Fields returned an interception 16 yards for a TD to make up for the Browns' lack of offensive production. Elsewhere, Philadelphia inched closer to a playoff berth with a 35-10 victory over the Tennessee Titans that took their league-best record to 11-1.

The Cincinnati Bengals again got the better of Kansas City, beating the Chiefs 27-24, and the San Francisco 49ers shook off the early injury departure of quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo to beat the Miami Dolphins 33-17. With Garoppolo sidelined early, the 49ers defense came through, containing the potentially explosive Dolphins offense. Miami opened the game with a 75-yard touchdown by Trent Sherfield on their first play from scrimmage, but struggled to move the ball from there. San Francisco didn't allow a third-down conversion in the game, the Dolphins mustering just 14 first downs.

Rookie Brock Purdy came in for Garoppolo and threw two touchdown passes as the Niners snapped Miami's five-game winning streak. But 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan said there were "mixed emotions" after the game as the team learned Garoppolo had broken his left foot and would require season-ending surgery. Eagles quarterback Jalen Hurts threw for three touchdowns and ran for another, exiting the field to chants of "M-V-P!" Philadelphia wide receiver AJ Brown torched his former team with a game-high eight catches for 119 yards and two touchdowns. —AFP

## First edition of AlGhanim Show Jumping Competition

KUWAIT: The first edition of the Al-Ghanem showjumping competition that was held at Kuwait Riding Club was highly competitive between riders from all local clubs, and had record attendance of spectators as well as riders, who reached 70 of both genders in some rounds, particularly in the intermediate category, which is promising for the equestrian sport. Competitions in greater heights also witnessed good participation by riders, an indication the sport is getting more popular in Kuwait despite the extremely high costs borne by riders and their families in bringing in horses and having long summer camps.

Competition director and member of the higher organizing committee, rider Jassem Al-Khalifan, said major support from competition patron Jassem Abdulaziz Al-Ghanem and competition idea presenter, rider Badriya Jassem Al-Ghanem, in addition to the attendance of several VIPs including Badriya Yousuf Al-Ghanem, Khawla Yousuf Al-Ghanem, Sheikh Dr Ibrahim Al-Duaij and Talal Abdelaziz Al-Ghanem, supported the riders.



## Kuwaiti shooter Al-Rashidi grabs bronze medal

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The delegation that participated in the ISSF PRESIDENT'S CUP in Cairo returned home on Sunday with shooter Talal Al-Rashidi securing the bronze medal - ranking third in the world. President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federation Engr Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi told journalists at the airport "we are pleased to receive shooter Al-Rashidi who won the third place among the best 12 shooters of the world in the Trap Event." Al-Otaibi on behalf of the shooting community congratulated HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince and HH the Prime Minister for this win. He also thanked all those who support the sport. He said invitations were already made for world champions to participate in HH the Amir Shooting Grand Prix tournament - to be held in February.



## Saudi 'sole bidder' to host 2027 Asian Cup after India exit

KUALA LUMPUR: Saudi Arabia on Monday became the sole bidder to host the 2027 Asian

Cup after India withdrew its bid. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said in a statement that the All India Football Federation had pulled out from the selection. The statement did not provide any reasons for India's decision.

In October the AFC's executive committee shortlisted India and Saudi Arabia as potential hosts. "The Asian Football Confederation has been officially notified by the All India Football

Federation (AIFF) of their decision to withdraw their bid from the AFC Asian Cup 2027 host selection process," the regional body said Monday without elaborating. Three-time champions Saudi Arabia will now probably host their first AFC Asian Cup. The AFC Congress will formally decide the host in the Bahrain capital of Manama in February next year.

Saudi Arabia caused one of the biggest shocks

in the ongoing World Cup in Qatar when they beat Argentina 2-1 in their opening match. But the team were not able to advance past the first round. The 2023 Asian Cup will also be hosted by Qatar. It was previously set to be held in China but the country withdrew because of COVID. The Asian Cup is staged every four years. Qatar won the tournament's last edition, in 2019, which was hosted by the United Arab Emirates. —AFP



# England set up titanic WCup quarter-final against France

## England overwhelm Senegal 3-0

**AL KHOR:** England set up a titanic World Cup quarter-final against holders France as Jude Bellingham's masterclass inspired a 3-0 win against Senegal in the last 16 on Sunday. Gareth Southgate's side survived a nervous start at the Al Bayt Stadium before Jordan Henderson and Harry Kane put Senegal to the sword with a pair of clinical finishes before half-time.

Bukayo Saka scored England's third, but it was Bellingham's prodigious work-rate and burgeoning quality in possession that allowed them to turn the tide. Bellingham set up Henderson's opener and the Borussia Dortmund midfielder was involved again when England captain Kane bagged his first goal in this World Cup.

Kane has now netted 11 times at major tournaments, overtaking Gary Lineker as England's all-time top scorer in those competitions. But at the tender age of 19, it is Bellingham who has emerged as England's driving force. He is the first teenager to assist in a World Cup knockout stage game since 1966, having already announced his arrival on the global stage by netting his first England goal in the 6-2 rout of Iran in their group opener.

Just two years after he was playing in the English second tier with Birmingham, the precocious Bellingham was totally unfazed against Senegal in the biggest game of his life. "We made a very complicated game look straightforward. Because of the mentality, the attitude we've made it look that way," Southgate said. "We've got some super young players and we feel it's been right to give them their head. Jude and Bukayo are heading in a really good direction."

England will need another command performance

from Bellingham if they are to extend their stay in Qatar beyond the last eight. Eyeing a third successive semi-final appearance at major tournaments, England will return to the Al Khor desert on Saturday to take on the red-hot Kylian Mbappe and company after France brushed aside Poland 3-1 on Sunday. Euro 2020 runners-up England have won only one of their last eight meetings with France, who pose a significant threat to their hopes of winning a first major title for 56 years.

"France are an outstanding team with a phenomenal tournament record and some outstanding individuals. That's a game where we've got to find our highest possible level," Southgate said. Senegal boss Aliou Cisse added: "We have worked for years to be the top African side but we were playing a top five team in the world and you saw the difference." After a rocky opening when they passed too slowly and looked anxious at the back, England hit their stride to show why Southgate has such confidence in them.

### Jolt of adrenaline

African champions Senegal squandered a golden opportunity to take the lead when Harry Maguire gave the ball away and Boulaye Dia's volley deflected off John Stones into Ismaila Sarr's path, only for the Watford forward to blaze over from close-range. Preying on England's nerves, Sarr harried Saka and Dia seized the loose ball, forcing a good save from Jordan Pickford with a fierce drive. That proved the turning point as England snatched the lead against the run of play in the 38th minute. Bellingham sprinted onto Harry Kane's incisive pass into the Senegal area and clipped a precise cutback into the path of Liverpool midfielder Henderson, who guided his low



**AL KHOR:** Senegal's defender #12 Fode Ballo-Toure vies with England's forward #99 Harry Kane during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between England and Senegal on December 4, 2022. —AFP

strike past Edouard Mendy from 12 yards.

Henderson's goal served as a jolt of adrenaline that coursed through England as they doubled their lead seconds before the interval. Bellingham was the catalyst with his well-timed tackle and a crisp pass to Foden, whose perfectly-weighted lay-off allowed

Kane to race clear for a clinical finish. England strolled through the second half and, repaying Southgate's faith, Saka put the result beyond doubt in the 57th minute. Foden made a dynamic run down the left and Saka reached his cross to flick a clever effort over Mendy from close-range. —AFP

## Conserving energy tactically in WCup

By Ricardo Guerra

**H**igh-intensity-pressure soccer within the opposition's half all the way up to right when the goalkeeper is about to place the ball back into play can be very taxing to physiological capacity. Such a strategy saps even more of a player's energy reserves when executed in inhospitable climatic conditions. In a location with significant heat, humidity, or both, it may be wiser to employ a more economical tactical system, one that expends energy more efficiently. Systemic Economical Cohesive Play (SECP) describes the ability of a soccer squad to move in unison in ways that conserve as much energy as possible.

SECP relates to deliberately slowing down the game as a strategy. Pacing and managing the intensity of play during the game are critical characteristics of SECP, and certain tactical systems of play are more conducive to such a strategy. The squad makes a communal commitment to adhere to one of these economical tactical schemes, allowing them to keep steady reserves of energy throughout the match.

Some teams are more practiced at managing tempo—the intensity with which they play—to ensure that they don't run out of gas toward the last quarter of the match. For example, Japan was ahead in the second half of their last group match against Spain. In a clear example of SECP strategy, they retreated to their own half, playing with a defensive line of five in front of their own penalty box. Dropping back completely within a defensive scheme is an efficient mode of conserving energy.

Look what happened to the US in their match against Holland today. The American coach Berhalter decided to put into effect an all-out high pressing deep inside Dutch territory in the first 10 minutes of the game. There is a high cost to executing that in the heat and with less individually talented players. Holland did no pressing and had significantly less possession during the first half. They were composed and patient. By the end of the first half, the Dutch were already up by two goals. Toward the end of that first half, some US players were already showing signs of fatigue.

Another example of SECP is Spain's well-

known practice of passing the ball from side to side (aka tiki-taka) in a sort of standby mode until they eventually find a potential opening that culminates in a goal. Other teams follow a similar strategy when they circulate the ball with no apparent intention to do anything but kill the clock.

By contrast, other teams fail miserably at employing an economical strategy, playing at such a high level of intensity during early segments of the game that they run out of steam towards the end. It is evident that while some tactical systems of play are aligned with SECP, others expend energy quickly for immediate gain. High-intensity pressing in the opposition's half is very physically demanding. If overdone in the hostile climatic conditions of Qatar, such a strategy is a risky endeavor that could even be considered communal suicide.

The Croatian national team plays beautifully—it's a pleasure to watch their high intensity of play, the speed in transition, the switch in play from one side to the other and the overall flamboyance. The Croatians utilize a variety of tactical schemes within their match play. At times they can fall back and defend, but they tend to be too extreme in their pressing and sometimes attack like a pack of wolves in ways that can be construed as irresponsible, opening them to deadly counterattacks. If they don't adapt Systemic Economical Cohesive Play for greater portions of the game, I wonder how successful they will be.

During Croatia's last match, twenty minutes into the second half, in the group stage, they were already physically exhausted. In fact, fatigue had spread across the whole team. When a team neglects to systematically apply any given method or scheme, they can be prone to errors, succumbing to that famous motto, "jack of all trades, master of none." Without the consistent repetition in training that leads to familiarization and effectiveness, they run the risk of failing to develop optimal proficiency at any particular scheme.

Maybe the Croatian coach will have the foresight to find a more balanced and appropriate strategy for the climatic characteristics of the desert, but if Croatia does not do a better job at adapting to their current environment, incorporating more SECP schemes into their play, they may end up in the canvas sooner rather than later, like a boxer who gives it all in the first six rounds, losing sight of the remaining six.

In fact, boxing has a lot of lessons to teach us.

Thomas Hearn was one of the greatest boxers the sport has ever seen. He was relentless, and at times his fearlessness bordered on grotesque irresponsibility. How can anyone forget his first round against the great Marvin Hagler? But Hearn often failed to manage his reserves across the rounds and paid dearly for it, as we witnessed on multiple occasions.

In contrast to that lack of pacing, the great Mexican fighter Julio Cesar Chavez would methodically and consistently punish his opponents throughout all rounds, almost as if he relished the pain he was delivering. This meant a slow death for his opponent. At times, even when he knew there was a good chance of knocking out an opponent, he would hold off firepower to avoid the risk of being exposed or tiring out prematurely.

Let's hope that Croatia will not end up the Thomas Hearn of soccer, giving it all in the beginning in hopes of a quick victory only to succumb to exhaustion at the end. Japan may not have Croatia's individual talent and flair, but they do manage their tempo of play and consequently their SECP options with greater efficiency and responsibility, which may ultimately be a better option for the Cup in Qatar. One should also think about the possibility of having to play overtime. And that is another reason to moderate tactical systems that will be overtaxing to physical reserves.

Obviously, a team needs to apply aspects of SECP strategically, and its application should be determined by several factors such as climatic conditions, the result a team needs to obtain and the current fitness status of its players. On Monday evening, we will find out who is the real student of boxing. Which strategy will prevail, Zlack Dali's or Hajime Moriyasu's? Will Croatia's aggression pay off, or will Dali lead his team to seppuku?

Ricardo Guerra is an exercise physiologist working with professional soccer teams. He has a Master of Science in Sports Physiology from the Liverpool John Moores University. He has worked with several football clubs in the Middle East and Europe, including the Egyptian and Qatari national teams. In 2015 he was the exercise physiologist of Olympique de Marseille when they reached the final of the French Cup against PSG.

Ricardo holds the highest coaching license of the Football Association (England) and a UEFA license. He is the author of two upcoming books and a PhD Candidate. He can be contacted at rvcgf@hushmail.com

## Spain's hopes lie on goalkeeper

**DOHA:** Spain's hopes of winning a second World Cup trophy in Qatar lie in the hands-and-feet-of goalkeeper Unai Simon. Luis Enrique's possession-based system demands a goalkeeper brave enough to distribute to nearby teammates, even when under immense pressure from opposition forwards. Sometimes it goes woefully wrong, but the coach has kept his faith in Simon, no matter the criticism received after errors. Simon survived scares against Germany in the 1-1 group stage draw, while he was at fault for Japan's first goal in their shock 2-1 win over Spain on Thursday.

With Spain losing, for a few minutes La Roja were due to be eliminated. They dodged that bullet when Germany triumphed, progressing in second place from Group E to set up Tuesday's last 16 clash with Morocco. Japan laid the blueprint for the North African nation to follow, with Spain malfunctioning completely when the Samurai Blue overloaded their system. "They scored two against us, and if they had needed two more, then they would have scored them too, I'm sure," said coach Luis Enrique after the game.

With Spain 1-0 up and cruising against Japan at the start of the second half, Simon played the ball out to Alejandro Balde, who was immediately pressed and lost possession. Ritsu Doan drove the loose ball past Simon at his near post from the edge of the box. Simon got a hand on it and might have kept it out, with some claiming Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea would have saved the shot. ITV pundit Gary Neville claimed Simon seemed "a real weak point" for La Roja, later advocating for De Gea.

However he was never likely to be selected, with Luis Enrique bringing David Raya from Brentford and Robert Sanchez of Brighton as Simon's back-ups, two goalkeepers more comfortable with the ball at their feet-and who create fewer headlines. —AFP

### Today's matches

FIFA World Cup 2022	
Morocco v Spain	18:00
beIN Sports HD 1 Max	
beIN 4K HDR	
Portugal v Switzerland	22:00
beIN Sports HD 2 Max	
beIN 4K HDR	

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

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

### Clinics

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

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, PARLAPALLI SHIVA KUMAR REDDY holder of Indian Passport No. U0748409 having permanent address pin code 524101, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given name SIVA KUMAR REDDY and Surname YARAMAPU. (C#2811)

I HAVE CHANGE MY NAME FROM HAKIMUDDIN S/O SHABBIR HUSAIN JAWDDIYA PASSPORT NO. Z5712517 IN FUTURE I AM KNOW FROM THIS NAME HAKIMUDDIN JAWDDIYA S/O SHABBIR HUSAIN JAWDDIYA V/P MOHAM-MDIPURA TEMBA SAGWARA. (C# 2813) - 05-12-2022



## Croatia book World Cup quarters with shoot-out

Dramatic 3-1 victory after tense clash ended 1-1



AL-WAKRAH: Croatia's goalkeeper #01 Dominik Livakovic (left) saves the penalty of Japan's midfielder #10 Takumi Minamino during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between Japan and Croatia on December 5, 2022. — AFP

DOHA: Croatia reached the quarter-finals of the World Cup on Monday with a dramatic 3-1 penalty shoot-out win over Japan after a tense last-16 clash ended 1-1. Mario Pasalic struck the winning penalty to send Croatia through after Ivan Perisic had pulled Croatia level in the 55th minute of normal time following Daizen Maeda's opener for Japan just before the break.

Croatia now face either Brazil or South Korea in the last eight and continued midfielder icon Luka Modric's stay at his fourth and likely final World Cup. Japan's bid to reach the last eight for the first time in their history came to a crushing end after another display of the sort which saw off Spain and Germany on their way to topping Group E.

However they could not claim one more big European scalp in the shape of the 2018 finalists and go home in the second round, as they did four years ago, after having three of their penalties saved.

Japan could easily have been ahead within three minutes when Shogo Taniguchi glanced a header wide from point-blank range, and 10 minutes later Daizen Maeda came close to turning in Junya Ito's brilliantly placed low ball from the right flank.

In the meantime Perisic had let off a shot from a tight angle which led to a goalmouth scramble, but had Croatia scored they risked the goal being ruled out for what looked like a clear push on Takehiro Tomiyasu. Bruno Petkovic then wasted a great opportunity in the 25th minute, strolling through almost unopposed onto a long through ball only to dawdle and fail to get a pass off to Andrej Kramaric who was charging into the box.

Kramaric was then too slow to latch on to Perisic's dangerous flick-on and from there Japan took control, and the lead. Daichi Kamada had already blasted over after a superb passing move when in the 43rd minute Maeda fired in the opener

after Ritsu Doan's cross was knocked down by Maya Yoshida. Japan looked the better team and ready to inflict more damage but out of the blue Croatia's most dangerous player Perisic levelled the scores with a bullet header from Dejan Lovren's deep cross.

Almost immediately afterwards Wataru Endo responded by having a good strike tipped over the bar by Dominik Livakovic, before Shuichi Gonda pulled off the save of the match to keep out Modric's beautifully-struck, dripping shot. Modric was replaced nine minutes into the first half of extra-time in which Japan had the best chance, Kaoru Mitoma's effort well tipped away by Livakovic. With penalties drawing close, one final chance fell to Modric's replacement Lovro Majer, who dragged his shot wide, but his team prevailed in the shoot-out to end the Blue Samurai's entertaining adventure.— AFP

said. "We are not saying goodbye in the hospital," she insisted, explaining that the respiratory illness was the result of a Covid-19 infection the sporting icon had contracted three weeks ago. Her sister, Flavia Arantes Nascimento, denied reports from the daily Folha de S.Paulo and ESPN Brazil that Pele was no longer responding to chemotherapy and was now receiving only "palliative care."

She told the news channel that her father was not in the intensive care unit, but a regular ward, and that the family was "tired of receiving condolences" and that the cancer treatment is "delivering results." "It's really unfair that they're saying he's at the terminal stage. It's not that, believe us," she said. Earlier Sunday, fans of Pele-born Edson Arantes do Nascimento-congregated outside the Sao Paulo hospital where the three-time world champion is staying.

More than 100 devotees prayed for the recovery of the man widely regarded as the greatest foot-

baller of all time. "We are a spiritual force" praying for the sporting idol as he wages "one of the toughest battles of his life," one fan, Marcos Bispo dos Santos, told AFP. Doctors at Sao Paulo's Albert Einstein Hospital said Saturday that Pele remained "stable." Pele "has had a good response to care without any worsening in the clinical picture in the last 24 hours," they said in a statement.

The star later struck an optimistic note in an Instagram post, saying, "My friends, I want to keep everyone calm and positive. I'm strong, with a lot of hope and I follow my treatment as usual." On Sunday, his fans stood mostly in silence outside the clinic in the Morumbi neighborhood of western Sao Paulo, holding a banner bearing an image of a youthful Pele and marked "Torcida Joven" ("Young Fans"). "Long live the king!" said several posters pasted on walls near entrances to the hospital. Around noon, the fans formed a circle and held hands as they recited an "Our Father." — AFP

### 'He'll come home': Pele's daughters reassure fans

SAO PAULO: Brazilian football superstar Pele's daughters told his fans Sunday that their father's health was not at serious risk, saying they are confident he will return home when he recovers from a respiratory infection. The 82-year-old has been hospitalized in Sao Paulo since Tuesday amid ongoing treatments for colon cancer, which was first diagnosed in September 2021. Pele "is sick, he is elderly, but at this point he is hospitalized for a lung infection," Kely Arantes Nascimento told the TV channel Globo.

"And when he gets better, he'll come home," she

### FIFA probe Uruguay after stormy exit

DOHA: Uruguay striker Edinson Cavani and several team-mates face disciplinary action from FIFA following the South Americans' stormy World Cup exit, a statement said Monday. The world governing body said disciplinary proceedings had been opened against Cavani, Jose Maria Gimenez, Fernando Muslera and Diego Godin after a melee following Uruguay's 2-0 win over Ghana. Uruguay were eliminated despite their victory on Friday due to South Korea's 2-1 defeat of Portugal in Group H.

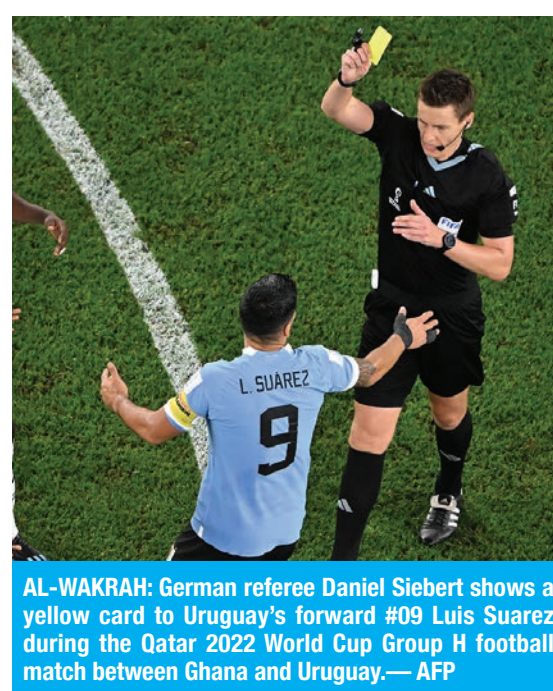
Referee Daniel Siebert was surrounded by a group of furious Uruguay players after the match, in which several decisions went against La Celeste, including two penalty claims. Cavani, 35, later knocked over a VAR monitor in disgust as he left the pitch. As well as the disciplinary action against players, Uruguay's football association faces potential sanctions for breaches of regulations relating to offensive behaviour and misconduct of players.

Also, FIFA said on Monday it had opened disciplinary proceedings against the Serbian football association fol-

lowing the team's bad-tempered World Cup clash with Switzerland. Football's governing body said it was looking at several potential breaches of its disciplinary code including the misconduct of players and officials, and discrimination. FIFA referred to "incidents" during the group stage game, without saying what they were.

Fans during Friday's match in Qatar, which Switzerland won 3-2 to progress, were told to "stop all discriminatory chants and gestures". It was not immediately clear what triggered the announcement but it followed a confrontation between Swiss captain Granit Xhaka and Serbia's players. The flashpoint in the second half drew in Switzerland forward Brel Embolo and Serbia substitutes ran onto the pitch at Stadium 974 to remonstrate with Swiss players before the referee brought the situation under control.

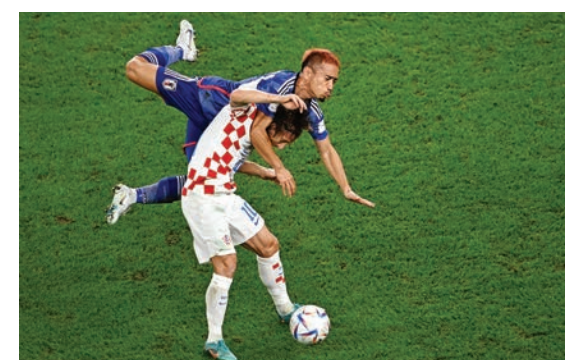
Xhaka comes from a family with roots in Kosovo, the former Serb province with a majority ethnic Albanian population. Serbia were already being investigated by FIFA after the team hung a controversial flag in their changing room before they lost to Brazil in Qatar. The Kosovo football federation filed a complaint with FIFA after photos showed a version of the Serbian flag with a map that depicted Kosovo as part of the country and included the slogan "there will be no surrender". — AFP



AL-WAKRAH: German referee Daniel Siebert shows a yellow card to Uruguay's forward #09 Luis Suarez during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group H football match between Ghana and Uruguay.— AFP



Japan's midfielder #15 Daichi Kamada reacts as he lies on the pitch during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between Japan and Croatia on December 5, 2022. — AFP photos



Croatia's midfielder #10 Luka Modric and Japan's defender #05 Yuto Nagatomo fight for the ball during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match on December 5, 2022.



Japan supporters pose for a picture outside the stadium ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between Japan and Croatia.



Croatia's midfielder #04 Ivan Perisic (right) attempts an overhead kick during the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between Japan and Croatia on December 5, 2022.



A supporter takes her seat ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup round of 16 football match between Japan and Croatia.



Croatia's goalkeeper #01 Dominik Livakovic concedes a goal scored by Japan's forward #25 Daizen Maeda on December 5, 2022.