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# VAMOS ARGENTINA!

## Messi & Co beat France on penalties to win World Cup • Amir congratulates Qatar



### FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022™

DOHA: Argentina's captain and forward Lionel Messi lifts the FIFA World Cup trophy as he celebrates with teammates at Lusail Stadium north of Doha on Dec 18, 2022. — AFP (See Page 16)

## MoH imposes new medicine fees on expats

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The health ministry on Sunday imposed new charges on medicines for expats at public clinics and hospitals on top of old fees, as the ministry bids to resolve a shortage of medicines in the country. The ministry imposed a fee of KD 5 on expats for receiving medicines from public clinics or from hospital emergencies and KD 10 for receiving medicines from outpatient clinics at hospitals.

The new charges come on top of the old fees of KD 2 per visit to public clinics and KD 10 for visiting hospitals. The charges and fees apply to expats who pay annual charges to be covered under the government health insurance scheme. Every expat is required to pay an annual fee of KD 50 to be able to receive medical treatment at health ministry facilities. Expats also pay a variety of charges for surgeries, radiology services and others.

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**DOHA:** Lionel Messi crowned his glittering career with victory in the World Cup on Sunday as Argentina beat France on penalties in a final for the ages, triumphing 4-2 after Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick ensured the game ended level following extra time. Gonzalo Montiel rolled in the deciding penalty to give Argentina their third World Cup and prevent France becoming the first team in 60 years to retain the trophy.

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to Qatar Amir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani on Sunday on the exceptional success of the 2022 FIFA World Cup hosted by the Gulf country from Nov 20 until Dec 18. HH the Amir said the championship was held in a manner that highlighted,

the entire world, the message of Islam, peace and Arab civilization, as well as reflected the bright civilized face of Qatar and its urban and developmental renaissance under the wise leadership of Sheikh Tamim.

Furthermore, HH the Amir extolled Qatar's great preparations, and distinguished and high-level capabilities in organizing this international sporting event. The championship gained praise and admiration of everyone all over the world, the cable said, indicating that Qatar represented all Arab countries well, as it made, after this successful hosting, a model difficult to match in the future. HH the Amir wished Sheikh Tamim and the Father Amir everlasting health and further prosperity and progress to Qatar. —Agencies

## Qatar warns EU parliament curbs threat to relations

**DOHA:** Qatar on Sunday condemned a corruption investigation by Belgium and the suspension of the Gulf state's access to the EU parliament, saying it could "negatively" impact ties and natural gas supplies. A statement issued by a Qatari diplomat singled out Belgian authorities for criticism and insisted that "inaccurate" information had been used.

"The decision to impose such a discriminatory restriction that limits dialogue and cooperation on Qatar before the legal process has ended, will negatively affect regional and global security cooperation, as well as ongoing discussions around global energy poverty and security," said the diplomat. "We firmly reject the allegations associating our government with misconduct," the statement added. "Qatar was not the only party named in the investigation, yet our country has been exclusively criticized and attacked."

"We have observed this week's selective condemnation of our country with great alarm," the statement said. Belgian prosecutors said they had been investigating EU parliament corruption for

more than a year before the raids and arrests of the past 10 days. "It is deeply disappointing that the Belgian government made no effort to engage with our government to establish the facts once they became aware of the allegations," said the diplomat. The statement highlighted the "close" relationship with Belgium. "Our nations cooperated during the COVID-19 pandemic and Qatar is an important supplier of LNG to Belgium," it emphasized.

Qatar feels it has been unfairly singled out, with sentiment swayed by other accusations made against the wealthy Gulf state in its hosting of the World Cup. "The decision to exclusively ban representatives from a single nation at the EU Parliament

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Messi kisses the World Cup trophy as FIFA President Gianni Infantino and Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani look on.



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## Local

# Ibn Sina Hospital's Pediatric dept performs 4,000 surgeries annually

## Medical team provides care and surgical services

KUWAIT: Pediatric surgery department at Ibn Sina hospital is a team working round the clock tirelessly and diligently to provide care and surgical services to the little ones, including urgent and intricate cases, said a Kuwaiti surgeon. Head of the department Dr Ismael Taqi told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that their team extends its surgical services to all public hospitals and specialized public centers to deal with urgent cases.

He added that the department, conducting around 4,000 surgery annually,

is also concerned with treating all types of tumors affecting children, appearing in abdominal cavity, intestines, kidneys or liver, and is in direct contact with other specialized hospitals to ensure better services to their young patients. In his interview to KUNA, Dr Taqi spoke of some more complex cases saying they are caused by birth defects, saying that tens of lives were saved thanks to early detection, rapid diagnosis, and the skill and expertise of the medical teams.

Results of such cases were examined at Kuwait's pediatric conference, as

guest doctors commended surgery outcomes saying they rival those of international hospitals, Taqi added. He further noted the department's various research papers and studies were published in international journals, one study on a surgery detaching joint twins, focused on the continuous and meticulous coordination between differing departments to arrive at the desired results.

Taqi affirmed that such publications and ongoing dialogue with fellow doctors outside of Kuwait contribute to the development of patient treatment proto-

cols, adding that the exchange of expertise is key to widening horizons and utilizing innovative modes of treatment. The pediatric surgeon stated they are looking forward to the establishment of a specialized children's hospital in Kuwait, housing various clinics with various specialties. This kind of establishment, Dr Taqi illustrated, will save time and effort, accelerate the process, contribute to the academic environment, and attract global expertise and talents, all of which will create an enhanced experience for children and their families. —KUNA



Dr Ismael Taqi

## PM to attend Iraq donor conference

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah will head to Jordan on Tuesday, as he leads the delegation of Kuwait at the second donor conference to support Iraq. The conference's slogan is 'cooperation and working together towards the continuous support of Iraq', directed at addressing issues regarding food and medication security that needs regional and international support.

The weekly Cabinet meeting, which is held every Monday week, will be postponed due to the prime minister's meeting with National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun. "The Cabinet meeting will discuss the government's position regarding laws listed in the upcoming Assembly session on Tuesday, as MPs have requested laws such as the removal of debts on citizens and changing the electoral system to a list-based system," sources told Kuwait Times.

## Amir receives letter from Palestine leader

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday received a letter from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas regarding fraternal relations and firm historical bonds between both countries as well as ways of promoting them in all fields. The letter was handed to Chief of His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah by Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub at Bayan Palace on Sunday morning. —KUNA



## Military, KFF fight against narcotics

KUWAIT: In the fight against the spread of narcotics and addiction, several entities heeded the call to arms by the State of Kuwait including the Defense Ministry and the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF). For the Defense Ministry's moral guidance and public relations department, its efforts focused on holding a variety of activities including symposia and lectures centering on protection of the youth against addiction and drugs.

Those events highlighted the role of the family structure in fending off the evils of illicit drugs. The department also stressed the importance of society in preventing the youth and other sectors of society from slipping into the desperate pit of narcotics. During events and forums, the different types of drugs and their ill effect on society were discussed as a forewarning for those taking the issue lightly. On its part, the Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) had taken a route when it came to combating drugs.

The KFF's health affairs and public relations departments hold similar functions throughout the year to discourage drug use and promote clean living. Functions, conducted in collaboration with various state entities, also urged people to spread awareness about narcotics use and called for reporting cases of drug usage. It is noted that the military and security establishments in Kuwait ran routine tests on their personnel of all ranks and job descriptions to make sure that they were free of drugs. —KUNA



Photo captures the external image of the center.

## Kuwait addiction recovery hits 40%

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Health Ministry's Addiction Treatment Center helps in treating those entangled with drugs and narcotics, and thankfully, efforts helped boost the recovery rate to 40 percent, said an official on Sunday. In an interview by KUNA, head of the center Dr Adel Al-Zaid revealed that addiction had a social, ethical, legal, and health affect those suffering from it; therefore, the center tried to address each problem and find a solution to the most urgent issues.

Dr Al-Zaid revealed that the center was the only one in the Gulf region that provided recuperative services to women, noting that they were now planning to address teenagers with the same services. He went on to say that the center also offered services to help addicts during and after their predicament

Head of the center  
Dr Adel Al-Zaid

Addiction treatment center lab

## CSC completes frontliner award list review

KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Civil Service Commission Abeer Al-Duaij announced the completion of the review procedures of lists from institutions including the Defense Ministry, National Guard and Kuwait Fire Force regarding frontliner awards. Duaij thanked workers who made efforts to complete the procedures regarding the lists despite being assigned a specific timeframe by the Cabinet, which includes the approval of treating workers at the aforementioned institutions the same as their colleagues at the interior ministry over frontliner awards.

This is due to procedures followed for accreditation and specified categories, as direct coordination has been made with concerned officials as soon the Cabinet decision was announced. They worked on a daily basis in order to complete the review before the due date. The finance ministry has been contacted regarding the list of deserving employees, as well as the numbers and total amount to be spent to conclude accreditation of those who deserve it.

## 'Care of People with Disabilities'

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation dedicated a fund for 30 children with disabilities to cover their rehabilitation and education services at the KSHs Educational Centers. The Kuwaiti Society for the Handicapped is eager to implement the "Care of People with Disabilities" project in Kuwait in cooperation with the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation.

KSH Director General Dr Elham Al-Hamdan stated: "Since the establishment of the Kuwait

## Tech awareness key to avoiding cybercrime

KUWAIT: Armoring oneself with technological awareness is key to safely navigate the online world, stated Acting General Director of Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Dr Ammar Al-Husaini on Sunday. During his inaugural speech of the fourth Kuwaiti cybercrime combating conference, Dr Al-Husaini explained that these crimes have become a leading cause of resource depletion as it causes data damage,

Society for the Handicapped in 1971 as the first charity in Kuwait that provides services for children with disabilities at no cost, the Society has continued to provide integrated rehabilitation services to people with disabilities at no cost and spared no efforts in integrating them into society.

All these efforts were directed to empower and encourage the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mainstream community. In conjunction with the KSH's belief in the rights of people with disabilities, the KSH has adopted in its strategy the achievement of sustainability in a way that serves the care of people with disabilities and the fulfillment of Kuwait Vision 2035".

Dr Elham added: "This project aims to pro-

vide integrated care programs for people with disabilities, which include rehabilitation services, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language pathology, and education. These services develop the abilities of our students helping them overcome obstacles and assist them in improving independence, becoming productive, and adapting to the environment around them.

Moreover, this project contributes to empowering people with disabilities from less fortunate families by covering their treatment fees and granting them access to adequate rehabilitation services, which symbolize solidarity and compassion among community members, especially as it's known that the costs of

intellectual property theft, personal data theft and financial theft.

He indicated that electronic crime-caused damage for year 2021 were estimated at more than six trillion dollars, and are expected to rise to 10 trillion dollars by 2025. Al-Husaini mentioned that social media platforms misuse and electronic crime is directly linked to lack of awareness as data shows that only 10 percent of victims report the crime. He stressed that all citizens must be knowledgeable about electronic crime law, to acquaint themselves with their rights and responsibilities and avoid falling victim to cybercrime.

Dr Al-Husaini called for boosting cybersecurity in public and private sector and furthering

addiction is a long life struggle. Dr Al-Zaid continued that the center was dedicated to providing help to those suffering from addiction offering primarily medical assistance. The State of Kuwait took an important step in re-establishing of the defunct 2013 national committee against drugs on December fourth, he affirmed, noting that the fight against narcotics was a responsibility of the society as a whole. —KUNA

collaboration to develop technologies and security systems, and improve safety indicators. Interior ministry lieutenant general Ammar Al-Saraf stated that electronic and cybercrime combating department is facing great challenge in privacy protection especially with recent developments in Artificial Intelligence and Metaverse.

He highlighted need for updating the legislative framework for cybersecurity, and hoped that a cybersecurity center be bought to life soon. Kuwait's fourth cybercrime combating conference, with participation of technicians and experts in the field, is organized by CAIT and Ministry of Interior and held over two days. —KUNA

treatment are pretty high. She added that the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped provides equal services for people with disabilities who reside in Kuwait.

And that the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation fund was dedicated to the most underprivileged 30 people with disabilities registered in the society. Concluding her statement, Dr Elham Al-Hamdan expressed her sincere gratitude and appreciation for Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation's efforts in supporting people in need, and she appraised the strategic partnership between the "Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation" and the "Kuwait Society for the Handicapped" which is the forefront of sustainability, growth, and development in Kuwait.



Local



The new Dhaman Hospital building in Ahmadi governorate. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Dhaman completes construction of its first hospital in Ahmadi

## Dhaman - One of the largest development plan projects in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Health Assurance Hospitals Company (Dhaman) celebrated the completion of the Dhaman hospital building in Ahmadi governorate in the presence of Managing Director of the Public Investment Authority and several medical and business dignitaries. This represents an important step towards achieving the company's strategy that aims at completing its health system, present medical services and enhance healthcare indicators in Kuwait.

"We celebrate today the completion of the building of Dhaman's first hospital, the crowning of many years of efforts during which we overcame many challenges in cooperation with our partners at the health ministry and other government entities," Dhaman Chairman Mutlaq Mubarak Al-Sane said. "Dhaman fulfilled an important and basic step in completing its health system, and we are now at the stage of getting the required licenses in cooperation with the health ministry."

### Nearly 660 beds

This hospital is a major element in our plan to establish an integrated health system that includes hospitals with a capacity of nearly 660 beds and several primary care centers, distributed across governorates to serve the national strategy for healthcare in Kuwait, which aims at improving health services and reduce the financial burden on Kuwaiti government entities at the same time," he said.

"We at Dhaman do not consider this event particular to the company; rather we see it as an important addition to the health sector within Dhaman's vision of its role to enhance health indicators and leadership in developing this vital sector in Kuwait. We went a long way in completing and constructing the medical company's facilities and we are proud of this advanced medical facility, which forms part of our vision to be the leading entity in providing integrated health services, which includes primary and secondary healthcare centers, in addition to wide-ranging allied services and professional medical development and training," Sane said.

Sane said Dhaman seeks to create a solid health base that prepares for sustainable health development that goes with Kuwait's interest in developing the medical system in agreement with the government's future view to make the private health sector a strong one that shares with the government sector in providing health services to citizens and residents.

Sane said the completion of construction of this hospital and the completion of the first stage of the company's workplan does not mean pausing at these achievements; rather they form a launchpad towards more expansion and growth in the coming stages by adding more health facilities, hospitals, centers and more services, with focus on professional training and development of medical personnel to meet the needs of the targeted groups.

"The hospital will be operated in cooperation with an international expert in managing a health system of this size, the Spanish Ribera Salud group, which is experienced in presenting healthcare for more than 30 years in Spain and several other countries, in line with implementing the Dhaman model and applying the best international standards and practices in managing and presenting medical services," Sane said.

### Largest development projects

Sane concluded by saying Dhaman is one of the largest development plan projects in Kuwait as far as capital is concerned (KD 230 million), and the first initiative to support the local medical sector,



Dhaman Chairman Mutlaq Al-Sane



Dhaman CEO Thamer Arab



Dr Ziad Al-Alyan, CEO of Central Circle Company and Dhaman's strategic medical contractor is pictured with Dr Mohammed Ashour, Deputy CEO of Central Circle Company.



KUWAIT: Dhaman CEO Thamer Arab welcomes Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei.

which considered the largest sector that bleeds the state's budget, as Dhaman will work to improve healthcare indicators, make a qualitative move for the health sector and reduce the financial and administrative burdens on government entities, in addition to backing economic diversification through healthcare by presenting its services to expats working in the private sector (article 18) and their families.

Managing Director of Public Investment Authority Ghanem Al-Ghunaiman said the project of Dhaman hospitals is one of the development plan's projects, and may be unique in being directed towards enhancing the level of the healthcare sector, which is considered one of the most important sectors of the national economy, with huge amounts of financial resources directed towards it every year in the state's general budget.

PIA was keen to play a basic and vital role in the company's works since the early stages of its establishment until reaching the current stage, that is near completion of its system through presenting all possible support to the company since the start of its work through contributing to its capital and playing an important role in the work of the board of directors, because it will allow many capabilities to improve medical services presented to citizens within the health ministry system because it will bear the burdens of primary and secondary healthcare for almost 1.8 million residents who work in the private sector and their families.

Ghunaiman said Kuwaiti citizens are main partners in the company's capital, as 50 percent of the

company's capital was allocated to them, hoping to invite them to underwrite the capital and that will be followed by listing the company on Bursa Kuwait. Ghunaiman concluded his statement by stressing the importance of cooperation of all concerned parties to reach the developmental goal the company was established for, and soon become an auxiliary to the health ministry system and contribute to stimulate the growth of non-oil economic activities and create new job opportunities for citizens.

Ambassador of China to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei participated in the event, saying the opening of the Dhaman hospital was due to consolidated efforts between Dhaman and China's Metallurgical Group Corporation (MCC) during past years, which is evidence of the Chinese push towards alignment between the Belt and Road Initiative and the New Kuwait 2035 vision.

He said the Kuwaiti government pays great importance to the medical and health field, strengthened general health services projects and exerted extreme efforts for continued improvement of the medical level, and Dhaman as the first healthcare establishment in the Middle East by public private partnership (PPP) is one of the most important pillars of the health sector in Kuwait's 2035 vision.

Chairman of Kuwait Medical Association Ibrahim Al-Tawalah said joint efforts between the health ministry and Dhaman will reflect on the services at the healthcare centers and health ministry hospitals. He said the activation of Dhaman's services will positively affect not only the beneficiaries, but also

citizens, who will get better services as crowding is reduced at health ministry centers.

Tawalah spoke about job opportunities the medical facilities of Dhaman will create in hospitals and primary health centers, be it for the local workforce or from outside, as one of the most important projects in Kuwait's government New Kuwait 2035 plan.

"We employed all our efforts in the project of building Dhaman hospitals, and worked hard to reach the current stage - the completion of the building - declaring our readiness for the next step. We hope efforts with the health ministry will be quick to get the necessary licenses, especially those related to medical cadres, so that we can complete the health system and start presenting primary and secondary healthcare services according to health maintenance organization (HMO), which means we will work according to an integrated healthcare system," Dhaman CEO Thamer Arab said in a press conference following the ceremony.

Arab said the hospital will constitute a quality addition to the medical sector. It is built on a total area of 85,000 sq m spread over 5 floors and a basement, with a capacity of 330 beds. It has 14 operation theaters, 21 ICUs, 75 outpatient clinics, a digital pharmacy, x-ray centers, labs and emergency departments, as well as a helipad.

Arab said the hospital has the latest in healthcare technology, achieved according to the most modern services standards. He said the hospital has a pharmacy equipped with an automated system (Omnicell) to dispense and deliver medicines. He added Dhaman has received accreditation from Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), and accreditation of Joint Commission International (JCI) for all primary care centers.

Chief Strategy and Growth Officer Santiago Delgado said "we are happy to work in Kuwait with Dhaman, which is considered the first company to adopt an advanced model to maintain health in the Middle East, and we felt Dhaman's keenness to implement its strategy to present its services to a large group of population".



The main entrance of the hospital.



Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei and other top officials inspect the medical facilities.



Senior officials attend the ceremony.



## Local

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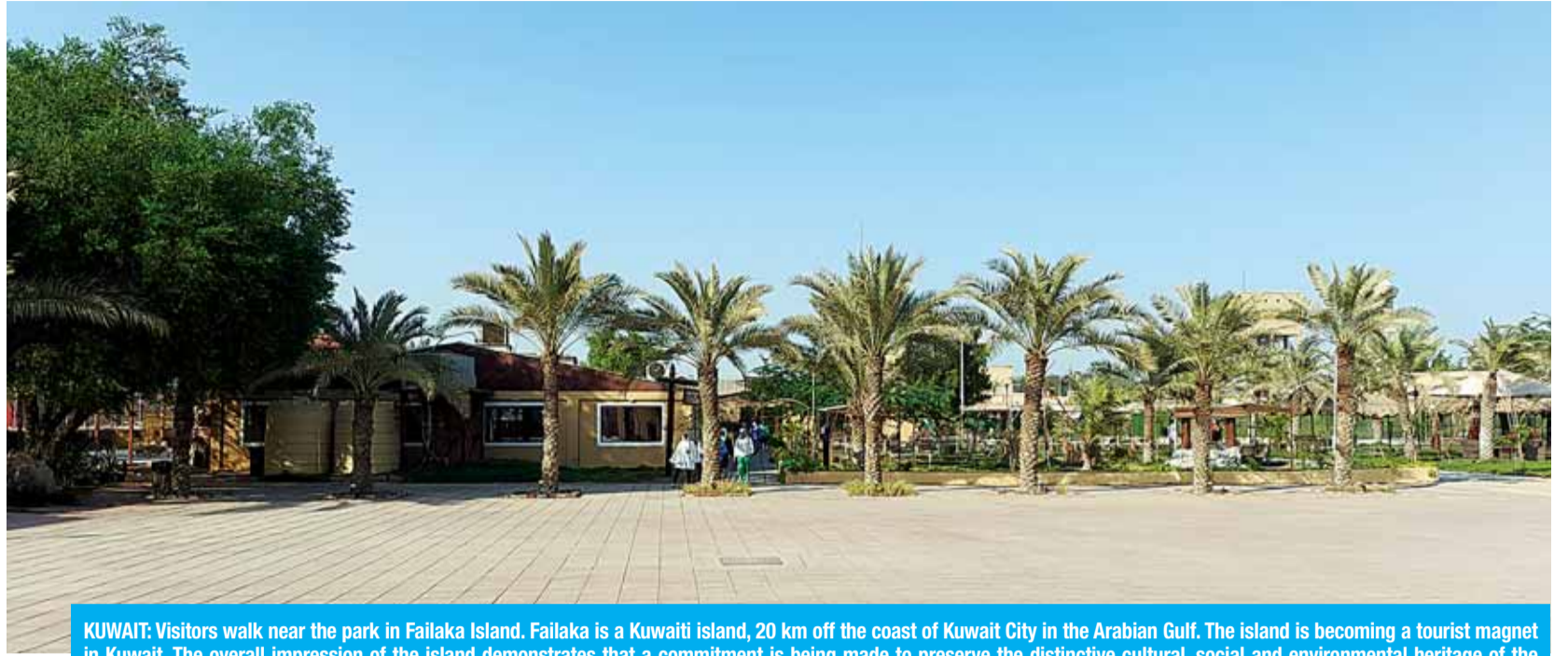
KUWAIT: Gold prices settled near the level of \$1,800 an ounce at the end of last week, in conjunction with a US Federal Reserve (the Central Bank) decision to raise the interest rate by half a percentage point. In a report the Kuwaiti Dar Al-Sabaek said that gold futures contracts, to be handed in February 2023, rose by 0.7 percent, equivalent to \$12.4, to reach nearly \$1,800 an ounce, indicated the report.

Adel Al-Fadhli, head of strategic planning and follow-up at Dar Al-Sabaek, was quoted as saying that the gold market is keeping gains, with recession fears continuing to grow, as preliminary data indicates more contraction in the manufacturing and service sectors. Al-Fadhli added that gold is considered a hedge against inflation and economic uncertainty, which makes its prices go up with every upward movement of inflation indicators. As for the local market, the report showed that 24 and 21 carat gold prices were closed at KD 17.7 per gram and KD 16.3 per gram respectively, while silver was closed at KD 276 per kilogram. —KUNA

Arab passenger  
caught with hashish

KUWAIT: An Arab resident arriving from an Arab country was arrested with four pieces of hashish hidden inside a battery slot. Kuwait International Airport supervisor Mohammed Al-Othaina said the suspect was found with rolled hashish joints in his luggage, and was sent along with the evidence to the concerned department.

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Visitors walk near the park in Failaka Island. Failaka is a Kuwaiti island, 20 km off the coast of Kuwait City in the Arabian Gulf. The island is becoming a tourist magnet in Kuwait. The overall impression of the island demonstrates that a commitment is being made to preserve the distinctive cultural, social and environmental heritage of the island. —Photo by Chidi Emmanuel

Kuwait charity offers aid  
to 3,500 Syrian refugees

Botswana Ambassador touts Kuwait's global humanitarian efforts



BEIRUT: Heating fuel handed out to Syrian refugees in Lebanon. —KUNA photos

BEIRUT: Kuwaiti Al-Najat Charity has distributed aid to 3,500 Syrian refugees in Lebanon as part of a humanitarian and relief campaign to alleviate their suffering during the winter. The aid, which was handed out to Syrian refugees at Ersal refugee camp in north-eastern Lebanon, includes food parcels, heating fuel and shelters, Al-Najat Director of Resources and Campaigns Omar Al-Shaqra told KUNA.

Kuwait is working to improve the living conditions of thousands of refugees in face of cold weather and shortage of foodstuff, he said. Kuwaiti charities and humanitarian organizations are keen on offering relief aid to Syrian and Palestinian refugees, as well as Lebanese families in need through the year. However,



they increase their relief efforts during the winter season due to tough weather conditions in Lebanon.

## Humanitarian efforts

In another development, Botswana Ambassador to Kuwait Augustine Ntshomane Makgonatsotlhe on Sunday appreciated Kuwait's distinguished and effective role in the international humanitarian and relief area. Speaking to KUNA following his meeting with Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Anwar Al-Hasawi, the ambassador commended Kuwait's role in offering humanitarian initiatives and aid to disaster-hit countries.

He also spoke highly of the KRCS' great and



Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society meets Botswana Ambassador in Kuwait.

impressive efforts in helping affected people, and launching projects that contribute to developing poor communities and helping all needy people. He added that his visit to the KRCS was intended to discuss cooperation and coordination regarding humanitarian aid to the needy. For his part, Al-Hasawi welcomed the ambassador of Botswana to the KRCS where he got familiar with relief aid offered to sisterly and friendly countries, underlining willingness to join humanitarian efforts exerted by Kuwait to help people affected by natural or man-made disasters. He added that they had tackled during the meeting ways of promoting his society's efforts and bolstering contacts and partnerships with Botswana's humanitarian bodies. —KUNA



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Artists pose for a group photo. —KUNA photos

6 Kuwaiti artists  
excel in Asian  
Art Biennale

KUWAIT: Visitors to the 19th Asian Art Biennale in Bangladesh have flocked to the Kuwaiti pavilion due to the contribution of six outstanding artists. Waleed Sarab, Abdullah Al-Jiran, Marzouq Al-Qihani, Dr Mumoud Al-Muqate, Dr Yousef Al-Mulaifi and Nawaf Al-Armali have bedazzled visitors with their unique formative art pieces. Kuwaiti artists are amongst 114 of their peers partaking in the event featuring 650 artworks. —KUNA



Artists pose for a group photo. —KUNA photos



Arab artists posing near Kuwaiti artist Abdullah Al-Jiran's artworks.





Voting for S Africa's ruling party leader to get underway

## Tunisia opposition calls for Saied to quit after voters shun election

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# France slams expulsion of Palestinian lawyer

## 'I have changed location but the fight continues'

**ROISSY-CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT:** French-Palestinian human rights lawyer Salah Hamouri, held without charge in Zionist entity's prisons since March accused of security offences, arrived in Paris on Sunday following his expulsion from Zionist condemned by Paris.

Hamouri, 37, had been held in Zionist entity under a controversial practice known as administrative detention, which allows suspects to be detained for renewable periods of up to six months. He arrived at the French capital's Charles de Gaulle airport on Sunday morning, an AFP correspondent saw, the culmination of a lengthy judicial saga after his deportation.

"I have changed location but the fight continues," an emotional Hamouri said at the airport, where he was welcomed by his wife Elsa, politicians, NGO representatives and supporters of the Palestinian cause. "I have an enormous responsibility to my cause and people. We can't abandon Palestine. Resistance is our right."

Zionist entity's interior ministry earlier on Sunday announced the deportation following Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked's decision to withdraw his residency status. "We condemn today the Zionist authorities' decision, against the law, to expel Salah Hamouri to France," the French foreign ministry said in a statement.

A Zionist military court sentenced Hamouri, who holds French citizenship, to administrative detention in March, accusing him of being a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and said he "endangers security

in the region". Zionist entity, the United States and the European Union consider the PFLP a "terrorist group". It has been implicated in several deadly attacks on Zionists. Hamouri denies links to the PFLP.

### 'Illegal' deportation

The French foreign ministry said Paris had been "fully mobilised, including at the highest level of the state", to enable Hamouri to defend his rights, benefit from all possible assistance and lead a normal life in his native east Jerusalem. "France also took several steps to communicate to the Zionist authorities in the clearest way its opposition to this expulsion of a Palestinian resident of east Jerusalem, an occupied territory under the Fourth Geneva Convention," it added. "It's a happy day for a family reunited but for the Palestinian people, it's a sad day," Amnesty International's France chief, Jean-Claude Samouiller, told AFP. He described the expulsion as a "crime of apartheid". Supporters said Hamouri's deportation from his birthplace by an "occupying power" was illegal.

Amnesty International and French NGOs said Hamouri's deportation aimed to hinder his human rights work and was part of Zionism's "long-term political objective to diminish the Palestinian population" of annexed east Jerusalem, which Palestinians want as the capital of a future state.

Hamouri has been arrested and jailed by Zionist authorities on several occasions, including in 2005. Following that arrest he was tried and convicted by a Zionist court on charges of plotting to assassinate



PARIS: French-Palestinian lawyer Salah Hamouri (C) arrives at the Parisian airport of Roissy, after he was expelled from Zionist entity, on December 18, 2022. — AFP

Ovadia Yosef, a prominent rabbi and spiritual leader of the ultra-Orthodox Shas political party.

Hamouri was released in December 2011 as part of a prisoner swap. He has always maintained his innocence. Born in east Jerusalem, Hamouri does not have Zionist nationality, but he held a residency permit that Zionist authorities revoked. "We didn't

think it was possible to deport somebody from his birthplace," Hamouri's mother Denise said earlier.

Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank and east Jerusalem since the 1967 Six-Day War. Last month, he was informed he would be deported, but the expulsion was delayed as his lawyers contested the case. —AFP

## N Korea fires two ballistic missiles

**SEOUL:** North Korea fired two medium-range ballistic missiles Sunday, Seoul's military said, days after Pyongyang announced a successful test of a solid-fuel motor for a new weapons system. Military tensions on the Korean peninsula have risen sharply this year as Pyongyang has carried out an unprecedented blitz of weapons tests, including the launch of its most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile ever last month.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected two medium-range ballistic missiles that had been fired from the Tongchang-ri area in North Pyongan province.

The missiles were fired from 11:13 am (0213 GMT) to 12:05 pm into the East

Sea, it said, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

They were fired on a "lofted" trajectory and flew around 500 kilometres (311 miles), JCS said in a statement, adding South Korean and US intelligence were analysing the launch "in consideration of recent trends related to North Korea's missile development".

Tongchang-ri is home to a major rocket launch site, where the North tested a "high-thrust solid-fuel motor" on Thursday, with state media describing it as an important test "for the development of another new-type strategic weapon system".

"Given that the missiles launched today are medium-range ballistic missiles, it is assessed to be test-firings of a new ballistic missile equipped with the solid-fuel engine tested on December 15," said Cheong Seong-chang, a researcher at the Sejong Institute.

The South's military "strongly" condemned Sunday's launch, calling it a

"serious provocation" and a "clear violation" of UN Security Council resolutions. "Our military will maintain a firm readiness posture based on the ability to carry out an overwhelming response to any provocations by North Korea," it added.

### Kim's wishlist

Despite heavy international sanctions over its weapons programmes, Pyongyang has built up an arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). All its known ICBMs are liquid-fuelled, however, and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has placed strategic priority on developing solid-fuel engines for more advanced missiles.

Liquid-fuel rockets are notoriously difficult to operate and take a long time to prepare for launch, making them slower and easier for the enemy to spot and destroy. The more mobile solid-fuel missiles have a much shorter prep time, and are harder to detect before launch.

A wishlist Kim revealed last year



Picture taken on December 15, 2022 and released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on December 16, 2022 shows North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un as he directs a ground ejection test - a high-power solid fuel engine test - conducted at the Saikai satellite launch site in South Pyongan Province. —AFP

included solid-fuel ICBMs that could be launched from land or submarines. The latest motor test was a step towards that

goal, but it is not clear how far North Korea has come in the development of such a missile, analysts said. —AFP

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## International

# Tunisia opposition calls for Saied to quit after voters shun election

**'We should agree on a high-ranking judge to oversee immediate presidential elections'**

**TUNIS:** Tunisia plunged into political uncertainty Sunday as its main opposition alliance called on President Kais Saied to "leave immediately", a day after voters overwhelmingly snubbed elections for a neutered parliament. That comes with Saied's government negotiating a nearly \$2-billion package to bail out the North African country's crippled public finances.

Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, president of the National Salvation Front alliance, said Saied had "lost all legal legitimacy". The electoral board said 8.8 percent of the nine-million-strong electorate had turned out for Saturday's polls, the culmination of a power grab by Saied in the only democracy to have emerged from the Arab Spring.

An abstention rate of more than 91 percent "shows that very, very few Tunisians support Kais Saied's approach", Chebbi told AFP by telephone. He said the result showed "great popular disavowal" of the process that began when Saied, elected in 2019, seized executive powers last year.

The president in July 2021 sacked the government, froze parliament and surrounded it with military vehicles, following months of political deadlock and economic crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Saied, a former law professor, followed up by seizing control of the judiciary and pushing through a constitution that consolidated his near-absolute power in a widely boycotted referendum in July.

His moves, a decade after the ouster of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, have sparked fears of a return to autocracy. The National Salvation Front, which includes Saied's nemesis the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, boycotted Saturday's

election, saying it was part of a "coup" against Tunisia's democracy.

"Today the situation is critical. We should agree on a high-ranking judge to oversee immediate presidential elections," Chebbi said. A presidential decree earlier this year gave Saied the power to fire judges, and he sacked 57 of them but an administrative court in August revoked most of those firings.

Chebbi said his bloc would reach out to "all social and political actors" in the coming days. "Tunisians were shaken yesterday. I hope that will push them towards talking to each other and agreeing on an urgent solution," Chebbi said.

### 'Draconian conditions'

The ballot for the new 161-seat assembly followed three weeks of barely noticeable campaigning, with few posters in the streets and no serious debate among a public preoccupied with day-to-day economic survival.

Saied's moves were initially supported by some Tunisians tired of the messy and sometimes corrupt democratic system installed after the revolution. But almost a year and half on, the country's economic woes have gone from bad to worse and inflation is higher than Saturday's voter turnout. Political analyst Salaheddine Jouchi said Saturday's "shock" low turnout had left Saied "more isolated, from the elite, the parties and now the people too". "This turnout, the lowest ever recorded, shows that the people have no trust" in Saied, he said.

The previous legislature, dominated by Ennahdha, had far-reaching powers in the mixed presidential-parliamentary system enshrined in Tunisia's post-revolution constitution. But the new



**TUNIS:** Members of the Tunisian electoral commission count votes on December 18, 2022 in Tunisia, a day after voters overwhelmingly snubbed the elections for a neutered parliament. —AFP

chamber "won't be able to appoint a government or censure it, except under draconian conditions that are almost impossible to meet," according to political scientist Hamadi Redissi.

Candidates were required to stand as individuals,

in a system that neuters political parties. Hamza Meddeb, a fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center, said the election was a "formality to complete the political system imposed by Kais Saied and concentrate power in his hands". —AFP

## Iraq torches giant haul of illegal drugs

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq on Sunday burnt some six tons of illegal drugs including vast piles of cannabis, captagon and cocaine, in what officials said was the largest destruction for over a decade. Government officials, wearing white coveralls and face masks, piled the drugs in holes dug into the sand, doused them with fuel and set them on fire.

Health Minister Saleh al-Hasnawi, speaking at the event outside a military base near the capital Baghdad, said it was the first "destruction operation of this magnitude" since 2009. The drugs had been seized by "forces at border crossings" and other sites in Iraq, he said, with some of them stored for several years.

Security forces have intensified narcotics operations in recent years with near-daily announcements of drug seizures and arrests of traffickers. Areas bordering Iraq have become major narcotic trafficking routes for drugs, including crystal methamphetamine.

Vast plumes of black smoke rose into the sky as the stocks were set on fire, which included 350 kilogrammes (770 pounds) of cocaine and 54 million pills-including five



**BAGHDAD:** Government officials gather to destroy nearly six tons of drugs, some of which had been in storage for more than a decade, in Baghdad's Nahrawan area on December 18, 2022. —AFP

million pills of the amphetamine-type stimulant captagon, a government official said.

Quantities of crystal methamphetamine and hashish were also destroyed. The majority of the destroyed drugs originated from Iran, but Lebanon and neighbouring

Syria were also sources, the government official said.

While some drug traffickers use Iraq as a transit point, the country has also seen an explosion in domestic sales and consumption in recent years. —AFP

## Iran plans satellite launches

**TEHRAN:** Iran prepares to launch "at least two satellites" into space by late March, Telecommunications Minister Issa Zarepour said Sunday, just over a month after successfully testing a launcher.

The United States has repeatedly voiced concern that such launches could boost Iran's ballistic missile technology, extending to the potential delivery of nuclear warheads. But Iran insists it is not seeking nuclear weapons and that its satellite and rocket launches are for civil or defence purposes only.

"Nahid 1 and Nahid 2 satellites are being prepared," Zarepour was quoted as saying by official news agency IRNA. Nahid is the name given to a series of telecommunications satellites developed by the Iranian Space Research Center.

According to Zarepour, "we will have launches by year's end," March 20 in the Persian calendar.

In early November, Iranian state television announced the "successful suborbital launch of the satellite launcher named Ghaem-100". The Ghaem-100 rocket was manufactured by the aerospace organisation of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and it is the country's first three-stage solid-fuel satellite launcher, the channel added.

Iran successfully put its first military satellite into orbit in April 2020, drawing a sharp rebuke from Washington. In August this year, another Iranian satellite, named Khayyam, was launched by Russia on a Soyuz-2.1b rocket from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

Iran's space agency said the device was constructed by Russia under Iran's supervision. The US alleged at the time that the Khayyam would enable "significant spying capabilities" and that a deepening Russia-Iran alliance amounted to a "profound threat" to the world. Iran's space agency rejected those allegations, countering that the purpose of Khayyam was to "monitor the country's borders", and help with the management of natural resources and agriculture. —AFP

## MoH imposes new medicine...

Continued from Page 1

The ministry of health also barred dispensing a number of key medicines to expats on top of around 80 medicines banned in 1997. The measures come as part of the health ministry's efforts to resolve an acute shortage of vital drugs in ministry stores. The government said it has earmarked some KD 260 million to import medicines as soon as possible.

A meeting between HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah and several ministers with the Assembly speaker and MPs which was supposed to take place on Monday has been postponed. The premier will still meet the Assembly speaker. The meeting was supposed to discuss cooperation

between the government and the Assembly to iron out some differences over a number of issues to establish strong cooperation.

Among these issues is a draft law calling on the government to purchase all consumer and personal loans of Kuwaiti citizens, which the Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee has approved but the government has rejected. The government has reportedly told the panel that the value of these loans is KD 14 billion and the cost of the purchase process will be KD 23 billion. Several MPs said the cost is much lower. The financial committee has sent its report on the issue to the Assembly, which is expected to debate the bill on Tuesday or Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the Assembly's interior and defense committee approved a draft law stipulating the establishment of an election commission to supervise the polls instead of the government. The committee also approved the scrapping of a law that deprives politicians from running for public office if they were convicted of abusing HH the Amir.

to those who have demonstrated their commitment to these relationships during this current wave of attacks against our country," said the diplomat.

President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola has vowed to adopt "a wide-ranging reform package" to clean up the legislature. Metsola said the plan would strengthen the parliament's whistleblower protection systems, ban all "unofficial friendship groups" with foreign governments and review how to enforce its own rules. She said she would lead the changes, which are to include "a complete and in-depth look at how we interact with third countries," and that the package would be ready "in the New Year".

The probe and the charges have shaken the European Parliament, and put its interactions with lobbyists and representatives of non-EU countries under intense scrutiny. Metsola has sought to frame the scandal as an attack on "European democracy" and said that take was endorsed by EU leaders who gathered for a Brussels summit on Thursday. —AFP

## IS gunmen kill 9 Iraqi police

**KIRKUK:** Islamic State group jihadists said Sunday they had carried out an attack in northern Iraq killing nine police officers, setting off a roadside bomb before machine-gunning survivors. The attack in the Kirkuk area - which police said left nine federal officers dead - is one of the deadliest in Iraq in recent months. IS fighters attacked "a police patrol... detonated an explosive device then attacked them with machine guns and hand grenades," the group said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app.

A federal police officer, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said the bomb blast hit a vehicle transporting members of Iraq's federal police near the village of Shalal Al-Matar. It was then followed by "a direct attack with small arms", the officer added. "An assailant has been killed, and we are looking for the others," the officer said.

IS jihadists seized large swathes of Iraqi and Syrian territory in 2014, declaring a "caliphate" where they ruled with brutality before their defeat in late 2017 by Iraqi forces backed by a US-led military coalition. IS lost its last Syrian bastion, near the Iraqi border, in 2019. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani

condemned the violence as a "cowardly terrorist attack". Security forces should show "vigilance, carefully inspect the roads and not provide any opportunity for terrorist elements", he said.

The US-led anti-IS coalition continued a combat role in Iraq until December last year, but roughly 2,500 American soldiers remain in the country to assist in the fight against the jihadists. IS cells, however, remain active in several areas of Iraq. On Wednesday, three Iraqi soldiers were killed and three others wounded when a bomb exploded as their patrol vehicle passed through farmland in Tarmiya, a rural municipality about 30 km north of the capital Baghdad that is a known hotspot for IS sleeper cells.

Last month a machine gun attack on a remote northern Iraqi military post killed four soldiers near Kirkuk, a military source said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Iraqi security forces continue to carry out counter-terrorism operations against the group, and the deaths of IS fighters in airstrikes and raids are regularly announced.

Despite the setbacks, which has left IS a shadow of its former self, the group has "maintained its ability to launch attacks at a steady pace", a January report by the United Nations read. The UN estimates the jihadist organization maintains between 6,000 and 10,000 fighters inside Iraq and Syria, exploiting the porous border between the two countries and concentrating mainly in rural areas. —AFP



**KIRKUK:** The bodies of Iraq's federal police members who were killed in an IS attack are repatriated from Kirkuk airport on Dec 18, 2022. —AFP

## Qatar warns EU parliament curbs...

Continued from Page 1

demonstrates that MEPs have been significantly misled," said the statement. "It is unfortunate that some acted on preconceived prejudices against Qatar and made their judgements based on the inaccurate information in the leaks rather than waiting for the investigation to conclude."

Qatar has already had one diplomatic showdown with Germany in recent months. Doha summoned the German ambassador after the interior minister cast doubt on whether Qatar should host the World Cup because of its treatment of foreign workers. "Qatar has strong and longstanding ties with many countries in the European Union, and we extend our gratitude



## International

# Voting for South Africa's ruling party leader to get underway

## More than 4,000 delegates to cast their ballot

**JOHANNESBURG:** Voting to elect a new leader of South Africa's ruling party was to get underway on Sunday, with President Cyril Ramaphosa squaring off against his former health minister Zweli Mkhize. Ramaphosa, 70, is expected to be confirmed in the role that opens the way to being head of state, despite a damaging cash-heist scandal and vociferous internal opposition. But observers said the race looked closer than expected, with local media reporting party delegates from several provinces had shifted support to Mkhize.

"We're seeing Ramaphosa moving from enjoying a comfortable lead, to having Mkhize right behind him. It's up in the air right now," independent political analyst Pearl Mncube told AFP. More than 4,000 delegates are to cast their ballot to appoint seven top leadership roles, including party president, deputy president, chair and secretary general, at a conference near Johannesburg. After 28 years in power, the African National Congress (ANC), which was shaped by Nelson Mandela to spearhead the struggle to end apartheid, faces deep rifts and declining support. Its image has been stained by corruption, cronyism and a lacklustre economic record.

Some of those divisions played out in the open at the conference that opened on Friday, with Ramaphosa heckled by some delegates before his opening address.

Much of the disturbance came from supporters of corruption-tainted former president Jacob Zuma who was forced out by Ramaphosa.

"(Ramaphosa) is going to win, we know that. But because of Phala Phala, he must step aside," said one of the disruptive delegates, Thami Chamane, 30, referring to the farm at the centre of the scandal engulfing the president.

### Dented image

Chants, shouting and celebratory dances also marked the process to confirm all nominations in the



**JOHANNESBURG:** Delegates sing and chant slogans during the second day of the 55th National Conference of the African National Congress (ANC) at the National Recreation Center (NASREC) in Johannesburg. — AFP

early morning, with senior party officials repeatedly calling for order. Some delegates rolled their hands as a sign for "change" while others made the number two with their fingers in support of a second term for Ramaphosa.

Mkhize, hails from the same province as Zuma, the southeastern KwaZulu-Natal, which has the largest number of party delegates. A 66-year-old doctor by training, he is among those whose image has been tainted by corruption allegations that he denies.

As health minister, he was lauded for his handling of the coronavirus pandemic, but his two-year spell ended abruptly when Ramaphosa replaced him in August 2021. He was placed on special leave after investigators opened a probe into a 150-million-rand (\$10.4-million) contract for a Covid awareness campaign.

Ramaphosa's clean-hands image has also been dented by accusations he concealed a huge cash burglary at his farm in 2020, rather than report it to the authorities. Portraying himself as a graft-busting champion, he took control of the ANC in 2017 after his then boss Zuma became mired in corruption allegations.

Ramaphosa, who denies any wrongdoing, won a reprieve ahead of the conference when the ANC used its majority in parliament to block a possible impeachment inquiry. An ex-trade unionist, he fronted the historic negotiations to end apartheid in 1994 and helped draft the constitution—considered to be one of Africa's most progressive charters.

Paul Mashatile, 61, the current party treasurer and acting secretary general, is seen as the leading contender for the role of deputy president. — AFP

## 12 Afghans killed as oil tanker catches fire

**CHARIKAR:** An oil tanker overturned and caught fire in Afghanistan's high-altitude Salang pass, killing 12 people and injuring dozens, officials said on Sunday. The incident happened late on Saturday in the province of Parwan, north of Kabul, leaving travellers on both sides of the mountainous pass stranded. At least 12 people were killed and 37 others were injured in the incident, said Hamidullah Misbah, spokesman for the Ministry of Public Works, adding the toll was expected to rise. "An oil tanker overturned and caught fire in the Salang tunnel, which then set several other vehicles on fire," Misbah told AFP.

Abdullah Afghan Mal, a senior health official in Parwan, said many of the dead included women and children who were badly burned. "Among the dead it was very hard to identify who was a male and who was a female," he said.

The pass was now closed for traffic as rescue teams in helicopters deployed at the site, officials said. The Salang pass, one of the highest mountain highways in the world at around 3,650 metres (12,000 feet) was built by Soviet-era specialists in the 50s and includes a 2.6-kilometre tunnel. The pass runs through the Hindu Kush mountain range that connects capital Kabul to the north. Hailed as an engineering feat upon completion, the Salang pass is often shut for days because of accidents, heavy snowfalls and avalanches during the winter.—AFP

## China nursing homes struggle to keep residents safe

**BEIJING:** China's nursing homes are fighting an uphill battle to keep their elderly residents safe as a wave of COVID-19 infections sweeps the country following a relaxation of the government's zero-tolerance virus policy.

Facilities are locking themselves off from the outside world with staff sleeping on site, while struggling to get their hands on drugs. Authorities have warned of rapidly growing caseloads, and industry ministry official Zhou Jian said on Wednesday that the country was "making all-out efforts to ramp up the production of key medicines".

Experts fear the country is ill-equipped to manage the "exit wave" of infections as it presses ahead with reopening, with millions of vulnerable elderly people still not fully vaccinated. And eldercare facilities have now been left to fend for themselves as society reopens, the manager of one privately run Beijing home said.

"We are fully sealed off," the manager, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP. Only food and supplies are allowed in—no one is allowed to enter or leave. He said the home had ordered medical supplies "at a high price", but they had not arrived yet after a week, with the city's logistics network battered by infections among delivery workers.

He warned it would be impossible to keep the virus out forever. "Couriers and delivery personnel are almost all COVID positive," he said. "Even if you disinfect or throw away all the outer packaging, plus the plastic packaging, you can't spray disinfectant on all the food that comes in."

Many Chinese eldercare facilities have already been locked down for weeks following local government directives, with Yuecheng Senior Home in Beijing saying last week it had already been sealed off for nearly 60 days.

In Shanghai, the Xiangfu Nursing Home said this week it would continue "closed management", forcing all employees to sleep on site and giving staff nucleic acid tests every day. "As society optimises prevention and control policies, our home should in particular maintain high vigilance," the home said in its statement.

### Hospitals under pressure

Visits to hospital fever clinics surged in the days following China's lifting of restrictions last week, though the World Health Organization said the virus was already spreading widely in the country as "the control measures in themselves were not stopping the disease".

The toll of the abrupt shift away from zero-COVID is still unfolding, with multiple funeral homes in the capital telling AFP they experienced a recent surge in demand. Health authorities have reported no deaths from COVID-19 in the past week, but have admitted that official figures no longer capture the full picture of domestic infections now that mass testing requirements have been dropped.

"We've had hundreds of patients, with a number of patients coming from nursing homes and in their 90s," though there appeared to be few severe cases, one nurse at a Beijing hospital, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP.

The nurse, who had recently caught COVID himself and returned to work after just three days, said more than half of his colleagues had been infected over the past few days. "We can only force ourselves to work to keep the hospital running," he said. "Those who have no fever and only mild symptoms are returning to work." — AFP

## Ireland's Varadkar becomes premier for second time

**DUBLIN:** Ireland's Leo Varadkar on Saturday took over as prime minister for the second time, a handover of power in line with a coalition deal struck in 2020. Varadkar replaced Micheal Martin as Taoiseach (premier) in a rotation between his Fine Gael and Martin's Fianna Fail parties unprecedented in Irish history.

The centre-right parties, the two main political partners in a three-party governing coalition, were forged from opposing sides in the Irish Civil War in the early 20th century. They agreed to the rotating premierships as part of a coalition with Ireland's Greens following 2020 elections.

Varadkar, who is mixed race and openly gay, is stepping up from deputy premier. Even in his second stint in the role, at 43 he is still one of Ireland's youngest-ever leaders. Speaking at a special sitting of the Irish parliament in Dublin, Varadkar paid tribute to his predecessor Martin, who he said had provided "reassurance and hope in difficult times".

He added: "I accept this nomination with humility and resolve and a burning desire... to provide new hope and new opportunities for all our citizens." Varadkar gained the support of 87 members of parliament in a vote on Saturday, while 62 voted against.



**DUBLIN:** A handout photo released by Ireland's Government Information Service (GIS) on December 17, 2022, shows Ireland's incoming prime minister, and Fine Gael party leader Leo Varadkar (R), receiving the Seals of Office of Taoiseach and Government, from Ireland's President Michael D. Higgins, at Aras an Uachtarain in Dublin. — AFP

After the result, UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak tweeted: "Congratulations to @LeoVaradkar on becoming Ireland's Taoiseach once again. "I look forward to working with him to ensure all strands of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreements are working and to continue to work with @MichealMartinTD in his new role."

The 1998 Good Friday agreement of 1998 ended

three decades of sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland that left more than 3,500 dead.

In a video posted on social media, Martin earlier said it had been "the honour of a lifetime to serve" as Taoiseach. Varadkar's rise to the top of Irish politics was remarkable in a country dominated by a strict, conservative Catholic morality well into the latter half of the last century.—AFP

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2022

## Business

# Syria fuel crisis slows down life in Damascus, shuttering businesses

## Fuel shortages blamed on Western sanctions that severely restrict imports

**DAMASCUS:** Syrian student Ziad al-Ezz can no longer get to university as severe fuel shortages cripple the capital Damascus, pushing residents to seek alternatives for heating and shuttering businesses. With the country's economy battered by more than a decade of war, authorities have announced four fuel price hikes since the start of the year as well as rationing of petrol and fuel oil supplies.

"Our struggle for fuel starts at home and doesn't end" in the classroom, said Ezz, 20, who studies literature at the University of Damascus. "At home it's extremely cold without heating, and on the street it's not easy to find transport."

In a city where winter can be bitterly cold, the price of heating fuel has gone through the roof, so his mother has told him to make do with piling on layers of covers for warmth. Syria blames the fuel shortages on Western sanctions that severely restrict imports, and the country's major oil fields lie in areas outside government control.

Ezz works part time doing food deliveries by bicycle, but the trip to university is too far to pedal, while rare public buses are packed and taxis are too expensive, he said. Universities have dropped classes to three days a week due to the fuel crisis. "People are only thinking about how to stay warm over winter," said Ezz. "How can I even think of university and studying in this situation?"

### No more traffic jams

Daily life has gotten tougher in recent weeks in Damascus, where severe electricity rationing means residents receive just two hours of daily state power. Some people have opted for burning pistachio

shells or the remains of pressed olives to keep warm. Peak-hour traffic jams in the capital are now almost non-existent, with many motorists leaving their cars at home except in case of emergency.

Taxi drivers used to be able to buy fuel at subsidized rates once a week, but now that has dropped to once a month, pushing many to the black market for fuel supplies and ramping up taxi fares.

Black market fuel used to cost around \$1 per liter but prices doubled this winter, in a country where civil servants earn on average \$21 a month. "The (subsidized) fuel allowance only lasts me two working days," said taxi driver Bassam Zahrawi.

Prime Minister Hussein Arnout told reporters on Thursday that the government was forced to hike official fuel prices to prevent key services including transport, hospitals and bakeries from grinding to a halt. Zahrawi said he no longer cruises the streets of Damascus, but waits for people to phone him for fares. "Before, we used to look for clients, but now they're seeking us out," the 39-year-old said.

### 'Toughest crisis'

Syria's civil war has killed nearly half a million people since it began in 2011, fragmenting the country and ravaging its economy and infrastructure. Ninety percent of the population now live below the poverty line and 12.4 million people are food insecure, according to the United Nations.

The government has recently introduced further austerity measures, including temporarily reducing public servants' working days this month and announcing extra holiday closures between Christmas and New Year. Some call centers of the country's main telecommunications companies were



**DAMASCUS:** This picture shows a street in the Syrian capital Damascus. Syrian student Ziad al-Ezz can no longer get to university as severe fuel shortages cripple the capital Damascus, pushing residents to seek alternatives for heating and shuttering businesses. — AFP

temporarily out of service earlier in December after running out of generator fuel.

Bassam Qalaaji, head of the bakers' association, told a local radio station last week that half of the capital's private bakeries had stopped work due to the shortages. Abu Mohammed, 25, said he had resorted to firewood to keep his Damascus bakery going.

"The crisis has been going on for months, but I never expected that one day I would not be able to

find a single liter of fuel oil," he said. He said he'd also reduced the size of his traditional pizza-style bread—usually served with olive oil and thyme or cheese—instead of raising prices. The nose-diving local currency hit a new record low this month of more than 6,000 Syrian pounds against the dollar on the black market, compared to 47 in 2011. "It's the longest and toughest crisis we have ever faced... and we have lived through a lot of others," Abu Mohammed said. —AFP

## China set to offer compromise to save nature accord

**MONTREAL:** China, which chairs a high-stakes UN biodiversity summit in Montreal, is due to present a long-awaited compromise text on Sunday in an attempt to seal the "peace pact with nature" that the planet sorely needs. More than 10 days of fraught biodiversity negotiations look to be coming to a head as delegates prepare to wrangle over the compromise draft agreement.

"It is not a perfect document, not a document that will make everyone happy, however it is a document that is based on the efforts of all of us over the last four years," said China's Environment Minister Huang Runqiu. "It is a document that must be adopted at this meeting that is highly expected by the international community."

Observers had warned the COP15 conference risked collapse as countries squabbled over how much the rich world should pay to fund the efforts, with developing countries walking out of talks at one point. But conference leaders turned upbeat Saturday on their chances of securing a deal. Huang said he was "greatly confident" of a consensus and his Canadian counterpart Steven Guilbeault said "tremendous progress" had been made.

Huang said he would publish a draft agreement at 8 am EST (1300 GMT) on Sunday and hear lead delegates' feedback later in the day. The negotiations officially run until December 19, but could go longer if needed. "Now is not the time for small decisions, let's go big!" tweeted French President Emmanuel Macron. "Let's work together to achieve the most ambitious agreement possible. The world is depending on it."

### Million species threatened

Delegates are working to roll back the destruc-



**MONTREAL:** (Left to right), Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, Elizabeth Maruma Mrema; Chinese Ecology and Environment Minister, Huang Runqiu; and Canadian Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault, hold a joint press conference at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on December 17, 2022. — AFP

tion and pollution that threaten an estimated one million plant and animal species with extinction, according to scientists that report to the UN. The text is meant to be a roadmap for nations through 2030. The last 10-year plan, signed in Aichi, Japan in 2010, did not achieve any of its objectives—a failure blamed widely on its lack of monitoring mechanisms.

Major goals in the draft under discussion include a cornerstone pledge to protect 30 percent of the world's land and oceans by 2030. The more than 20 targets also include reducing environmentally destructive farming subsidies, requiring businesses to assess and report on their biodiversity impacts, and tackling the scourge of invasive species. Representatives of Indigenous communities, who safeguard 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity, want their rights to practice stewardship of their lands to be enshrined in the final agreement.

"We are the ones doing the work. We protect biodiversity," said Valentin Engobo, leader of the

meeting is being held. His Canadian counterpart Steven Guilbeault echoed his statement, saying: "We've made tremendous progress... I don't know about how many of us thought we could get there."

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French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted: "With just a few days to go before the end of the COP 15 Biodiversity Conference in Montreal, my message to our partners is: now is not the time for small decisions, let's go big! "Let's work together to achieve the most ambitious agreement possible. The world is depending on it."

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Lokolama community in the Congo Basin, in a statement released by Greenpeace. "You won't replace us. We won't let you."

### Money matters

The issue of how much money the rich countries will send to the developing world, home to most of the world's biodiversity, has been the biggest sticking point. Several countries have announced new commitments. The European Union has committed seven billion euros (\$7.4 billion) for the period until 2027, double its prior pledge. But campaigners and developing countries say more is needed—and delegates have not reached agreement on what form the new funding flows should take. Brazil has proposed flows of \$100 billion annually, compared to the roughly \$10 billion at present. "We will be able to specify our financial ambitions once we have seen the text," France's Environment Minister Christophe Bechu told AFP on Saturday. —AFP

achieve any of its objectives—a failure blamed widely on its lack of monitoring mechanisms.

Major goals in the draft under discussion include a cornerstone pledge to protect 30 percent of the world's land and oceans by 2030. The more than 20 targets also include reducing environmentally destructive farming subsidies, requiring businesses to assess and report on their biodiversity impacts, and tackling the scourge of invasive species.

Representatives of Indigenous communities, who safeguard 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity, want their rights to practice stewardship of their lands to be enshrined in the final agreement. "Indigenous Rights are not negotiable," said Orpha Novita Yoshua, an Indigenous Namblong woman from West Papua, in a statement released by Greenpeace. "We are the ones doing the work. We protect biodiversity," said Valentin Engobo, leader of the Lokolama community in the Congo Basin. "You won't replace us. We won't let you."

### Money matters

The issue of how much money the rich countries will send to the developing world, home to most of

## Rules amended for usufruct of state real estate plots

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid issued a new decision to introduce amendments to the list of commissions for usufruct of state real estate property, allowing the ministry to collect 30 percent of the contracts concluded by subcontractors of state-owned plots.

Ministerial decision resolution No 107 of 2022 regarding the amendment of some provisions related to the usufruct fee for the subcontracting of state private real estate property and service fees included replacing the phrase "30 percent of the value of annual investment contracts" to collection of "30 percent of the value of subcontracting" by the ministry.

Meanwhile, another decision issued by Rushaid (No 108 of 2022) stipulates that the provisions of ministerial resolution no. 40 of 2016 regarding the regulation of fees for usufruct of state private real estate property and service fees not apply to fully state-owned companies, and that these companies are exempted from paying the fees for usufruct of the state's private real estate.



Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid

## At UN talks, hope stirs for deal to save nature

**MONTREAL:** Top officials at high-stakes UN biodiversity negotiations said Saturday they were confident of securing a major deal to save the natural world from destruction. Observers had warned the COP15 talks aimed at sealing a "peace pact for nature" risked collapse due to disagreement over how much the rich world should pay to protect ecosystems in developing countries.

The talks that started on December 7 had appeared to be on the verge of breakdown when developing countries walked out days ago over the question of funding. But the mood among leaders turned upbeat on Saturday. "I am greatly confident that we can ... keep our ambitions as well as achieve consensus," China's Environment Minister Huang Runqiu told reporters in Montreal, where the COP15



**MONTREAL:** People walk in front of the convention sign at the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, on December 17, 2022. — AFP

the world's biodiversity, has been the biggest sticking point. "If the framework is not accompanied by adequate resources, then we will be destined to repeat the same failures that we saw after Aichi," warned Brian O'Donnell, director of the NGO Campaign for Nature. —AFP



Business

# EU reaches deal on major carbon market reform

Deal the central plank of EU's ambitions to invest in climate-friendly technologies

BRUSSELS: EU member states and parliamentarians on Sunday announced an agreement for a major reform to the bloc's carbon market, the central plank of its ambitions to reduce emissions and invest in climate-friendly technologies. The deal aims to accelerate emissions cuts, phase out free allowances to industries and targets fuel emissions under a "polluter pays" principle. The quotas are designed to decrease over time to encourage them to emit less and invest in greener technologies as part of the European Union's ultimate aim of achieving carbon neutrality.

The EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) allows electricity producers and industries with high energy demands such as steel and cement to purchase "free allowances" to cover their carbon emissions under a "polluter pays" principle. The quotas are designed to decrease over time to encourage them to emit less and invest in greener technologies as part of the European Union's ultimate aim of achieving carbon neutrality.

Negotiators representing member states and the parliament had spent more than 24 hours in intense talks before reaching an agreement on Saturday night that widens the scope of the carbon market.

The deal means emissions in the ETS sectors are to be cut by 62 percent by 2030 based on 2005 levels, up from a previous goal of 43 percent. Concerned industries must cut their emissions by that amount.

The agreement also seeks to accelerate the timetable for phasing out the free allowances, with 48.5 percent phased out by 2030 and a complete removal by 2034, a schedule at the centre of fierce debates between MEPs and member states. The carbon market will be progressively extended to the mar-



European Parliament rapporteur Peter Liese

itime sector and intra-European flights. Waste incineration sites will be included from 2028, depending on a favorable report by the commission.

Climate Action Network, a coalition of NGOs, criticized the agreement, saying it would allow major polluters to continue to receive billions of euros in free quotas for another decade while households would receive little.

**'Ambitious carbon price'**

French MEP Pascal Canfin, president of the European Parliament's environment committee, said the carbon price for industries affected by the ETS would be around 100 euros per ton. "No other continent has such an ambitious carbon price," he tweeted. A "carbon border tax", which imposes environmental standards on imports into the bloc based on the carbon emissions linked to their production, will offset the reduction of free allowances and allow industries to compete with more polluting non-EU rivals.

The agreement also aims to make households pay for emissions linked to fuel and gas heating from 2027, but the price will be capped until 2030. The European Commission had proposed a second carbon market targeting building heating and road fuels, but the plan raised concerns as households grapple with soaring energy prices exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The second carbon market would have obliged suppliers of fuel and gas to buy quotas to cover their emissions, but MEPs argued the measure should be limited to offices and large vehicles.

If energy prices continue to spiral, the application of this part of the agreement will be delayed by a year. Funds from this second market will go to a "Social Climate Fund" designed to help vulnerable households and businesses weather the energy price crisis.

**'Moment of truth'**

"This deal will provide a huge contribution towards fighting climate change at low costs," European Parliament rapporteur Peter Liese said in the statement. "It will give breathing space for citizens and industry in difficult times and provide a clear signal to European industry that it pays off to invest in green technologies." The conservative German MEP added the bloc would have until 2026 to invest in green sources and energy efficiency, after which it would be "the moment of truth: we must reduce our emissions by then, or pay dear".

The commission first proposed the carbon market reform in July 2021 as part of plans to reduce the bloc's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 percent by 2030 compared with 1990 levels. The ETS was created in 2005 and applies to around 40 percent of EU emissions. — AFP

## Virgin to operate 'first net-zero transatlantic flight'

LONDON: Virgin Atlantic is set to operate the world's first "net zero" transatlantic flight, the Department for Transport has announced. The airline has received £1 million (\$1.2 million) from the UK government to fly a Boeing 787 jet from London Heathrow to New York JFK next year using sustainable aviation fuel instead of kerosene. Virgin Atlantic and its partners are putting in similar funding.

The sustainable aviation fuel is expected to be produced mainly from waste oil and fat, such as used cooking oil. It reduces carbon emissions by more than 70 per cent compared with kerosene.

The use of the fuel combined with carbon removal credits will make the flight net-zero, the department said. The flight is likely to take place towards the end of 2023 with no fare-paying passengers on board. Commercial flights can only use the fuel if it is blended with standard aviation fuel at up to 50 per cent. "For decades, flying from London to New York has symbolized aviation's ability to connect people and drive international progress," Transport Secretary Mark Harper said.



"It's now going to be at the forefront of cutting carbon emissions from flying. "Not only will this flight pave the way for future generations, but it will demonstrate just how much we can achieve when we work together on a shared goal, bringing together some of the best businesses and academics in the world and led by a British airline." — Agencies



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 15 DECEMBER 2022

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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	38,102	8,176.73	-1.7%	-3.7%	7.0%	266,180,397	145,349,887	20,632	22.5	2.4	78.8%
Main Market	10,226	5,653.55	0.3%	-0.5%	-4.0%	396,145,760	80,037,779	14,369	46.0	1.4	21.2%
All Share	48,327	7,350.82	-1.3%	-3.1%	4.4%	662,326,157	225,387,666	35,001	27.5	2.2	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
BANKS	30,464	1,808.96	-1.0%	-3.0%	11.5%	225,653,590	140,864,086	10,206	23.7	#VALUE!	63.04%
BASIC MATERIALS	770	866.57	-0.4%	-1.7%	-15.4%	1,348,887	1,071,672	362	5.2	#VALUE!	1.59%
CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY	981	1,463.55	0.4%	-1.0%	9.5%	17,555,887	4,075,972	1,947	27.6	10.9	2.03%
CONSUMER STAPLES	149	488.93	-4.5%	0.1%	-33.1%	4,384,363	1,785,581	227	0.0	1.2	0.31%
ENERGY	239	1,148.06	0.5%	5.2%	-19.6%	2,506,645	137,101	136	10.1	1.2	0.50%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	4,531	1,273.73	-2.9%	-4.4%	-10.5%	226,021,940	28,473,739	9,488	75.1	1.8	9.38%
HEALTH CARE	230	463.66	2.1%	2.1%	-41.8%	62,607	25,124	7	14.4	5.8	0.48%
INDUSTRIALS	3,784	1,070.61	-3.9%	-5.8%	-6.2%	65,130,711	26,977,290	5,693	35.9	1.5	7.83%
INSURANCE	635	1,541.73	-0.4%	-0.1%	0.5%	3,513,577	159,053	246	9.4	0.9	1.31%
REAL ESTATE	2,667	1,245.42	-1.0%	-2.8%	-6.1%	96,747,163	11,683,650	3,979	19.0	1.3	5.52%
TECHNOLOGY	9	683.12	-11.4%	-11.4%	-0.1%	599,998	60,951	98	0.0	0.8	0.02%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	3,661	1,193.37	-1.0%	-1.7%	9.5%	16,768,248	9,688,993	2,315	13.3	2.0	7.57%
UTILITIES	207	494.74	-1.1%	-4.6%	-17.5%	2,032,541	384,456	297	15.5	1.7	0.43%

**Top Gainers**

Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
CBK	509	13.87%	89,061,581	44,528,970.120	135
KSHC	38.9	11.78%	1,044,480	39,288.035	94
TAHSSILAT	21	10.00%	36,740	689.598	18
SANAM	63	8.06%	432,295	25,950.306	38
ENERGYH	23	7.62%	214,776	4,345.162	22

**Top Losers**

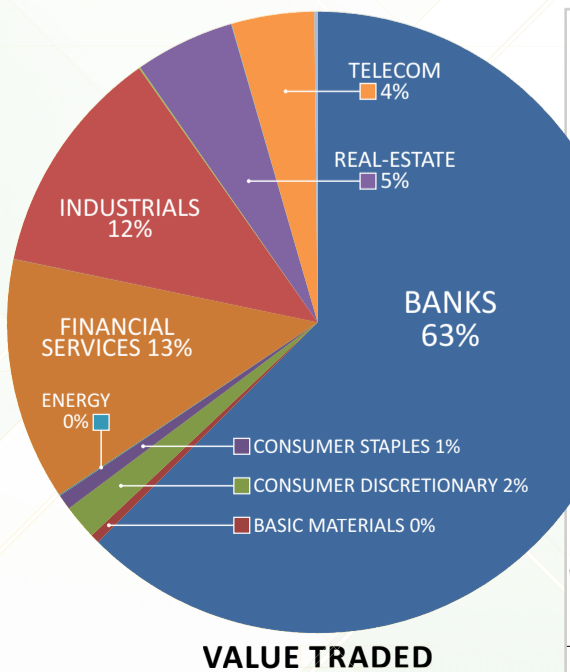
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
MARAKEZ	54.7	-14.80%	151,594	8,586	55
ASC	94	-11.42%	599,998	60,951	98
ACICO	85	-9.48%	1,702,913	151,579	165
ALOLA	65.2	-9.19%	8,212,906	552,858	462
FIRSTDUBAI	49.5	-9.17%	1,544,855	78,841	84

**Top Volume**

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
CBK	509	13.87%	89,061,581	44,528,970	135
KFH	828	-2.59%	63,777,985	53,135,889	4,615
IFA	105	-2.78%	40,331,464	4,288,240	759
GFH	79	-1.50%	30,757,618	2,440,451	1,031
ALAFCO	206	-2.83%	27,593,228	5,890,407	883

**Top Value**

Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades
KFH	828	-2.59%	63,777,985	53,135,889	4,615
CBK	509	13.87%	89,061,581	44,528,970	135
NBK	1,087	-0.64%	26,040,015	28,387,947	2,126
AGLTY	717	-5.66%	18,225,684	13,362,708	2,525
ZAIN	572	-1.72%	15,250,413	8,776,544	1,635



**Market Summary:**

- Premier Market's weekly volume and value dropped by 30% and 5%, respectively. The Main Market volume decreased by 24%, while the value increased by 38%.
- Premier and Main indices are on a downtrend due to several factors affecting market moves such as oil prices, FED increasing interest rate, and inflation.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7350, with support levels at 7318, 7286, and 7214, while resistance at 7379. The Premier index closed at 8176, with support levels at 8116, 8064, and 8013, while resistance at 8184. The Main index closed at 5653, with support levels at 2616, 5601, and 5575, while resistance was at 5641.



## Business

# French growth to slow in 2023 due to energy crisis, inflation: CB

## Economy expected to bounce back in 2024 and 2025

PARIS: French economic growth will slow considerably in 2023 due to the energy crisis and inflation, before bouncing back in 2024 and 2025, the central bank forecast on Saturday.

GDP growth will slow from 2.6 percent in 2022 to 0.3 percent in 2023, according to the Bank of France's "most probable" macroeconomic scenario for the next three years. The slowdown in growth will be followed by a 1.2-percent rebound in 2024. That is lower than the 1.8 percent previously anticipated, because "the winter of 2023-24 could still be a bit complicated due to the energy crisis", director-general Olivier Garnier said. The rebound will continue in 2025, when growth is expected to reach 1.8 percent, the bank said.

The forecasts remain highly uncertain though. This is because of extremely volatile energy prices, geopolitical tensions—particularly the war in Ukraine—and uncertainty as to the evolution of COVID-19 in China. The Bank of France's outlook is less optimistic than that of the government, which forecasts 2.7 percent growth in 2022 and 1.0 percent in 2023.

"We can't rule out a recession but if there is one it will be limited and short-lived," Garnier said. Oil and gas prices are expected to fall back from the peaks seen this year but remain high and continue to feed inflation, as will food prices. Prices will have risen 7.3 percent by the end of 2022.

Inflation will continue to rise in the first half of 2023 before dropping back to 4.0 percent by end-2023 and 2.0 percent at end-2024, the Bdf said.

The national statistics agency INSEE said that France's economy is expected to contract by 0.2 percent this quarter as consumer spending is squeezed by inflation predicted to peak at 7.0 percent early next year. France is nevertheless expected to dodge a recession, which is usually defined as two consecutive quarters of contraction, with INSEE seeing a tepid rebound of 0.1 percent at the start of 2023.

It forecasts growth picking up to 0.3 percent in the second quarter of 2023.

Overall, INSEE expects the French economy to post 2.5 percent growth in 2022. Julien Pouget, the head of INSEE's forecasting unit, said the fourth quarter was more likely a "passing cold" than a more serious illness for the French economy.

But with the European Central Bank raising its main interest rate by 0.5 percent on Thursday, and warning more such hikes were on the way in order to tame inflation, the forecast in the eurozone is not rosy. The ECB cut its 2023 eurozone growth outlook to 0.5 percent.

INSEE did not provide figures for economic growth in 2023. The French government expects 1.0 percent growth next year, but independent forecasters consider that too optimistic. —AFP



PARIS: Inflation will continue to rise in the first half of 2023 in France before dropping back to 4.0 percent by end-2023 and 2.0 percent at end-2024, the Bdf said.

## Greek PM pledges 10% food subsidy for families

ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis on Saturday announced a 10-percent subsidy for every household's food purchases to help counter the burden of inflation. "From next February, the state will cover 10 percent of each household's purchases for six months in supermarkets and food businesses (bakeries, pastry shops, fishmongers)," the prime minister told parliament before a vote on the 2023 state budget amid a pre-electoral atmosphere.

The measure would cost 650 million euros (\$690 million), said Mitsotakis. Elections in Greece are scheduled for July 2023, but Mitsotakis has said they could be held in the spring.

Individuals will receive a maximum of 220 euros. For large families with several beneficiaries, the overall amount will be capped at 1,000 euros. The measure is for households with an income of 24,000 euros per couple, with an additional 5,000 euros for each child.

Mitsotakis also said electricity and natural gas subsidies would remain in place. "A total of more than eight billion euros will be allocated at the national level," he said. The 2023 state budget was approved Saturday, with 156 votes in favor out of a total of 299 votes. It is the first in 12 years to be drawn up outside a framework of bailout supervision or enhanced surveillance.

Greece emerged from financial aid plans in 2018. But until earlier this year it remained under scrutiny by its creditors, the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, who closely monitored the promised reforms and the country's finances. —AFP

## Egypt's natural gas reserves at 230tn cubic feet in Mediterranean

CAIRO: Former Egyptian Minister of Petroleum Osama Kamal announced that indicators and aerial surveys of the Mediterranean Sea in Egypt confirm the presence of more than 230 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. During a phone interview with "Al-Hekaya" (the story) program, presented by Amr Adeb on MBC Masr, on Saturday evening, Kamal added that the recent demarcation of Egypt's maritime borders has led to the entry of companies to start search and exploration operations.

He pointed out that the demarcation of the maritime borders is in accordance with the international rules of the United Nations' maritime border demarcation mechanisms. Kamal noted that Egypt has agencies that can implement the ruling in accordance with the United Nations Convention in its entirety.

Egypt's reserves of natural gas before the Zohr gas field were about 60 trillion cubic feet of gas, he added, indicating that Egypt's needs range between 2.7 and 3 trillion per year. He said that the Zohr field added 30 trillion cubic feet of gas, which led to a significant increase in the natural gas reserves.

It may be recalled that Egypt had exported eight million tons of liquefied natural gas (LNG) this year, up from seven million in 2021. 90 percent of Egyptian LNG exports would be destined for European Union markets.

The petroleum sector succeeded as a result of cooperation, interdependence, and teamwork on an integrated program in partnership between the sector's entities affiliated with the state, the private sector, and international companies, with the full support of President Abdul Fattah El-Sisi and the government. —AFP



KUWAIT: The inauguration of Mangaf branch.



KUWAIT: LuLu Exchange's Salmiya branch opening.



KUWAIT: Adeb Ahamed at the newly-inaugurated branch.

## LuLu Exchange opens two new branches in Kuwait

KUWAIT: LuLu Exchange - Kuwait's leading payments provider offering cross-border pay-

## What campaigners want to see in UN nature deal

MONTREAL: As high-stakes UN biodiversity talks in Montreal draw to a close, delegates will be presented Sunday with a draft deal to safeguard the planet's ecosystems and species by 2030.

Will it amount to the "peace pact with nature" that UN chief Antonio Guterres said the world desperately needs? Campaigners say the devil lies in the details. Here's what they're looking out for:

### '30 by 30'

The cornerstone of the agreement is the so-called 30 by 30 goal—a pledge to protect 30 percent of the world's land and seas by 2030. Currently, only about 17 percent of land and seven percent of oceans are protected. And some experts say 30 percent is a low aim, insisting that protecting 50 percent would be better. So far, more than 100 countries have publicly pledged support for the 30 by 30 target, and observers say it has received broad support among negotiators.

"For COP15 to be a success, we need to hold the line on our existing level of ambition," Alfred DeGemmis, of the Wildlife Conservation Society, told AFP. Brian O'Donnell of the Campaign for Nature added it was key that the text applies to oceans, as well as land, which had been in doubt.

### Indigenous rights

The question of Indigenous rights will be crucial. About 80 percent of the Earth's remaining biodi-

verse land is currently managed by Indigenous people, and it's broadly recognized that biodiversity is better respected on Indigenous territory. Many activists want to make sure their rights are not trampled in the name of conservation-previous efforts to safeguard land have seen Indigenous communities marginalized or displaced in what has been dubbed "green colonialism."

Advocates say therefore these rights have to be adequately addressed throughout the text, including within the 30 by 30 pledge, so that Indigenous people are not subject to mass evictions.

Failure on this front would be a "complete red line for us," said O'Donnell. "We are the ones doing the work. We protect biodiversity. You won't replace us. We won't let you," said Valentin Engobo, leader of the Lokolama community in the Congo Basin, which protects the world's largest tropical peatland.

"You can be our partners, if you want. But you cannot push us out."

### Loopholes matter

As a general principle, it is vital that the targets envisioned in the text aren't significantly weakened through loopholes that will weaken actual implementation, said Georgina Chandler of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. For example, during some plenary sessions, some ministers had suggested stripping out language about numerical targets for ecosystem restoration.

"Keeping those measurable elements...and making sure that they are ambitious, is really, really important," said Chandler. Other things she'll be watching include whether there will be a commitment to halve pesticide use, and whether businesses will be mandated to assess and report on the biodiversity impacts.

lifeline for thousands of expats, and as a responsible financial services provider, we are keen to expand our network to bring our services closer to our customers. We are also happy to see our investments in digital services ably complement our physical network in making the payments experience seamless and convenient for our customers, while fully adhering to the country's enhanced regulations."

The new branches mark the 263rd and 264th global branches of LuLu Financial Group.



MONTREAL: A delegate takes a photo of a sign at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on December 17, 2022. —AFP

### Finance

As ever, money remains a difficult question. Developing countries say developed nations grew rich by exploiting their resources and the South should be paid to preserve its ecosystems.

Several countries have announced new commitments either at the COP or recently, with Europe emerging as a key leader. The European Union has committed seven billion euros (\$7.4 billion) for the period until 2027, double its prior pledge. But Brazil has led a charge by developing countries for far more, proposing flows of \$100 billion annually, compared to the roughly \$10 billion at present.

Developing countries are also seeking a new funding mechanism, as a signal of the rich world's commitment to this goal. Whether international aid is delivered via a new fund, an existing mechanism called the Global Environment Facility (GEF), or a halfway solution involving a new "trust fund" within the GEF is still up for debate. —AFP



Lifestyle | Features



This picture shows an aerial view of an old fort in the Khaybar oasis in northwestern Saudi Arabia. — AFP photos



An aerial view of the Khaybar oasis in northwestern Saudi Arabia.

# FROM BATTLEFIELD TO GLAMPSITE: THE STORY OF A SAUDI TOWN



A woman unrolls a spool for a traditional weaving loom in the old town of the Khaybar oasis in northwestern Saudi Arabia.

A Saudi town best known for a fierce battle between the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Jewish tribes is remodeling itself as an upscale tourist draw in line with the kingdom's rebranding efforts. Situated in an oasis amid a volcanic field north of Madinah, the settlement of Khaybar was once home to thousands of Jews, who were defeated in a decisive seventh-century battle with the Prophet's army as Islam expanded across the Arabian Peninsula. The chant "Khaybar, Khaybar, o Jews, the army of Muhammad will return" can still sometimes be heard at present-day anti-Zionist demonstrations, drawing objections from groups such as the Anti-Defamation League, which says it "can be perceived as a threat of armed violence".

Last month, Saudi Arabia inaugurated a new visitors' centre in Khaybar, which takes a longer view of the area's history by highlighting references in ancient texts to its conquest by Babylonian-era King Nabonidus. At the centre, displays avoid mentioning the seventh-century battle and tourists can arrange hikes to nearby volcanoes, strolls through lush palm springs or helicopter tours over ancient tombs and desert kites, which are dry stone walls that served as animal traps.

The project is part of a broader push in the conservative Sunni Muslim country, which only began issuing tourism visas in 2019, to attract some 30 million foreign visitors annually by the end of the decade, up from four million last year. Khaybar tour guide Enass al-Sharif said it was important to shine a light on features of the area that go beyond its significance to Islam.

"Khaybar has a strong relationship with religion and it has a close relationship with the Prophet," she told AFP. However, "it also has a strong relationship with history and civilization. All these things were collected in one place, which is why it is attracting many tourists."

### 'Quantum leap'

Archaeologists believe Khaybar has been inhabited for over 200,000 years, and it once served as a vital stop along the so-called Incense Route that linked it to Medina to the south, and the desert city of Al-Ula to the north. But in the 1970s, the



Teacher Saifi Al-Shilali, a Khaybar native, speaks at the Khaybar Volcano Camp centre in the old town of the Khaybar oasis.

Saudi government began pushing residents to leave the old settlements for new structures with modern plumbing and electricity. "We wanted some civilization and development... so we left," recalled Saifi Al-Shilali, a Khaybar native who was in his early 20s when his family moved away.



Women operate traditional weaving looms in the old town of the Khaybar oasis.

time," he told AFP. "With my interest in research in Khaybar and in tourism... we have been waiting for this moment, so we consider it a quantum leap."

Like other Saudi attractions such as Al-Ula, a budding arts hub located among ancient Nabataean tombs, Khaybar is largely geared toward well-heeled travelers. The Khaybar Volcano Camp promises

ki energy healing master named Chamuel who conducts sound meditation sessions, inviting guests to enter "your own magical garden, a place beyond time and space".

### Unsolved mysteries

All the while, an archaeological survey and excavation project continues to unearth new details about human activity in the area as well as how its climate has evolved. The project, backed by the French government and expected to last through the end of 2024, has already yielded a deeper understanding of neolithic campsites, canals and rock art. Among the most intriguing finds are the "pendant tombs", rock formations that when viewed from above resemble a pendant hanging from a chain.

The story behind them "remains a mystery", according to the visitors' centre, though archaeologists believe they date back 5,000 years. Khaybar residents like Shilali are eager to learn more about the people who constructed them as part of rounding out a picture of the region's past including the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) seventh-century victory, but also everything else. "I think we are supposed to shed light on Khaybar as a historical region whose roots go back to prehistoric periods, including the Jewish period," he said. "I believe that the history should be known in its true form, without any exaggerations." — AFP



A man stands at entrance of an old home in the old town of the Khaybar oasis.



A view of traditional goods stalls in the old town of the Khaybar oasis.

Since then, the old settlements have been abandoned, and Shilali, now in his 60s, is among those who have been agitating for a revival. The transformation of Khaybar into a potential tourism draw "is something we have been waiting for a long

an "exclusive stay" that "takes glamping to another level", with 10 rooms surrounded by imposing mountains.

The focus lies squarely on the setting rather than the historical events that took place there. The camp even features a rei-



A view of a spring at the Khaybar Volcano Camp centre in the old town of the Khaybar oasis.



A view of an old fort in the Khaybar oasis in northwestern Saudi Arabia.



An aerial view of an old fort in the Khaybar oasis in northwestern Saudi Arabia.

## Iran actor arrested after voicing support for protests

Iran arrested a prominent actor Saturday after she voiced support for the three-month-old protest movement triggered by the death of a woman in custody, the judiciary said Saturday. Taraneh Alidoosti, 38, was arrested "by order of the judicial authority" as she "did not provide documentation for some of her claims" about

the protests, reported the judiciary's Mizan Online news website. It added "some figures and a number of celebrities" including Alidoosti have been questioned or arrested



Iranian actress Taraneh Alidoosti

"following some baseless comments about the recent events and the publishing of provocative material in support of the street riots".

Alidoosti is best known for her role in the Oscar-winning 2016 film "The Salesman". Her most recent social media post was on December 8, the same day Mohsen Shekari, 23, became the first person executed by authorities over the protests. "Your silence means the support of the oppression and the oppressor", read text on an image shared to her Instagram account.

"Every international organization who is watching this bloodshed and not taking action, is a disgrace to humanity," Alidoosti

wrote in the caption of her post. The actor has been a prominent presence in Iranian cinema since she was a teenager. Recently, she starred in the film "Leila's Brothers", which screened at this year's Cannes Film Festival. The Islamic republic has been rocked by protests triggered by the September 16 death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian of Kurdish origin, after her arrest for an alleged breach of the country's dress code.

On the day of Amini's death, Alidoosti posted a photo to Instagram with text saying: "Damnation to this captivity". The caption to the post read: "Don't forget what Iran's women go through" and asked people to "say her name, spread the word".

On November 9, she posted an image of herself without a headscarf, holding a paper with the words "Woman, life, freedom", the main slogan of the protests. Hot on the heels of Shekari's execution, Iran publicly hanged protester Majidreza Rahnavard, 23, on December 12. Nine other people arrested in connection with the unrest have been sentenced to death. Thousands of people have been detained since the protests erupted and 400 have received jail sentences of up to 10 years for their involvement in the unrest, Iran's judiciary said Tuesday. — AFP





Newly elected Miss France Indira Ampiot (left) is crowned by Miss France 2022 Diane Leyre (center) during the Miss France 2023 beauty contest in Deols, central France.



Newly elected Miss France Indira Ampiot (center) reacts TV host Jean-Pierre Foucault's (2nd R) speak during the Miss France 2023 beauty contest. — AFP photos

## MISS FRANCE 2023 CROWNED AFTER TWEAKED PAGEANT FAILS TO SWAY CRITICS



Miss France 2022 Diane Leyre performs on stage.

Indira Ampiot, an 18-year-old communications student, was crowned Miss France 2023 on Saturday night after a parade of swimsuits, evening gowns and heels, concluding a pageant that had sought to update its image with newly expanded eligibility criteria. Ampiot, the reigning Miss Guadeloupe, said she was living "a waking dream" after she was given the silver and blue tiara by beauty queen Diane Leyre. During the contest, Ampiot had championed women with cancer and urged France on at the World Cup, concluding her speech with "Allez les Bleus!"

This year's competition involved fewer eligibility requirements, which had previously restricted entry to women without children between the ages of 18 and 24 who were at least 1.70 metres (5.6 feet) tall. Now, any woman over 18 years old of

any height and child-bearing status can enter. And visible tattoos were allowed for the first time.

Transgender women who have female civil status records were also permitted to compete, according to Alexia Laroche-Joubert, president of the Miss France society. The pageant still retained the genre hallmarks: talent performances, costume changes, pose striking and plenty of taffeta. To fit this year's theme-cinema-contestants tucked into Wonder Woman onesies for one performance and sashayed in blue gowns in front of a "Titanic" backdrop in another. In the end, the pageant eligibility changes did little to soften some critics' views, with the French feminist group "Osez le Féminisme" calling the modifications "white paint over a mouldy wall". — AFP



(From left) Miss France Comte-Marion Navarro, Miss Guadeloupe Indira Ampiot and Miss Nord-pas-de-Calais Agathe Cauet perform on stage.



Contestants perform on stage during the Miss France 2023 beauty contest.



### Beloved 'Hollywood Cat' mountain lion euthanized in Los Angeles

The Los Angeles area's most famous mountain lion, an aged wild male feline sighted around the city's Griffith Park, was euthanized Saturday, wildlife officials said. For years, it was known to prowl around the hillside "Hollywood" sign visible around much of Los Angeles, a fitting setting for a celebrity cat. It earned the nickname Hollywood Cat, but the mountain lion-estimated to be around 11 years old-is officially called P-22. State and federal wildlife officers decided earlier this month to capture it due to its erratic behavior, perhaps associated with being struck by a vehicle.

Veterinarians found "significant trauma" to its head, right eye and internal organs. California's Department of Fish and Wildlife said in a statement. The experts also found underlying health issues, including "irreversible kidney disease, chronic weight loss, extensive parasitic skin infection over his entire body and localized arthritis." "The most difficult, but compassionate choice was to respectfully minimize his suffering and stress by humanely ending his journey," the statement said.

"Mountain lion P-22 has had an extraordinary life and captured the hearts of the people of Los Angeles and beyond." Euthanizing the cougar was a punch to the gut for game experts who



This handout photo courtesy of the National Park Service shows Los Angeles mountain lion P-22 when he was captured in 2019.—AFP

had grown to love the animal. "This really hurts," said Chuck Bonham, director of the Department of Fish and Wildlife, when he announced P-22's death, according to USA Today. "It's been an incredibly difficult several days."

#### 'Our favorite celebrity'

Congressman Adam Schiff, who represents part of Los Angeles County, said he was "heartbroken" at P-22's passing. "He was our favorite celebrity neighbor, occasional troublemaker, and beloved L.A. mascot," Schiff tweeted. "But most of all he was a magnificent, wild creature, who

reminded us that we are part of a natural world much bigger than ourselves."

California Governor Gavin Newsom praised P-22's "incredible journey" in a statement. "P-22's survival on an island of wilderness in the heart of Los Angeles captivated people around the world," Newsom said. Griffith Park, where P-22 lived for perhaps a decade, is hemmed in by freeways and urban sprawl. It is a nine-square-mile (23-square-kilometer) isolated patch of nature.

Experts marveled at how the wild cat got across either of two major Los Angeles freeways—the 405 and 101 — to get to Griffith Park as early as 2012. Officials said they were not looking for the driver who hit it. "This situation is not the fault of P-22, nor of a driver who may have hit him," the California Department of Fish and Wildlife said. "Rather, it is an eventuality that arises from habitat loss and fragmentation, and it underscores the need for thoughtful construction of wildlife crossings and well-planned spaces that provide wild animals room to roam."

In a profile of P-22 done long before its death, the National Park Service lamented that Griffith Park is too small for a second cougar, and "it's unlikely he will ever find love with a female lion." The cat's renown was due to frequent sightings, video doorbell cameras and physical encounters. A Facebook page in honor of the cougar has more than 20,000 followers.—AFP

### Rihanna shares first video of her baby boy

Megastar Rihanna has for the first time shared a video of her baby son, who was born to her and boyfriend rapper A\$AP Rocky in May. The 45-second video on TikTok, the singer's first on the social media platform, has already attracted 11.5 million views and 3.4 million likes since it was posted on Saturday. In the video titled "hacked," the

baby boy smiles and gurgles and makes a grab for her phone as Rihanna says "You're trying to get mommy's phone?"

The 34-year-old entertainment and fashion mogul behind the hits "Diamonds" and "Umbrella" gave birth in May but no other details, including the child's name, had been made public. The Barbadian-born singer, whose real name is Robyn Rihanna Fenty, in recent years has become a billionaire, parlaying her music achievements into successful makeup, lingerie and high-fashion brands. Rumors that she and A\$AP Rocky were dating swirled for years before the pair confirmed last year that their romance was official.—AFP



Hong Kong author Xi Xi

### Hong Kong author Xi Xi dies aged 85

Hong Kong author Xi Xi, whose whimsical tales became a defining portrait of a city transitioning away from British rule, died on Sunday, according to a publisher she co-founded. She was 85. One of the most beloved names in Sinophone literature, she published more than 30 books of fiction, poetry, non-fiction and screenplays in a career spanning six decades. She was often credited with putting Hong Kong on the map in the literary world. Xi Xi died

of heart failure at a Hong Kong hospital on Sunday morning surrounded by family and friends, publisher Plain Leaves Workshop said in a statement on Facebook.

It said her life was "wonderful, happy, as well as beneficial and meaningful". Her imaginative writing often gave mundane events a fairytale twist and was an invitation to "re-examine the world with fresh eyes and childlike curiosity", said Jennifer Feeley, who translated some of her works.

After China and Britain signed an agreement in 1984 on the transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty, she famously described her home as a "floating city"—reflecting the anxieties of residents fac-

ing a historic shift. In 2019 she became the first Hong Kong writer to win the Newman Prize for Chinese Literature, hosted by the University of Oklahoma's Institute for US-China Issues.

Hong Kong's culture minister Kevin Yeung mourned her loss and said Xi Xi "devoted her whole life to the creation of literary works, to the teaching of younger generations, as well as cultivating talent". Born Cheung Yin in Shanghai in 1937, she adopted the pen name Xi Xi and moved to colonial Hong Kong with her family in 1950. She published her breakthrough novel "My City" in 1975 depicting urban life "from the vantage point of ordinary residents, using defamiliarisation and deceptively plain lan-

guage", said Feeley.

Another acclaimed work, "Mourning a Breast", was a semi-autobiographical account of her fight with breast cancer in the late 1980s, a subject rarely covered in Chinese-language literature up to that point. In a 2020 interview, Xi Xi said she was shocked by the sight of young people bloodied in the huge and often violent democracy protests that had swept Hong Kong in the preceding months. "Young people don't owe us anything. Instead, it is us who owe them an ideal society," she told a local newspaper.—AFP



Lifestyle | Features



A picture shows an organic prickly pear field in Zelfen near Kasserine, in central Tunisia. — AFP photos



A picture shows a factory that transforms organic prickly pears into juice, paw and seed extract to make oil.



A picture shows a factory that transforms organic prickly pears into juice, paw and seed extract to make oil.

# PRICKLY PEAR PRODUCERS PREDICT CACTI COSMETICS CASH-IN

Rows of sprawling cacti fill a valley in central Tunisia, where producers are hoping the spiky fruit can fuel a cosmetics cash-in. "This is the capital of the Barbary fig," said Mohamed Rochdi Bannani, one of the North African country's first producers of cosmetic oil from the seeds of the fruit—better known as the

symbol of poverty," the 52-year-old said. He was standing on his 420-hectare (about 1,000-acre) organic-certified farm in the parched Zelfen district. Every year, Bannani produces 2,000 liters of oil from the plant, which is native to Mexico but has been cultivated in North Africa for generations.

close to the border with Algeria. Around a tenth of that is organic-certified. The industry employs some 5,000 people, says Boubaker Raddaoui of the United Nations-backed Market Access Project for Agrifood and Local Products (PAMPAT). "This oil has become a catalyst for an inclusive local economy," he said, praising the cactus for its "ability to adapt and produce in difficult conditions, as well as its industrial potential". "It's really a miracle plant," he said.

Hamza Rochdi, a young farmer with 40 hectares of land. Hanane Messaoudi, who harvests the fruit for the minimum wage of just \$125 a month, says demand for the fruit has improved her working conditions.

manding, adapts to lots of soil types and doesn't use much water," Raddaoui said. The success of the crop in Zelfen has prompted farmers in other regions such as Nabeul and Kairouan to take an interest. But there is only so much demand for the product, and Bannani says "marketing problems" mean he only processes around a fifth of his harvest—some 20,000 tons of fruit—for oil. — AFP

Yet the high price of its oil is not the prickly pear's only asset. In a dry country where access to water is already far below the 1,700 cubic meters per resident per year the United Nations defines as "water stressed", the drought-tolerant cactus is a safer bet compared with thirstier crops. "The prickly pear is unde-



Workers harvest ripe figs in an organic prickly pear field in Zelfen near Kasserine, in central Tunisia.

prickly pear. He is hoping the oil, with its rich antioxidant properties and a price tag of some 350 euros (around \$360) a litre, can bring wealth to the marginalized province of Kasserine.

Used in moisturizing and anti-ageing products, it is a much-needed cash cow in a region where one third of people live in poverty and unemployment runs at 20 percent. The cactus plant's ability to weather extreme drought is another advantage. Some 30,000 hectares of land are dedicated to the crop in Zelfen,

**Rapid growth**  
Tunisia ranks fifth in the world in terms of land devoted to prickly pear production, behind Brazil, Mexico, Ethiopia and Morocco. While some of the 550,000 tons of fruit it produces every year are sold in markets and from street carts known as "hindi", most goes to oil.

Some 8,000 liters were exported in 2021, bringing in five million euros (dollars) in revenue, according to PAMPAT. The organization has been helping farmers with training and business advice since 2013, and has seen rapid growth in the sector, Raddaoui said. "Exports jumped by 50 percent between 2019 and 2021," he told AFP. "This shows the attractiveness of the sector and the increase in demand from one year to the next."

Since the start of the millennium, the country has gone from having five processing plants to 55. Zelfen alone has 11, run by cooperatives. "Before, everyone just wanted to emigrate, but today that's ancient history—thanks to the oil," said



A picture shows a factory that transforms organic prickly pears into juice, paw and seed extract to make oil.



A picture shows a factory that transforms organic prickly pears into juice, paw and seed extract to make oil.

## Angelina Jolie steps down as UN refugees envoy

Angelina Jolie announced Friday that she is stepping down from her role as the UNHCR's special envoy after more than 20 years of working with the United Nations' refugee agency. The Hollywood actress, 47, has carried out more than 60 field missions with UNHCR, shining a spotlight on the plight of millions of people displaced from their homes over the past two decades. "After 20 years working within the UN system I feel it is time for me to work differently, engaging directly with refugees and local organizations, and supporting their advocacy for solutions," Jolie said in a statement.

"I will continue to do everything in my power in the years to come to support



In this file photo US actress Angelina Jolie, gives a statement in Goudebou, a camp that welcomes more than 11,000 Malian refugees in northern Burkina Faso, on International Refugee Day. — AFP photos

refugees and other displaced people." UNHCR called her one of the most influential proponents of refugee rights. The Oscar-winning US star has worked with UNHCR since 2001 and became a

special envoy in 2012.

In this expanded role, she built awareness and support for refugees and called for urgent solutions for people forced to flee, UNHCR said. Jolie has "worked tirelessly... to bear witness to stories of suffering as well as hope and resilience", the Geneva-based agency said. Most recently, she travelled with UNHCR to Yemen and Burkina Faso to meet displaced people enduring two of the most underfunded emergencies in the world.

"We are grateful for her decades of service, her commitment, and the difference she has made for refugees and people forced to flee," said UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi. "After a long and successful time with UNHCR, I appreciate her desire to shift her engagement and support her decision," he said. "I know the refugee cause will remain close to her heart, and I am certain she will bring the same passion and attention to a wider humanitarian portfolio." — AFP

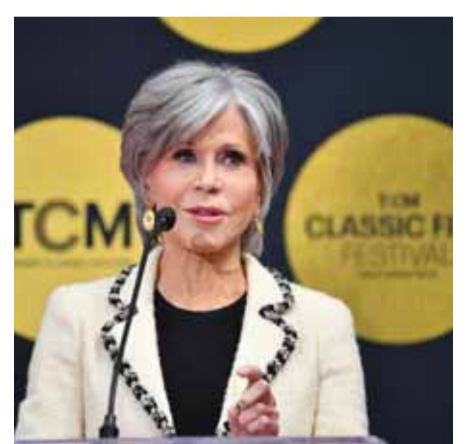
## Actress Jane Fonda says cancer in remission

US actress and activist Jane Fonda says her cancer is in remission, just three months after revealing her diagnosis. The Oscar winner, a prominent supporter of the Democratic Party, wrote on her blog on Thursday that she is no longer in treatment for non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. "Last week I was told by my oncologist that my cancer is in remission and I can discontinue chemo," the environmentalist, who turns 85 next week, wrote in a post entitled "Best birthday present ever" "I am feeling so blessed, so fortunate. I thank all of you who prayed and sent good thoughts my way. I am confident that it played a role in the good news."

Fonda, who shot to fame in the 1960s, revealed in September that she had been diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a cancer that starts in the lymphatic system, a part of the body's immune defenses, and can develop into widespread tumors. Symptoms can include swollen lymph nodes, abdominal pain or swelling, chest pain, coughing or trouble breathing, the Mayo Clinic says. Fonda said treatment had started out easily enough, but had got harder. "I'm especially happy because while my first 4 chemo treatments were rather easy for me, only a few days of being tired, the last chemo session was rough and lasted 2 weeks making it hard to accomplish much of anything."

### Climate activism

Fonda first appeared on screen in 1960, and scored Academy Awards for best actress for "Klute" (1971) and "Coming Home" (1978). She has five other Oscar nominations in her career, four of them for best lead actress. As well as



In this file photo Jane Fonda speaks at the handprint and footprint ceremony for Lily Tomlin, at the TCL Chinese Theater in Hollywood. — AFP

anti-war activism during the US-Vietnam war that saw her dubbed "Hanoi Jane" and blacklisted in Hollywood, she was also a major figure in the home fitness video craze of the 1980s.

Fonda continues to work, and appears as the voice of an elegant dragon who is the CEO of a luck-making operation in the Apple TV+ animated movie "Luck." She also stars in the popular, long-running Netflix hit "Grace and Frankie."

Fonda comes from a family of famous stars; her father Henry was a legend of the big screen appearing as the hold-out juror in "12 Angry Men," and winning best actor for "On Golden Pond" (1981). Her brother Peter was a seminal figure in 1960s counterculture, whose turn in "Easy Rider" is a touchstone of Hollywood history. — AFP



United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) special envoy Angelina Jolie reacts at a camp for the internally displaced north of Yemen's southern city of Aden.



A handout picture shows UNHCR special envoy Angelina Jolie sits with women and children at a camp for the internally displaced in Yemen's Lahj governorate, during a visit to help draw attention to the catastrophic consequences of the seven-year conflict on the Yemeni people.



## Sports

# Booker scores 58, propels Phoenix Suns over Pelicans

## Thunder top Grizzlies; Heat beat Spurs 111-101

LOS ANGELES: Devin Booker scored 58 points to propel the Phoenix Suns to a come-from-behind 118-114 victory over New Orleans on Saturday, his second 50-point performance of the NBA season. Booker scored 36 points in the second half as the Suns, who trailed by as many as 24 in the third quarter, sliced the deficit to 89-84 heading into the final frame. They took a 106-105 lead on Chris Paul's three pointer with 5:24 to play. The Pelicans would tie it up one more time before Bismack Biyombo's layup put Phoenix ahead for good with 4:11 remaining.

With his second 50-point game of the season Booker, 26, became the sixth-youngest player to score 12,000 points. Paul scored 18 points and Mykal Bridges added 15 for the Suns. Zion Williamson scored 30 to lead the Pelicans, who fell to 18-11 - one game behind Western Conference leaders Memphis whose seven-game winning streak ended with a 115-109 loss to the Thunder in Oklahoma City. The Grizzlies were down 61-40 when star Ja Morant was ejected in the waning seconds of the first half after he received a second technical foul apparently for criticizing the officiating while talking to a fan.

Morant, who had picked up his first technical seconds earlier complaining about a call, finished with six points and five rebounds. Dillon Brooks drained six three-pointers on the way to 32 points for Memphis, but Oklahoma City, without offensive standouts Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Josh Giddey, dominated. Lu Dort scored 24 points with seven rebounds and four assists to lead the Thunder and Isaiah Joe added 23 points as Oklahoma City snapped a five-game skid.

In Cleveland, Jarrett Allen's dunk with 2:01 left in overtime gave the Cavaliers a 100-99 victory over the Dallas Mavericks. The Mavs came up empty on three ensuing possessions and the Cavs notched their fifth win in five overtime games this season. Donovan Mitchell led Cleveland with 25 points and came up with a steal in the final minute of overtime. Dallas' Kemba Walker scored 32 points but missed a jump shot with 12.7 seconds left in OT and Christian Wood was off target as time expired.

### Miami win in Mexico

The Miami Heat pounced late to beat the San Antonio Spurs 111-101 in Mexico City, where commissioner Adam Silver discussed the prospect of NBA expansion south of the border. A sellout crowd of 20,160 turned out at Mexico City Arena, where the Spurs seized the initiative with a 19-0 first-quarter run. The young Spurs team led by three at half-time and were up by four going into the final period, but Miami's experience and tough defense paid off in a 31-17 fourth quarter advantage that delivered the victory.

Jimmy Butler scored 26 points and grabbed five rebounds, Bam Adebayo added 22 points and 13 rebounds and Tyler Herro added 21 points for Miami, who won their fourth straight. Before the game Silver reiterated his belief that the NBA could one day expand into Mexico. "When you look at the success we've had in Canada to the north, beginning in the early '90s, it makes sense to me that we would expand to the south, as well," Silver said. "I don't have a specific timeline right now in terms of expansion, but there's no doubt we will be looking serious-



PHOENIX: Devin Booker #1 of the Phoenix Suns attempts a shot over Trey Murphy III #25 of the New Orleans Pelicans during the first half of the NBA game at Footprint Center on December 17, 2022. — AFP

ly at Mexico City over time."

In Los Angeles, Kawhi Leonard shook off a slow start to score a season-high 31 points and lead the Clippers to a 102-93 victory over the Washington Wizards. Leonard missed all four of his shots in the first quarter, but found his groove to carry the Clippers who were without injured Paul George, Ivica Zubac, Reggie Jackson and Norman Powell.

Portland star Damian Lillard scored 25 points

and handed out 10 assists in the Trail Blazers' 107-95 victory over the Rockets in Houston. But it was teammate Anfernee Simons who jump-started the Blazers' offense, scoring 14 of his 32 points in the first quarter. In Milwaukee, the Bucks had little trouble in a 123-97 victory over the Utah Jazz, despite the absence of two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo who was nursing a sore left knee. — AFP



## Kuwait athletes excel; Burahma withdraws

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Triathlon team's outstanding performance at the Asian Triathlon Championship in Manama pushed them to the top. Abdelaziz Al-Duaij ended in first place (overall), while Huda Al-Saleh took second; Noura Al-Barrak

(third). In the age groups, Abdelaziz Al-Huwaidi won the 16-29 years competition while Hussain took first in the 30-39 category. Abdallah Al-Asfour secured the second position (for men) as Dalal Al-Rayes won the same for women.

Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Triathlon Federation and Club, Rashid Al-Kandary congratulated the players, technical and administrative departments for this significant achievement and commended the athletes. He said the Club is keen on participating in such events and seek top places wherever the event is held. Meanwhile, Kuwait National Team Triathlon member Usama Burahma withdrew from the competition in the Professionals Category due the presence of an athlete from the Zionist entity.

## Al-Fatat, Tadhamon battle for top place

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Al-Fatat and Tadhamon Women Futsal teams continued their fight for the top place in the standings of the URC League. Al-Fatat defeated Kuwait team 4-2 while Tadhamon defeated Fatyat Al-Oyoun 5-0 in the sixth round of the league. With this win, Fatat now have 15 points (in first place on goal difference with Tadhamon) while Kuwait remain with six points

and Fatyat Al-Oyoun pointless.

Tadhamon players had difficulty scoring in the first half of their match with Fatyat Al-Oyoun as the first half ended in 0-0. As the second half began, Tadhamon maintained relentless attacks until Isebella Maria opened the score - becoming the league top scorer with nine goals. Fatyat Al-Oyoun's defense collapsed as they conceded four consecutive goals which were scored by Ainaa Al-Haj, Fajer Ahmad and Hawraa Al-Kalbi. In the second match, Al-Fatah kept their grip on first place with goals by Rareeni Christian (a hat trick) while Natalya Carolina scored the fourth goal. Kuwait's two goals were scored by Francisca Valeria and Tayla Helen.



CHITTAGONG: Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan (center) plays a shot as India's Rishabh Pant (right) watches during the fifth day of the first cricket Test match between Bangladesh and India on December 18, 2022. — AFP

## India overpower Bangladesh, go second in Test

CHITTAGONG: Shakib Al Hasan provided brief entertainment for Bangladesh but India kept their cool to win the first Test by 188 runs and take a 1-0 lead in the two-match series in Chittagong on Sunday. The result and first-placed Australia's convincing win over South Africa in Brisbane on Sunday moves India up to second in the ICC Test Championship rankings. The top two sides will lock horns when Australia tour India in early 2023.

Set an enormous 513 to win, Bangladesh put up dogged resistance with Zakir Hasan scoring a century on debut on Saturday in a record opening partnership for the hosts against India with Najmul Hossain who made 67. Skipper Shakib made a marauding 84 that included six sixes but he was bowled by Kuldeep Yadav on day five and the hosts quickly folded for 324 all out after an hour's play.

Needing an academic 241 runs with four wickets

remaining for the win on day five, Mehidy Hasan signalled an attacking intent for Bangladesh, hitting Mohammed Siraj for four through cover in the first over. Siraj came back in the next over to force Mehidy to give a catch to Umesh Yadav at backward point, leaving the onus on Shakib to take the game forward. Kuldeep dismissed Shakib and Ebadot Hossain in successive overs, finishing with figures of 3-73 while Axar Patel claimed the final wicket of Taijul Islam to return with 4-77.

Kuldeep, who also claimed 5-40 in the first innings, was named player of the match. "Getting runs was hard on the first three days. The way their openers batted, we had to work hard. Our intensity was really high," said India captain KL Rahul.

"The pitch wasn't really assisting the bowlers, but they found something... We've built this attack over the years. They are showing what quality they have," he added. Bangladesh captain Shakib blamed their poor batting for the loss after being skittled for just 150 in the first innings. "It was a really good wicket to bat on but we didn't bat well (in the first innings). Playing after five to six months, it wasn't ideal but there should be no excuses. Lot of credit to India the way they bowled," he said. — AFP

## Cuban women in boxing ring finally

HAVANA: With a strong right jab to the face of her opponent, Elianni Garcia Polledo on Saturday won the first official women's boxing match in sports-crazed Cuba. "It is a historic result for Cuban boxing," said one of the judges over the loudspeaker when announcing the "unanimous" decision for Garcia, from Havana province, over Reynabell Grant, from Guantanamo. Both are 27. Dressed in red and shorter, Garcia tirelessly landed powerful blows with both hands that hit her opponent's face, shoulders and abdomen several times. That is, until the decisive blow, in the third round, left Grant down for the count and ultimately decided the fight.

It was the beginning of the first official women's boxing program, something that many women and authorities of this sport expected in Cuba, an island that boasts 80 world boxing titles and 41 Olympic

gold medals in boxing, including the legendary Teofilo Stevenson. Finally, Cuban sports authorities gave a green light for women on December 5. "This is a moment that we have been preparing for, for several years," Alberto Puig de la Barca, president of the Cuban Boxing Federation, told AFP.

In the end, there will be 12 females-two for each division, which will be the preselection of the team for the Central American games in San Salvador, in August 2023 and other international events. "She (Garcia) just kept working on the offensive, looking to shorten the distance," Raul Fernandez, 55, one of her trainers, told AFP at the end of the fight. Garcia, who says she came to boxing from athletics, now looks optimistically at her future in boxing.

"I have a bittersweet feeling, because I cannot represent Cuba," Namibia Flores told AFP. At 46, she is six years older than the age maximum in this sport. But she can be there outside the ring: "Right now, I am the only trainer and I was one of the first girls who is training since 2006," she says. At 70 years old and already retired, Nardo Mestre could not miss this moment. — AFP

## Australia down SA in first Test

BRISBANE: Australia captain Pat Cummins spearheaded a pace barrage that tore through South Africa before his side chased down a target of 34 runs Sunday to claim a six-wicket win inside two days on a hostile Gabba pitch. After finishing their first innings 66 runs in front midway through the first session Sunday, Australia dismissed the visitors for just 99 despite a fighting 36 not out from Khaya Zondo. But the Australians then lost four cheap wickets in the chase as paceman Kagiso Rabada ran amok, with Usman Khawaja, David Warner, Steve Smith and Travis Head all falling to catches behind the wicket.

However, Marnus Labuschagne and Cameron Green-aided by 15 extras-guided Australia home to give them a 1-0 lead in the three-match series on a day when 19 wickets fell. "Tricky wicket. I thought the way Head and Smith batted (in the first innings) got us to this winning position," said

Australia captain Pat Cummins. Man of the match Head added: "Very difficult wicket, plenty for the bowlers. We saw that the whole game. Nice to be able to contribute and get a win." Despite the victory, Australian selectors will be concerned with Warner's form after yet another failure.

Warner is due to play his 100th Test in Melbourne on Boxing Day without scoring a century in almost three years, as calls for him to be dropped grow louder. The two teams went into the series both boasting high-quality bowling attacks, but Australia's batting always looked stronger. And on a green Gabba wicket, South Africa's frailties at the top of the order were brutally exposed. "Another 60 runs and we would have been in the game. Pretty spicy wicket, bowlers were licking their lips," said South Africa skipper Dean Elgar.

"I don't think we could prepare any better. Conditions weren't in favour for the batters." South Africa slumped to 27-4 in the first innings and 5-3 in the second, positions from which they never recovered. While the Australians also struggled at times, Head's superb 92 from 96 balls proved the difference between the two teams. — AFP



# WCup hits and misses; Messi, Mbappe shine

## Morocco caught the imagination of the continent

DOHA: Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe have dazzled at the World Cup in Qatar, while Morocco caught the imagination of a continent on their run to the semi-finals. But the host nation flopped badly, Germany made a swift exit and Cristiano Ronaldo discovered he was no longer an automatic pick for Portugal. AFP Sport looks at the hits and misses from a month-long festival of football.

### Overachievers

Morocco became the first African side and the first Arab team to reach the semi-finals of a World Cup. And it was no fluke. Walid Regragui's men, ranked 22nd in the world, beat Belgium and drew with Croatia on the way to topping their group before dumping 2010 champions Spain and Portugal out of the tournament. Roared on by tens of thousands of fans and supported across Africa and the Arab world, they came up short in the semi-finals, losing 2-0 to France, but they have broken new ground. Japan shocked Germany and Spain to top their group before losing on penalties to Croatia in the round of 16. South Korea underlined the progress Asian football is making by beating Portugal to qualify from their group but came unstuck against Brazil in the first knockout round.

## 5 most memorable goals of World Cup

DOHA: Acrobatic volleys, long-range piledrivers and sweeping team goals: AFP looks at some of the most memorable goals of the 2022 World Cup:

### Richarlison (BRA) - Brazil v Serbia

Without doubt the most acrobatic goal of the tournament came after the Brazilian striker had already made his mark in Qatar by putting his team 1-0 up in their opening group game. A Vinicius cross with the outside of his right boot was controlled by Richarlison with his left foot, before he spun around and leapt to score with an outrageous mid-air volley with his right. It was a goal which led one commentator to declare "That's Brazil" and it suggested they could be about to light up the tournament with flair, technique and improvisation but despite some more moments of magic they were eliminated in the last eight by Croatia.

### Salem Al-Dawsari (Ksa) - Argentina v Saudi

A stunning goal to produce the most stunning result as Saudi Arabia upset the South American giants 2-1 in their opening game. Al-Dawsari turned sharply in the box, beating two defenders in the process, before he shifted the ball past a third and then, with Leandro Paredes lunging at him, drilled an unstoppable shot into the top far corner. It was a goal that sent Arabic language commentators wild with delight and will ensure the 31-year-old Al-Dawsari lifelong fame but Argentina were able to recover from the shock it caused and go on to reach the final.

### Wout Weghorst (NED) - Netherlands v Argentina

It wasn't spectacular and it didn't take extraordinary technique but Wout Weghorst's equalizer in the 11th minute of injury time was a moment of sheer impudence and high drama. 2-1 down and with nothing left on the clock, the Dutch got a free-kick five meters outside the penalty area. Argentina, lined up a five-man defensive wall and the Dutch placed a three-man wall of their own alongside

### Superstars shine

Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe, who will go head to head in Sunday's final, have certainly lived up to their stellar billing. The forwards have five goals apiece as they vie for the Golden Boot. Messi, 35, though lacking his former pace, has shown an uncanny knack to turn on the style at key moments, highlighted by his dazzling run to set up Julian Alvarez for the third goal against Croatia in the semi-finals. Mbappe, 23, is ready to take on his Paris Saint-Germain teammate's mantle as the best player in the world, looking unstoppable at times for defending champions France.

### Young guns

A clutch of young players have announced themselves on football's biggest stage in Qatar, and already look like they belong. Manchester City forward Julian Alvarez has already scored four goals while Portugal's Goncalo Ramos smashed a hat-trick in a 6-1 win against Switzerland after being brought in to replace Cristiano Ronaldo. England pair Bukayo Saka and Jude Bellingham caught the eye along with Dutch forward Cody Gakpo, while Croatia defender Josko Gvardiol enjoyed an outstanding tournament.

### Fallen giants

Cristiano Ronaldo left the pitch in tears after Morocco ended his World Cup dream. The superstar forward, without a club after his painful divorce from Manchester United, scored Portugal's first goal of the World Cup from the penalty spot in their win against Ghana. But he was left out of the starting line-up for their last-16 clash and watched from the sidelines as Portugal ripped Switzerland apart. Neymar equaled Pele's record haul of 77 goals for Brazil but watched in agony as his side lost to Croatia on penalties in the quarter-finals. The Brazil great announced after his side's exit that he might have played his final match for his country, saying he was "psychologically destroyed".

### Early exits

Qatar came into the World Cup with high hopes as reigning Asian champions but left their own party embarrassingly early. They became only the second home team to crash out of a World Cup in the group stage after South Africa in 2010, losing all three of their matches and scoring just once. Four-time winners Germany were also humiliated, exiting at the group stage for the second straight World Cup. — AFP



LUSAIL: Saudi Arabia's midfielder #10 Salem Al-Dawsari celebrates with his teammates after scoring the second goal during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group C football match between Argentina and Saudi Arabia at the Lusail Stadium in Lusail. — AFP

them. But instead of the expected last-gasp shot on goal, Teun Koopmeiners slipped a pass to Weghorst, who moved out of the Dutch wall and turned to poked the ball in and force extra-time. It was a classic training ground routine, executed to perfection, but the dazed Argentinians recovered to win the shoot-out and progress.

### Goncalo Ramos (POR) - Portugal v Switzerland

Portugal coach Fernando Santos had made the big decision to leave Cristiano Ronaldo on the bench and in his place start the 21-year-old Benfica forward who had only made his debut in a pre-tournament friendly. But Santos' selection choice proved inspired with Ramos putting Portugal ahead in the 17th minute with a blistering left-foot strike on the turn from the tightest of angles. The ball whistled past helpless Swiss keeper Yann Sommer, who had barely moved and Ramos went on to score a hat-trick in a 6-1 win.

### Luis Chavez (MEX) - Mexico v Saudi

There have been very few long-range goals at this World Cup and not many from free-kicks either but Luis Chavez showed how both are done with a wonderful strike. Over 25 meters out, Chavez struck his direct free-kick to perfection, curling the ball high



AL-RAYYAN: Brazil's forward #09 Richarlison heads the ball past Croatia's midfielder #10 Luka Modric during the Qatar 2022 World Cup quarter-final football match between Croatia and Brazil at Education City Stadium in Al-Rayyan, west of Doha. — AFP

over the wall but with speed and whip that sent it beyond the reach of the diving Mohammed Al-Owais. It proved to be in vain, as Mexico were eliminated despite beating the Saudis 2-1 in their final group game, but Chavez had shown that while the data-crunchers may discourage it, there is something wonderful about a perfectly struck free-kick goal. — AFP

## Breakout stars of 2022 World Cup

DOHA: The 2022 World Cup may have been the last hurrah for Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, but the tournament also witnessed the arrival of a new crop of talented young players. AFP looks at some of rising stars who shone during the finals in Qatar.

### Jude Bellingham (England)

England teenager Jude Bellingham arrived in Qatar tipped as a potential World Cup star and left as one of the hottest properties in global football. The Borussia Dortmund player - a modern box-to-box midfielder - opened England's account at the tournament with a fine header in the team's 6-2 romp against Iran. The 19-year-old also shone in the 3-0 quarter-final win against Senegal, crossing for Jordan Henderson to stroke home the first and driving through the midfield to launch the attack that led to the second. "I think he's a fantastic player. He has everything with and without the ball, presses really well, gets around the pitch, tackles," said captain Harry Kane.

### Cody Gakpo (Netherlands)

The 23-year-old Dutch forward was the only player to score in all three group games as he carried over his red-hot form for PSV Eindhoven onto the biggest stage. Gakpo's header in the Netherlands' opening match against Senegal broke the deadlock late on in a 2-0 victory. He drilled the Dutch ahead with a fierce left-footed drive against Ecuador in a 1-1 draw and again set the Oranje on their way with another tidy finish as they beat Qatar 2-0. Gakpo did not add any more goals but still played his part as Louis van Gaal's side only succumbed on penalties to Argentina in the quarter-finals. "He has everything it takes to become a star," said Van Gaal. It is surely only a matter of time before he is prised away from his boyhood club, with Manchester United a possible destination.

### Goncalo Ramos (Portugal)

The forward showed he has the potential to be the successor to Cristiano Ronaldo at international level, seizing his opportunity in sensational style when he was selected ahead of Portugal's captain for the 6-1 demolition of Switzerland in the last 16. Known as "Pistoleiro" for his gun-toting celebration, Ramos shot his way into world football's consciousness with a hat-trick on his full debut. The 21-year-old took just 17 minutes to open the scoring and achieve something Ronaldo never has - net in a World Cup knockout game. Ramos could not replicate his heroics as Portugal lost in the quarter-finals, but the Benfica striker has time on his side and will surely get a long run in the team once Ronaldo steps aside, if not before.

### Julian Alvarez (Argentina)

The 22-year-old striker is the latest to roll off Argentina's conveyor belt of attacking talent. A year that began with a high-profile transfer from River Plate to Premier League champions Manchester City ended with the forward being acclaimed as one of the brightest talents in world football after a dazzling World Cup. Left on the bench for Argentina's opening two group games, Alvarez started and scored in a 2-0 win over Poland and then netted a crucial second goal in the 2-1 last-16 win over Australia. — AFP

# 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, Mohammad Tawfeeq Ur Rehman, holder of passport No. R5456176, do hereby change my name to Mohammad Tawfeeq Ur Rahman (as Given Name) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Mohammad Tawfeeq Ur Rahman, and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2820) - 19-12-2022

I, INSIYA FAKHRUDDIN, holder of Passport No. T-2410916 do hereby change my name to INSIYA FAKHRUDDIN (as Given name) SHAKIR (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name INSIYA FAKHRUDDIN SHAKIR and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my

documents.

I, FAKHRUDDIN, holder of Passport No. M-6102365 do hereby change my name to FAKHRUDDIN TAIYEBALI (as Given name) SHAKIR (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name FAKHRUDDIN TAIYEBALI SHAKIR and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

I, SAKINA, holder of Passport No. L-9662354 do hereby change my name to SAKINA FAKHRUDDIN (as Given name) SHAKIR (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SAKINA FAKHRUDDIN SHAKIR and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2816)

I, FATEMA, holder of Passport No. Z5184297 do hereby change my name to FATEMA (as Given name) HAKIMUDDIN (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name FATEMA HAKIMUDDIN and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

I, HAKIMUDDIN, holder of Passport No. Z3830256 do hereby change my name to HAKIMUDDIN (as Given name) JUZERALI (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name HAKIMUDDIN JUZERALI and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2819) - 16-12-2022

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## Messi's Argentina crowned World Cup champions for the third time

Argentina overwhelm France on penalties 4-2



LUSAIL: Argentina's forward #10 Lionel Messi lifts the World Cup trophy during the Qatar 2022 World Cup trophy ceremony after the football final match between Argentina and France on December 18, 2022. Argentina won in the penalty shoot-out. — AFP

DOHA: Lionel Messi crowned his glittering career with victory in the World Cup on Sunday as Argentina beat France on penalties in a final for the ages, triumphing 4-2 after Kylian Mbappe's hat-trick ensured the game ended level following extra time. Gonzalo Montiel rolled in the deciding penalty to give Argentina their third World Cup and prevent France becoming the first team in 60 years to retain the trophy.

But a truly remarkable game saw Messi and Mbappe both live up to their billing, with Messi scoring twice and Mbappe becoming the first player since England's Geoff Hurst in 1966 to net a World Cup final hat-trick in a game that ended 3-3 after extra time. Messi had opened the scoring from the penalty spot midway through the first half before Angel Di Maria doubled Argentina's lead at the end of a brilliant counter-attack in the 36th minute. But the astonishing Mbappe breathed life into the holders as he pulled one back from the penalty spot with 10 minutes to go before equalizing in stunning fashion just 60 seconds later to force extra time.

Messi then seemed to have decided the contest in Argentina's favor once and for all when he converted a rebound in the 109th minute, only for Mbappe to net from another spot-kick, bringing the game level at 3-3 and forcing a shoot-out. The third World Cup final penalty shoot-out started with Messi and Mbappe both scoring, but Kingsley Coman's next kick for France was saved and Aurelien Tchouameni then crucially missed the target.

It is the second time in five World Cups that France have lost the final on penalties after they were beaten by Italy in 2006,

and it is Argentina who are champions for the first time since 1986. The win allows Messi, at 35, to complete his glorious career by emulating Diego Maradona, and this will be remembered as his tournament despite the best efforts of Mbappe, who finished as the tournament's top scorer on eight goals, one more than his Paris Saint-Germain teammate Messi.

### Mbappe hat-trick

France's quest for history had been threatened by a virus in the days leading up to the final and they appeared sluggish before Argentina went ahead. France conceded a penalty for the fourth time this tournament when Di Maria was clipped by Ousmane Dembele, and Messi stepped up to score from the spot for the fourth time in Qatar, his 12th World Cup goal allowing him to equal Pele's tally. The expected response from the defending champions was not forthcoming and Argentina increased their lead in the 36th minute.

Messi and Julian Alvarez combined to release Alexis Mac Allister bursting through the middle, and he played a first-time ball to the back post for Di Maria to finish. Having hardly featured in the knockout rounds due to injury, Di Maria had returned here and appeared tearful as he celebrated his goal, which was a World Cup final classic. France had not even mustered a shot and Deschamps moved before the interval to replace Olivier Giroud and the struggling Dembele. On came Randal Kolo Muani and



Argentina's midfielder Enzo Fernandez, Argentina's forward Lionel Messi, Argentina's goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez and France's forward Kylian Mbappe pose on the podium after receiving the Young Player, Golden Ball, Golden Glove and Golden Boot awards respectively. — AFP

Marcus Thuram, as Mbappe moved into the middle of the attack.

### Argentina blow two-goal lead

Argentina had famously blown a two-goal lead before eventually emerging victorious in their last World Cup final triumph 36 years ago, but there appeared little prospect of a repeat of that scenario. However, the French were suddenly given hope when they won a penalty 10 minutes from time as Kolo Muani was brought down by Nicolas Otamendi.

Mbappe smashed the spot-kick into the net and the watching French President Emmanuel Macron rose to his feet. France had hope, and within another minute they were level. Messi was robbed of possession by Coman in the lead-up, before Mbappe found Thuram and then met his partner's knock-down with a stunning volley. It will go down as one of the most dramatic moments in World Cup history, and the French players on the bench raced across the pitch to celebrate with their teammate.

Argentina, who lost the 2014 final in extra time, looked shattered, and yet it seemed again that they had won it when Messi followed up to score early in the second extra period after Lautaro Martinez's shot was saved. But France were again saved by Mbappe as he converted another penalty following a Montiel handball. It was end to end, and Argentina needed a brilliant Martinez save from Kolo Muani to take it to penalties and Montiel's kick proved decisive to spark wild Argentineans celebrations. — AFP



Argentina's midfielder #11 Angel Di Maria holds the FIFA World Cup Trophy during the trophy ceremony. — AFP