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## FM: Wafra plant important for linkage of GCC-Iraq grid

New \$270m power station to provide 3,500 MW of electricity

**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah affirmed on Thursday the importance of Wafra power station in the plan to link the GCC grid with southern Iraq. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the GCC power linkage project, an event patronized by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Sheikh Salem said the Wafra power station will provide around 3,000 megawatts of electricity to the national grid of Kuwait.

Regionally, the station will link the power grids in southern Iraq and the GCC, affirmed Sheikh Salem - also Chairman of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) - adding that contracts were signed for this strategic project with initial construction beginning by 2024. He revealed



Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah

KFAED's contribution to the energy sector globally had reached KD 1.6 billion (\$5.6 billion), saying this reflected Kuwait's keen interest in this sector.

Minister of Public Works, Water,



Amani Bugammaz

Electricity and Renewable Energy Amani Bugammaz said that kick-starting the GCC power grid project in Kuwait displayed an increasing interest in boosting energy in the region. She revealed



Naif Al-Abbadi

Kuwait's ministry of electricity and water and counterparts in the region studied different aspects of the project, which led to the establishment of the Wafra station, an important facility added to

Kuwait's network capacity of 400 kilovolts. The station will be linked to Faadli station in Saudi Arabia as well as stations in Kuwait, including Zour, Wafra and others, she noted. If all goes according to plan, the GCC grid will be linked to that in Iraq and later to the global grid by Dec 2024, she pointed out.

Also speaking at the ceremony, Chairman of the GCC Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) Naif Al-Abbadi said the infrastructure for the GCC project commenced way back on Dec 14, 2009 in Kuwait. Since then, the project has contributed to the economic welfare of the region and opened the door for all possibilities, he added. He affirmed that the grid succeeded in preventing total shutdown by 100 percent by providing necessary power supplies through the

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### E-scooters to help beat traffic jams in Kuwait



KUWAIT: A man scans a QR code to ride an e-fly scooter. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** E-Fly is a new eco-friendly electric scooter app created to provide solutions that can help eliminate or mitigate modern problems, and significantly reduces emissions compared to fuel-powered cars and buses. The electric scooters are currently available in different locations in Kuwait, and is the perfect solution to beat traffic jams. It is mostly useful in urban areas and universities throughout Kuwait to provide easier transportation solutions, especially for university students.

The project aims to achieve practicality by moving from one place to another via a safe, advanced and small scooter, while saving effort and time and reducing pressure on energy. The scooter is made of high quality and safe materials that ensure the stability and balance of the product. It works in different environmental conditions such as rain, sun and humidity, and its parts can be recycled and recharged at the end of the day. It is possible to obtain e-Fly at the nearest point by looking at the map available on the scooter's application. Users should be aged 18 years or older, and should be trained by professionals. — KUNA

### Qatar claims diplomatic win with World Cup

**DOHA:** Qatar fought a "culture war" and accusations in hosting the World Cup, but experts say the Gulf state has reinforced its image everywhere. One of the final images to emerge from the event was

Qatar's Amir putting a traditional Arab bisht over the shoulders of Argentina star Lionel Messi. "That is what people will remember," said Carole Gomez, a sports sociology specialist at the University of Lausanne, in Switzerland. "The politicization was not as bad as it could have been and if there were problems they did not get much coverage," Gomez said.

The energy-rich state spent at least \$200 billion on infrastructure projects ahead of the World Cup, and Qatar insists it has made serious reforms to workers' rights. Its ruler, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, declared at the end of the competition "we have fulfilled our promise to organize an exceptional

championship" - the first in an Arab nation.

As a major global supplier of natural gas and an intermediary in conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Qatar already possessed diplomatic clout. However, the World Cup has left an impression on the Arab world and beyond. Images of Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman wearing a Qatari scarf on opening day, and Qatar's Amir later draped in green Saudi colors, sealed the neighbors' reconciliation after Prince Mohammed led a regional blockade of Qatar from 2017 to 2021. The public airing of the Palestinian cause in stadiums and

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### Zelensky on triumphant visit to US

**WASHINGTON:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday directly appealed for long-term US support on his first foreign trip since Russia's invasion, saying aid was not "charity" and had helped keep his country "alive and kicking". Three hundred days after Russian leader Vladimir Putin attacked Ukraine with hopes of swift conquest, Zelensky enjoyed a hero's welcome on a lightning trip to Washington where

President Joe Biden committed nearly \$1.8 billion in military supplies including, for the first time, the Patriot missile defense system.

Zelensky - whose media savvy and rugged demeanor have helped rally world opinion - wore his trademark green military fatigues as he held talks at the White House and addressed Congress, where he handed over a Ukrainian flag fresh from the battlefield. As Congress finalizes a new package of \$45 billion, Zelensky voiced gratitude and said that the new year would mark the "turning point" in the fight against Russia.

"Against all odds and doom-and-gloom scenarios," Zelensky said in a speech that drew standing ovations.

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WASHINGTON: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky presents a Ukrainian military medal to US President Joe Biden in the Oval Office of the White House on Dec 21, 2022. — AFP (See Page 5)

### Yemen women chafe under restrictions

**DUBAI:** Yemeni student Abir Al-Maqtari dreamt of studying abroad but amid a tightening of restrictions on women echoing religious regimes in Iran and Afghanistan, Houthi forces blocked her from leaving. The Iran-backed Houthis, who have controlled swathes of the Arab world's poorest country since seizing the Yemeni capital Sanaa in 2014, have increasingly enforced travel restrictions on women

over the past eight months, residents and activists say.

Maqtari, 21, from Yemen's southwestern city of Ta'ez, was ready to study in Egypt - but she was barred from leaving Sanaa airport without a male guardian. "I got a scholarship in Cairo, but the Houthis didn't let me travel through (Sanaa) airport," she said. "I then thought I could try to travel via the airport in (government-held) Aden, but the Houthis also stopped me from reaching it," she added.

Yemeni society, although deeply conservative, has traditionally allowed space for individual freedoms. But this is changing under the Houthi movement, which was founded with the aim

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TA'EZ: Yemeni women read at a university in Yemen's third city on Dec 15, 2022. — AFP



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# MPs to strengthen legislative system to tackle illicit drugs

## Saving people from great dangers and violent scourge of narcotics

**KUWAIT:** With the beginning of the 17th legislative term of the National Assembly, members of legislature authority realize responsibilities to combat the spread of drugs by strengthening the legislative system. The Kuwait constitution gave MPs several powers to control and carry out their responsibilities in combating drugs, and provide support for the ministry of interiors and its various sectors and relevant authorities, especially after the phenomenon has grown and spread widely.

In this regard, a number of parliamentarians stressed in statements to (KUNA) the importance of combating drugs, addressing its various causes, and strengthening the deterrent legislative system in this regard. The members also expressed support for the continuation of the tireless work to detect these crimes, and cooperate with the competent authorities in studying this problem in order to limit its spread, and strengthen prevention programs at various intellectual, social, psychological, security and legislative levels.

In a statement to KUNA, MP Dr Adel Al-Damkhi stressed the importance of establishing an apparatus that includes the various sectors and ministries concerned with drug control to develop plans and work mechanisms to combat drug. He praised the "great" and remarkable efforts made by the Ministry of Interior in its various sectors in combating the scourge of drugs, pointing to the "unprecedented" quantities that were detected in the past periods, which reflect these "great" efforts.

For his part, MP Fares Al-Otaibi said that the Ministry of Interior is working to protect society, and stressed the importance of joint and integrated work from all state departments, ministries, clinics, customs, ports and borders security and all concerned authorities. He expressed complete readiness to present all the necessary legislation, being a member of the National Assembly, to solve this crisis and save Kuwait's young men and women from these "great dangers and violent scourge."

In a similar statement to (KUNA), Representative Khalil Al-Saleh said that confronting the scourge of drugs is a joint societal responsibility by the family and the state through its social platforms, Media, Education, and ministries to intensify religious, health and community awareness campaigns for this "destructive" scourge of young minds.

He indicated that the size and number of recent seizures confirms that the State of Kuwait is being targeted, stressing the need to continue combating this "destructive" scourge through "tight" plans to deter anyone who tries to target the country. He praised the great efforts made by the various state agencies in confronting drug dealers who aim to "destroy" Kuwait's youth.

For his part, MP Hamdan Al-Azmi said that the most important ways to limit the spread of drugs is through raising awareness at all levels, referring to the role of the family, schools and educational establishment, and state ministries. He stressed the importance of applying deterrent laws and the existence of a fair trial that punishes drug traffickers, calling on the Ministry of Interior to intensify security campaigns at the sea, air and land ports to prevent the entry of such destructive substances for the minds of young people and their future.

On the other hand, MP Alia Al-Khaled said that drug control must be based on a multifaceted strategy that includes awareness, treatment, and security, in addition to studying and researching the reasons that led to the spread of narcotics. She focused on the importance of cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities to confront the scourge of drugs and make legislative amendments whenever necessary to fill and address any legislative gap. Al-Khaled stressed the importance of



MP Khalil Al-Saleh



MP Dr Adel Al-Damkhi



MP Fares Al-Otaibi



MP Hamdan Al-Azmi



MP Alia Al-Khaled



KUNA's anti-drugs campaign 'drugs kill you'



having a center or international hospital specialized in treatment of addiction and drug abuse to rehabilitate addicts to overcome that stage and continue in recovery.

She also stressed the need for coordination between ministries, state institutions, associations and public in studying the spread of drugs and protecting young people, as they

are the future youth generation. Al-Khaled praised the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior in combating this scourge, indicating the importance of knowing the security capabilities and security system and coordination with other countries to monitor any attempts to smuggle drugs into the country through the exchange of information. —KUNA



&gt; A security man on duty at a popular mall during COVID-19 (2020).



KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Thursday receives the visiting UK Minister of the Armed Forces and Member of Parliament James Heapey. —KUNA

## Kuwait FM, UK Minister of Armed Forces discuss ties

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Army Chief of the General Staff Lt-General Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah and UK Minister of the Armed Forces James Heapey held a meeting on Thursday, discussing military cooperation. The Defense Ministry said in a statement that British Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis was present at the meeting. Also, Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Thursday met with visiting UK Minister of the Armed Forces and Member of Parliament James Heapey on the latest regional and international developments. The Kuwaiti

foreign minister reiterated Kuwait's stance that backs the resolution of crises by peaceful means and negotiations, underlining the necessity of supporting international de-escalation efforts to find a peaceful solution based on international law and respect of countries' sovereignty.

For his part, the UK guest appreciated Kuwait's efforts to maintain regional and international peace and security, reaffirming UK commitment to safeguarding Kuwait's security and regional security and stability. Heapey voiced much thanks and gratitude to Kuwait's leadership, government and people for hosting British armed forces. Also during the meeting, they discussed historical relations and firm friendship between Kuwait and the UK, in addition to various fields of cooperation to promote the shared interests of both countries and their friendly peoples, looking forward to a Joint Steering Group meeting due early next year. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Acting Director of Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) Mubarak Al-Azmi meets Consul of the Kyrgyzstan Republic in Kuwait Omar Bek Gaparov and his panel.

## Public Authority of Manpower receives Kyrgyzstan consul

**KUWAIT:** Acting Director of Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) Mubarak Al-Azmi received Consul of the Kyrgyzstan Republic in Kuwait Omar Bek Gaparov and his panel. Azmi started the meeting by welcoming the consul and acclaiming the historic bilateral relations between the two countries, adding the aim is to strengthen ties. They discussed ways for bilateral cooperation

during the meeting, as well as cooperation regarding workers. Azmi assured about the authority's role in providing legal care and ensuring a good work environment for all workers.

"The market in Kuwait imports many workers based on jobs that serve the work market and its needs, as the authority exerts efforts to develop the process of bringing in foreign workers for the economic development of Kuwait, while at the same time benefiting all countries the workers are from," Azmi told Gaparov. Gaparov expressed his thanks and appreciation to Kuwait for the efforts and developments that deserve praise, as he hoped for the start of cooperation and exchange of expertise from the two sides for everyone's interest.

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Local



Al Musaibeh and Kanjo with the winners

# Zain the 'strategic partner' of Kuwait Times Art Competition

Over 1,000 students showed their skills, talents, vision for Kuwait's tomorrow

**KUWAIT:** Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announced its strategic partnership with the student art competition "Kuwait, Years from Now," organized by Kuwait Times newspaper. The competition featured the participation of over 1000 students from 80 public, private, and special needs schools who showed their skills, talents, and vision for Kuwait's sustainable future.

Zain joined the awarding ceremony held at Kuwait Times Print House in Shuwaikh, attended by Zain Kuwait's Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al Musaibeh, Kuwait Times Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo, along with the students and their families. Throughout the past 10 years, Zain contin-

ued to support this unique social initiative to encourage children and young people to develop their art skills and pursue their passion. By being a part of this project's success, the company seeks to offer a creative environment for schoolchildren and students to grow their talents, embrace their passions, and fulfill their ambitions.

The competition witnessed wide participation from students from many age groups, representing public, private, and special needs school from across Kuwait. The art pieces centered around Kuwait's sustainable future, where students showed their skills and talents and reflected their own unique visions for the nation's tomorrow. Winners of the first places were awarded with valuable prizes. Zain's sup-

port to such educational initiatives reflects its keenness on enriching creativity and innovation within young people. The company believes education is the building block for the growth and development of communities, and so it continues to support similar projects that achieve its shared social goals.

Zain is keen on playing a vital role as an integrated digital service provider in light of the rapid digital changes witnessed by the modern world. The company always seeks to reach new levels of excellence with its customers through offering the best innovative services, meeting their needs and aspirations, as well as supporting programs and initiatives that embrace innovation and aim at developing the youth.



Awarding one of the students

## Depts study flexible working hours to reduce traffic jams

**KUWAIT:** A number of government departments have started preparing the study regarding application of flexible work hours soon to reduce traffic jams, based on the request of the Cabinet. Justice Minister Abdulaziz Al-Majed sent a memo to his undersecretary regarding the instructions of HHI the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah to present a vision to study the possibility of applying flexible working hours. Employees will work specific hours without regard to time of attendance or leave. The memo said a study must be presented and redistributing employees in order to cut traffic jams and to give employees an opportunity to review their contracts during the night shift.

### Strategic payroll alternative

Meanwhile, government sources have assured that the project regarding the strategic payroll alternative, which is currently being prepared by the government for the National Assembly to approve, will not include expatriate workers in the public sector and will be limited to Kuwaiti employees. "The law equalizes Kuwaiti workers with the same specialization in different government entities, who will receive the same allowances without favoring one entity over another," sources told Kuwait Times.



KUWAIT. Cars are stuck in a traffic jam in this illustrative file photo. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

"Expatriate workers in the government sector have different procedures for hiring, and allowances they receive are allocated based on technical procedures that relate to the nature of work and new updates that each ministry gets, and are not based on the regulations of the Civil Service Commission. Expats can be employed

only in urgent cases, but priority will always be for Kuwaitis, then children of Kuwaiti mothers, then GCC nationals and bedoons," sources added. The strategic payroll alternative will be submitted to the Assembly in the next two months, and sources expect its implementation during the 2025/26 fiscal year.

## MoE suspends hiring of Kuwaiti teachers

**KUWAIT:** The Education Ministry has suspended procedures regarding the employment of Kuwaiti teachers temporarily, and will resume employment in the second semester on Jan 29. The general education department in the Ministry informed the administrative department to cease all procedures regarding employment temporarily, as the last day to receive employees was Sept 8 for foreigners and Dec 15 for Kuwaitis.

The reason for the temporary suspension of employment is the start of first semester testing in all educational zones and the nearing of the spring break, during which schools close. The general education department has specified a schedule for teachers during the second semester of the 2022/23 academic year.

### New scholastic year

Meanwhile, the Ministry personnel have been working diligently in preparation for the new scholastic year 2022-2023 to ensure that the season would pass without major hurdles and enable students attend classes amid hygienic conditions. The ministry said some workers were employed and distributed to the schools for cleaning, indicating that supervisory personnel had ensured that contracting companies meet the required standards, namely with respect of the tenders.



KUWAIT: Ministry of Oil work team takes a group photo with the Arab Planning Institute team. —KUNA

## MoO, API discuss new 5-year plan

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Oil (MoO) discussed with the Arab Planning Institute (API) its new strategic plan for the next five years, in accordance with the best practices, through the aim of providing a comprehensive and integrated roadmap to achieve its idea derived from Kuwait's 2035 Vision. MoO said in a press statement Thursday that its work team received notes on the ministry's strategy from API, studying it and adding any applicable observations in line with the work programs within the ministry.

The ministry currently has scores of strategic goals aimed at preserving and enhancing the oil resources in Kuwait while attaining the best development and utilization of resources to ensure the increase of state revenues. The work team for preparing the ministry's plan consists of MoO's Undersecretary Sheikh Dr Nimr Fahad Al-Malik Al-Sabah, Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs at MoO Khaled AlDin, Director of Public Relations and Information at MoO Sheikha Tamader Khaled Al-Ahmad AlJaber Al-Sabah, Counselor Qusai Al-Darwish, in addition to some other members, it mentioned. API's team consists of the Institute's Senior Expert Walid Abdumoula, the Senior Advisor at API Dr. Belkacem Laabas and several members of the technical staff, it noted. —KUNA

## Commerce ministry closes stores

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry personnel shut down a number of car oil replacement shops in Daiya, Fahaheel, Sabah Al-Nasser and Jahra areas after they were caught selling counterfeit oil filters which causes damage to vehicle and endangers their lives. The supervision team has continued legal procedures against the violators.



## News in brief

## Ministry expands Sahel

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Information Ministry has added three more features to Kuwait's integrated government services application called "Sahel", its spokesperson said on Wednesday, citing the move as part of its digital expansion plans. The ministry is now offering new services on the application that includes accessing documents and obtaining an electronic publication permit, Anwar Murad told KUNA, saying these initiatives fall in line with Kuwait's "Vision 2035" development plan, which aims to accelerate a national digital drive. The information ministry remains committed to its digital transformation plans, the spokesperson emphasized, saying that more features will be added to the application in the near future.



## Court rejects appeal

KUWAIT: The Constitutional Court has rejected an appeal from the Administrative Court against the constitutionality of the fifth item of the 11th article of the degree equivalency rules of school certificates that were issued outside Kuwait, saying it restricts the right to learn guaranteed by the constitution and violates article 13, 14 and 40 of the constitution. The ruling insisted that the education ministry issued the rules of degrees equivalency to not consider equivalency of university degree an employee at a government authority or non-government entity obtains without getting a study leave or a scholarship for the full designated period to obtain the degree. The ruling said the ministry was keen to make sure the degrees students get to be a true expression of continued scientific work and effort they exerted in their years of study, and close the door on valueless degrees, whose holders do not have scientific competence. This is an affirmation of the truth that as much as education is the right of the individual in the society, the society should use him as a tool for development and growth.

# GCC chief, Bahrain minister push for more gains and achievements

RIYADH: Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf and Bahraini Minister of Cabinet Affairs Hamad Al-Malki on Thursday discussed ways of promoting gains and achievements within the GCC framework. This would certainly contribute to fulfilling the expectations and hopes of the Gulf people in line with the visions and directives of the member states' leaders, they said during their meeting at the GCC Secretariat's headquarters in Riyadh, according to a GCC release. They also tackled ongoing efforts aiming at bolstering the Gulf bloc's goals and promoting common Gulf action, coherence and cooperation, said the release. The latest regional and international developments were also on the agenda of the meeting, it added.

## Intellectual Property Strategy

In another development, Saudi Crown Prince, Prime Minister and Chairman of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs, Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, launched Thursday, the National Intellectual Property Strategy (NIPST), aiming to achieve Saudi Vision 2030, via building an intellectual property ecosystem that supports an innovation and creativity based economy.

The national news agency (SPA) reported that the Crown Prince affirmed his aspirations to stimulate creativity and innovation in his country stating, "The National Intellectual Property Strategy will further enable stimulating investment, create high quality jobs, and raise awareness of creators and innovators rights." In order to ensure the growth of innovation and creativity stimulation, the National Intellectual Property Strategy is based on four fundamental pillars: IP Creation, IP Administration, IP Commercialization, and IP Protection, adding that strengthening cooperation and integration with national stakeholders is key to achieving such pillars. The pillar of IP Creation aims to enhance the



Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf and Bahraini Minister of Cabinet Affairs Hamad Al-Malki meet to discuss ways of promoting gains and achievements within the GCC framework. —KUNA

creation of national high value IP assets, whereas IP Protection aims to stimulate the market economy through intellectual property protection. The IP Commercialization pillar has been adopted as one of the pillars of NIPST to contribute to the growth and attraction of investments in the country through the utilization of intellectual property and maximizing its impact.

Moreover, to ensure effective management of human creations, IP Administration aims to improve the IP value by establishing a fast and high-quality registration system. The agency further added that each pillar will have a number of initiatives assigned to government agencies measured periodically according to a governance framework that defines roles and responsibilities. The adoption of NIPST supports the empowerment of innovators in various fields and attracts interested researchers, entrepre-

neurs and innovators from Saudi or around the world towards innovation, creativity and respect of IP rights.

## Saudi-Turkey trade

In another development, Türkiye's Treasury and Finance Minister Nureddin Nebati said on Thursday trade exchanges between his country and Saudi Arabia rose to \$4.3 billion in the last ten months. Value of the Turkish-Saudi commercial exchanges climbed from \$3.7 billion in 2021 to \$4.3 billion in the last ten months of 2022, said Nebati, addressing the Turkish-Saudi Investment and Business Forum, held in Istanbul. The minister called on Saudi investors to launch businesses in his country. The forum involves Turkish and Saudi officials, businessmen and entrepreneurs from the two countries. —KUNA



Teams participating in the competition

## Huawei concludes Middle East tech competition

MUSCAT: Huawei concluded Thursday its regional competition for Information Technology (IT) and communications aimed at Middle Eastern University students, with an honoring ceremony that took place at Sultan Qabous University. In his speech at the ceremony, Omani Ministry of Transportation, Communications, and IT secretary Ali Al-Shethani described this competition as one of the largest and most significant in the region.

He added that it began five years ago and with this is sixth edition, the competition saw participation of more than 80,000 students, noting Huawei's collaboration with more than 20 ministry and 453 establishments last year to organize the event in which more than 15,000 students participated. This year's competition, Al-Shethani elucidated, focuses on professional knowledge in seven directions of Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, data stor-

age, large data, cybersecurity, as well as fifth generation networks and technologies.

He announced a collaboration program between the ministry, Huawei, and supported by Omani communications company Omantel, to present motivational awards of about \$450,000 for a duration of five years to Omani students with Huawei specialized certificates. Supervisor of the Kuwaiti participating team, Engineering Professor at the Australian University in Kuwait Dr Mohammad Saad commented that the team's participation was quite fruitful, as they gained necessary expertise and skills.

Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), on sideline of the concluding ceremony, Saad said that arrival of three Kuwaiti Students to the final stage, out of more than 19,000, students a great achievement, wishing the students success in all their future endeavors. A Jordanian team was awarded the first place prize, as for the second it was given out to the Pakistani and Iraqi teams and the third went to Emirati, Bahraini and Kazakh teams. The final stage of the competition took place yesterday with participation of three Kuwaiti students, Dalal Al-Awadhi, Abeer Al-Farhan and Fares Al-Mutairi. — KUNA



Kuwaiti Team in Huawei Competition



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Afghan women stage street protest against university ban

## Fiji deploys military as PM refuses to concede poll defeat

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WASHINGTON: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky speaks after giving a Ukrainian national flag to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and US Vice President Kamala Harris (L) during his address to the US Congress at the US Capitol in Washington. — AFP

# Zelensky gives historic address to US Congress

## With no end to fighting in sight, Kyiv's war with Russia drags into new year

WASHINGTON: Ukraine's president thanked "every American family" in an emotional but defiant address to the US Congress Wednesday aimed at countering growing skepticism over US military aid as Kyiv's war with Russia drags into the new year.

It was Volodymyr Zelensky's first overseas trip since Moscow launched the full-scale invasion on February 24, a ruthless offensive that has upended the global economy and led to widespread destruction and death. "On this special Christmastime, I want to thank you, all of you. I thank every American family which cherishes the warmth of its home and wishes the same warmth to other people," he told lawmakers who had given him a lengthy standing ovation as he walked into the House chamber.

The conflict has begun to recede from the headlines in the United States, with no end to the fighting in sight and Republicans who take over the House of Representatives in January showing signs of weakening resolve.

In what was billed by US media as the most important speech of Zelensky's career, he told a joint meeting of the House and Senate his country would never surrender, adding: "Ukraine is alive and kicking."

But he urged lawmakers—many of whom were dressed in the blue and yellow of the

Ukraine flag—to do more for his nation through the brutal winter months, pleading for more weapons and financial aid.

"We have artillery. Thank you. Is it enough? Honestly—not really," he said in a frank moment that pierced what had been an upbeat atmosphere, with his words accompanied by several outbursts of spontaneous applause.

### 'Absolute victory'

Discussing his visit Tuesday to the war's southeastern front line, Zelensky presented lawmakers with a Ukrainian battle flag signed by soldiers from the besieged city of Bakhmut.

The Washington visit, which came some 300 days after Russian hitmen parachuted into Kyiv in a failed attempt to assassinate Zelensky, underlined Ukraine's near-total reliance on Washington for its defense.

It coincided with President Joe Biden announcing a first Patriot missile defense system for Ukraine, which has been devastated by air strikes leading to widespread power outages as winter bites.

Zelensky thanked politicians from both parties but his appearance was also calculated to counter fatigue for the war, particularly among isolationist Republicans who have voiced doubts over the continued flow of tax dollars to Kyiv.

Congress is poised to pass \$45 billion in additional military and economic aid to Ukraine this week as part of its \$1.7 trillion annual funding bill, bringing total US assistance to over \$100 billion.

But House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy recently warned that Republicans—a number of whom snubbed the speech—could reject significant continued funding for Ukraine when they take over the lower chamber in January.

Just six percent of Republican-leaning voters believed Washington was doing too much for Ukraine in a Wall Street Journal poll in March, but that had risen to 48 percent by November. Zelensky is not the first leader of a country at war to address US lawmakers in person: British prime minister Winston Churchill appeared before Congress in the thick of World War II, and leaders from Iraq and Afghanistan have given speeches more recently.

The Ukrainian leader acknowledged the burden of history weighing on the United States, borrowing from 32nd president Franklin D Roosevelt as he told the Congress: "The American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory." Earlier, Biden hosted Zelensky at the White House, telling his counterpart that Ukrainians "inspire the world." — AFP

## US winter storm threatens holiday travel chaos

WASHINGTON: US forecasters warned of life-threatening weather as a "once-in-a-generation" winter storm on Thursday threatened to wreak havoc on holiday travel plans for millions of Americans.

Airlines told travelers to brace for delays and cancellations as an Arctic cold front gripped the central United States on Wednesday. It was expected to sweep through the Midwest and head towards the East Coast on Friday, just before Christmas. The National Weather Service (NWS) warned the storm would cause "widespread disruptive and potentially crippling impacts across the central and eastern United States," in a forecast discussion released at 0822 GMT on Thursday.

It forecast that "record-breaking cold and life-threatening wind chills

over the Great Plains (would) overspread the eastern half of the Nation by Friday." The NWS also warned of wind chill temperatures as low as -40 degrees Fahrenheit (-40 degrees Celsius) in some areas, urging people to take precautions. Some locations could see readings plunge to -70F, it added.

"Wind chills of this magnitude can cause frostbite in less than 5 minutes if precautions are not taken, with hypothermia and death also possible from prolonged exposure to the cold," it said. The NWS said strong gusts and heavy snow could cause serious damage to infrastructure and disruption to air and road travel. The storm comes as the Transportation Security Administration said it expects holiday travel volume to be close to pre-pandemic levels, with the busiest day on Thursday. The American Automobile Association estimated that more than 112 million people will travel 50 miles or more from home between Friday and January 2, the vast majority — 102 million-by car. — AFP

## Fake 'onion water' flu cure exposes disparities

WASHINGTON: If it tastes this bad, it must be good for you?

Homemade, tear-inducingly strong onion "cures" for flu are the latest medical misinformation spreading on TikTok—a sign, analysts say, that affordable, evidence-based health care is beyond the reach of many Americans.

Videos extolling the pungent concoction—made by soaking chopped raw onions in water—as a miracle cure have garnered tens of millions of views on the influential app despite no scientific proof to support the claim.

The videos have gained traction as the United States faces a so-called "triple-demic" of influenza, COVID-19 and RSV that has put a strain on health services.

Onions in reasonable quantities are not considered harmful—except for the foul breath—but health experts warn that such videos promoted a blind belief in simple home remedies that could compromise public health. "Onions aren't going to hurt anybody, but if somebody is sick, they should seek actual medical attention," Katrine Wallace, an epidemiologist and assistant professor at the University of Illinois Chicago, told AFP.

"I am afraid that people will just drink onions and not seek medical care (and) they could spread COVID or the flu in the com-



WASHINGTON: In this photo illustration, a verifying health claims page from AFP Fact Check is displayed on a mobile phone with a TikTok video of Onion Water shown in the background in Washington. An onion-heavy homemade cure for flu is the latest medical misinformation swirling on TikTok. —AFP

munity." The pseudoscience has found many takers, with comments under the videos filled with declarations like "this worked for me!" That, Wallace said, suggested the so-called "placebo effect," with the dubious onion treatment getting the credit after the virus naturally ran its course.

### Miracle cure? No

The trend illustrates how TikTok is flooded with unqualified influencers who peddle misinformation, from vaccine and abortion-related falsehoods to health myths—often to boost engagement and views—in what experts say can have a serious impact on medical decisions.

In one of the most popular TikTok videos, which garnered over 2.5 million views, one woman—whose profile did not mention her qualifications and described her only as a "child of mother nature"—zealously promoted onion water.

For greater healing effects, she implored her viewers to ferment the concoction for hours to make it more "potent." "We love a miracle cure and for some reason we seem to think that the more painful a remedy is to consume, the more magic it will work," Abbie Richards, a disinformation researcher and fellow with the Acceleration Research Consortium, told AFP. — AFP

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## International

# Fiji deploys military as premier refuses to concede poll defeat

## Vote looks set to end Frank Bainimarama's long rule

SUVA: Fiji's long-time prime minister said on Thursday the military had been deployed to maintain "law and order", as the former coup leader refused to concede defeat after a close election. Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama, who has led Fiji since coming to power in a 2006 military putsch, cited unsubstantiated reports of post-vote ethnic violence as the reason for the deployment. "So long as it is our responsibility to serve in government, we will fulfil our duty to every Fijian's safety," he said in his first public comments since the December 14 election.

That vote looks set to end Bainimarama's long rule, with an opposition coalition cobbled together by another former coup leader, Sitiveni Rabuka, securing enough seats for a parliamentary majority. However, Bainimarama has refused to concede defeat and his allies have delayed the parliament sitting to nominate Rabuka as the next prime minister.

Fiji has been rocked by four coups and a military mutiny in the past 35 years. There are growing concerns Bainimarama is preparing for the military to step into the political process again. His ally, police commissioner Sitiveni Qiliho, claimed earlier to have unspecified "intelligence" about "planned civil unrest", as he sought to justify the military deployment.

The military has wide powers to intervene in politics under Fiji's constitution, holding "overall responsibility" at all times for ensuring "the security, defence and well-being of Fiji and all Fijians". New Zealand's ministry of foreign affairs was the first from a neighbouring country to urge restraint after news of the military deployment was made public.

"We encourage all parties to allow the constitutional process to play out," a ministry spokesperson told AFP. Fiji's military commander Jone Kalouniwa is said to have assured foreign diplomats before the vote took place that a coup was not on the cards.

Jon Fraenkel, a professor at Victoria University of Wellington who has just returned from Fiji, said the military's assurances "have to be very strongly questioned".

### 'Living in fear'

News that the opposition had reached a coalition deal saw Fijians pour onto the streets to celebrate what they believed was the end of a decade and a half of semi-authoritarian rule. While not an outright autocrat, Bainimarama has frequently had his government use the legal system to sideline opponents, silence critics and muzzle the media.

Soon after the coalition deal was struck, police expressed concern about reports of post-election "stoning incidents" and violence against the Indo-Fijian minority, which has tended to support Bainimarama.

The force later admitted the reports had not been fully investigated, but police commissioner Qiliho doubled down on claims of internecine strife on Thursday. "More information and reports are received by the Fiji Police Force and Republic of Fiji Military Forces of threats made against minority groups who are now living in fear," he said.

"The continuous attacks on minority groups has aggravated the current tense situation." Those claims



SUVA: People walk across a street in Fiji's capital city Suva on December 22, 2022. Fiji's long-time prime minister said the military had been deployed to maintain "law and order", as the former coup leader refused to concede defeat after a close election. —AFP

were rubbished by Mahendra Chaudhry, the country's first Indo-Fijian prime minister, who was ousted in a 2000 coup. "I see no evidence of unrest here, people are calm and they are waiting for the president to convene parliament so that a prime minister is elected," he told AFP. "I have no evidence of any unrest and nor do my people out in other districts. It's not what we are hearing on the ground." — AFP

## Netanyahu forms new government

JERUSALEM: Veteran leader Benjamin Netanyahu announced that he had formed a new Zionist government on Wednesday, returning to power as the head of the most right-wing coalition in Zionist's history.

Following his November 1 election win, Netanyahu secured a mandate to form a government backed by ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties and an extreme-right bloc. That result left him poised to end Zionist entity's unprecedented era of political gridlock that forced five elections in less than four years, and replace the ideologically disparate coalition that ousted him in 2021.

Netanyahu, who is fighting corruption allegations in court, has already served as premier longer than anyone in Zionist entity's history, including a 1996 to 1999 stint and a record 12-year tenure from 2009 to 2021.

His mandate to conclude coalition talks had been set to expire at midnight. Minutes before the deadline, he informed President Isaac Herzog by phone that he had "been able to establish a government," a statement from Netanyahu's office said. The statement confirmed Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party would govern in partnership with the main ultra-Orthodox parties and members of the extreme bloc that ran under the Religious Zionism alliance.

Some political analysts had forecast that Netanyahu, 73, would be able to announce a new government quickly after the November polls, given the ideological common ground between Likud and its partners.



JERUSALEM: File photo shows Zionist entity's prime minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu speaks at the Knesset Plenum Hall during a session to elect the new speaker of the assembly in Jerusalem. —AFP

But the talks dragged on, with Netanyahu forced to juggle demands for senior cabinet posts, some of which he was compelled to grant. Among his most controversial moves was promising an expanded national security ministry to the head of the Jewish Power party, Itamar Ben Gvir, who has a long history of using incendiary rhetoric against Arabs.

### Unfinished business

It was not immediately clear when the new government will be sworn in. Netanyahu told Herzog he intended to do so "as soon as possible". There could be delays linked to the ongoing Jewish Hanukkah holiday and because crucial parliamentary business

remains unfinished.

Aryeh Deri, leader of the Shas ultra-Orthodox party, is a key player in the new parliament who has been promised the interior and health portfolios. But according to Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, Deri cannot serve in the cabinet due to past convictions for tax offenses.

Parliament is expected to pass legislation to remove that obstacle, but has yet to do so even though Netanyahu and his allies control 64 of its 120 seats. More sensitive are measures that would give Ben Gvir control over the border police, which assists the army in annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank.

Ben Gvir has been widely accused of inflaming tensions and has repeatedly urged Zionist security personnel to use more force when countering Palestinian unrest. On Tuesday a senior United States official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Washington was planning a meeting for early in 2023 between Zionist entity and Arab nations that recognise it, as it pushes Netanyahu's incoming right-wing government to show restraint.

Zionist's attorney general has issued a stark condemnation of the prospective government's legislative agenda. She said some of the measures threatened to turn Israel into a "democracy in name, but not in essence".

"The politicisation of law enforcement will deal a serious blow to the most fundamental principles of the rule of law, that is to say equality, the absence of arbitrariness and impartiality," Baharav-Miara said. Netanyahu may still be juggling cabinet demands from within Likud, by far the largest party in parliament. Zionist newspaper Maariv said that remained a major challenge. "There are more demands for important portfolios than available jobs," the paper said in a commentary Wednesday. — AFP

## FM: Wafra plant important...

Continued from Page 1

vast network stretching for 1,000 km from northern Kuwait to the south of the Gulf region. The GCC power grid has decreased capital expenses in the region since launch, Abbadi revealed, saying the network has provided 2,700 cases of support, with 226 in 2021. He said the grid cut expenses by \$200-\$300 million, with the accu-

mulative figure since the beginning of the project reaching a tremendous \$3 billion, an amount that covered the operational and investment costs of the project, which hit \$2 billion.

The current Wafra power station is part of the expansion of the GCC grid, said Abbadi, indicating that construction cost was around \$270 million. The station will provide 3,500 megawatts of electricity, which will be beneficial for the Kuwaiti network, he added. He commended the role of KFAED in funding the Wafra project and efforts to link the station to the southern region of Iraq. He extended his gratitude to Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGO) for providing the plot of land to build the station in Nov 2022. — KUNA

## Zelensky on triumphant...

Continued from Page 1

"Ukraine is alive and kicking. Your money is not charity. It's an investment in the global security and democracy that we handle in the most responsible way," Zelensky said. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who welcomed Zelensky in one of her last acts before Republicans take control, likened the address to Winston Churchill's Christmas-time visit in 1941 days after the Pearl Harbor attack - and the Ukrainian leader was unafraid to encourage the parallels.

Comparing Ukrainian forces to Americans on the frontlines in World War II and the Revolutionary War, Zelensky said that Russians "burn and destroy everything" in a way "similar to the other tyranny" of Hitler. "Ukraine holds its lines and will never surrender," Zelensky said to applause. Ukraine enjoys wide support in the United States but several hard-right Republicans have been critical, considering the aid a giveaway of taxpayer money.

Kevin McCarthy, likely to become speaker next month after a narrow Republican election victory, has warned he will not give a "blank cheque" to Ukraine, a comment seen as attempting to mollify his right flank. Biden, wearing a tie in the blue and yellow

colors of the Ukrainian flag, affectionately put his hand over the wartime leader's shoulder as he saw him for the first time in person since the war began.

"You will never stand alone," Biden told him at a joint news conference. "The American people are with you every step of the way and we will stay with you - we will stay with you - for as long as it takes." Biden said that Americans "understand in our bones that Ukraine's fight is part of something much bigger". "Together I have no doubt we'll keep the flame of liberty burning bright and the light will remain and prevail over the darkness."

Biden approved another \$1.85 billion from previously budgeted funds for Ukraine, including Patriots which can shoot down cruise missiles and short-range ballistic missiles. Ukraine fears a rising onslaught of missiles and has faced a slew of attacks from drones, many bought by Russia from Iran, as Moscow pummels power plants and other civilian infrastructure just as the country shivers in the winter cold.

Zelensky in his speech to Congress played up the role of Iran, against which Republicans almost universally favor a hard line. Zelensky flew in secret to the United States straight after a risky visit to the frontline in Bakhmut, where Ukrainian and Russian troops have both endured heavy tolls over the past two months. He presented Biden with an award from a captain on the ground operating a HIMARS rocket system, which has been a game-changer on the battlefield. "He's very brave and he said, give it to a very brave president," Zelensky said. — AFP

## Qatar claims diplomatic win...

Continued from Page 1

Morocco's surge to the tournament's semifinals also boosted feelings of Arab pride. Qatar has already lined up more sporting events to keep it in the international eye. It is also reportedly preparing a bid for the 2036

Olympics, as well as hosting summits and other events including Formula One in 2023. Andreas Krieg, an associate professor of security studies at King's College London, said Qatar had been caught

in "a culture war" in Europe, but he thinks the criticisms had little impact in most of the world. "Qatar has been able to use the World Cup effectively to establish its brand, especially in the Global South," said Krieg. "This has made Qatar a rallying point for the Arab and Islamic world which has mobilized in support for Qatar as a champion of regional issues, such as Palestine or anti-colonialism," he added.

Simon Chadwick, professor of sport and geopolitical economy at the SKEMA Business school in Paris, said the Gulf state has "witnessed a net soft power benefit" in Asia, Africa and the Arab world from its World Cup campaign. Attitudes have even changed in some parts of Europe, added Chadwick, although he believes "there is still some considerable resistance" in countries such as Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands. — AFP

## Yemen women chafe under...

Continued from Page 1

of pushing for a theocracy. Recently the Houthis clamped down on women travelling without a "mahram" - or male relative - even within the country. Women in the rebels' northwestern stronghold of Saada are denied contraception if they don't have a prescription and their husband isn't present.

In Saada and some small towns, women cannot travel alone after dark, even for medical emergencies, while an all-female police force called the "Zainabiyat" enforces discipline. However, there are numerous examples of women complaining and pushing back, especially in the big cities. "As a Yemeni woman, I feel that all my rights and my freedoms are being stolen from me," Maqtari said.

The Houthis, from Yemen's mountainous north, belong to the Zaidi minority, an offshoot of Shiite Islam that makes up more than a third of the fractured country's Sunni-majority population. The hardline force emerged in the 1990s, rising up over alleged neglect of their region. It has been fighting a pro-government coalition led by powerful neighbor Saudi

Arabia since 2015, a conflict that has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions on the brink of famine.

Restrictions on female freedoms, which parallel decrees issued by the fundamentalist Taleban in Afghanistan, are not part of Yemeni law and are enforced arbitrarily through rebel directives. Radhya Al-Mutawakel, co-founder of Yemeni rights group Mwatana, said the travel restrictions set a "very dangerous" precedent and disproportionately affect women who have jobs. "This is the first time that a decision limiting the freedom of movement of women has come from an official authority," Mutawakel said.

Bilqees Al-Labbi, a gender consultant at the Sanaa Center for Strategic Studies think tank, said the restrictions are aimed at satisfying the most extreme branch of the Houthi movement and exerting political control. "They are inspired by both the Iranian model and that of the Taliban to silence all opposition and subjugate society," she said.

But in major cities, residents are resisting "attempts to Talebanize society", Mutawakel said, highlighting Sanaa's younger and more defiant population. Aicha Ahmed was forced to close her beauty salon and gym in Sanaa for months after the Houthis shut down swimming pools, fitness facilities and other businesses catering exclusively to women over the summer. After repeated complaints and lobbying on social media she was permitted to reopen her salon, but not the gym. "Eight employees lost their jobs," she said. — AFP

## International

## Philippines boosts military in disputed sea after Chinese 'encroachment'

China's foreign ministry called the report 'completely groundless'

MANILA: The Philippines ordered its military to boost their presence in the South China Sea on Thursday, citing a "threat" to a garrison in the disputed waterway after nearby Chinese "activities". It comes two days after media reported that Beijing has begun reclaiming more land in the contested Spratly Islands, a major archipelago in the South China Sea that hosts military installations by a number of countries.



China coastguard harass, attack fishing boats

"Any encroachment in the West Philippine Sea or reclamation on the features therein is a threat to the security of Pagasa Island," the Philippine defence department said Thursday. Manila refers to the waters immediately west of the Philippines as the West Philippine Sea, while Pagasa Island, the second biggest in the Spratlys, is also known as Thitu Island.

The defence department said it had directed the armed forces "to strengthen the country's presence in the West Philippine Sea, following the monitored Chinese activities close to Pagasa Island".

The agency did not specify the nature of the "monitored Chinese activities", but the Philippine military said its air and naval patrols had observed "China mili-

tia vessels" in these areas.

Beijing claims almost all of the resource-rich South China Sea, through which trillions of dollars in trade passes annually. Along with the Philippines, rival claimants are Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

China has ignored a 2012 ruling from a UN-backed tribunal that its claim is without basis.

In recent years it has built artificial islands on reefs while constructing military facilities and airstrips. Bloomberg reported Tuesday, citing satellite images from US officials, that new land formations have emerged in the Spratlys, on Eldad Reef, Whitsun Reef, Lankiam Cay and Sandy Cay.

China's foreign ministry called the report "completely groundless". A Philippine military statement said Thursday its regular air and naval patrols have "observed the persistent presence of China militia vessels around areas stated in the Bloomberg article".

The statement did not say if the patrols monitored the reported reclamations themselves. "WESCOM (the Philippines' Western Military Command) shall continue conducting maritime patrols and sustaining our presence in the WPS (West Philippine Sea) to protect our nation's territory and sovereign rights," it said.

Sandy Cay lies seven kilometres (4.3 miles) west of Thitu, where the Philippines runs an airstrip along with military and coastguard detachments. A small civilian community also lives there. Lankiam Cay is about 45 kilometres southeast of Thitu, while the two other reefs are further away.

The Philippines has repeatedly accused Chinese coastguard and maritime militias of harassing and



QUEZON CITY: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr (C) rides a military vehicle as he inspects the troops during the 87th anniversary celebration of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. — AFP

attacking fishing boats and other vessels in the region.

Manila filed a diplomatic protest last week after a Chinese coastguard vessel in November "forcefully" took control of debris from a Chinese rocket retrieved by a Philippine navy vessel off Thitu.

China denied using force, its embassy in Manila

saying the debris was handed over after "friendly consultation". Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos has insisted he will not let China trample on the country's maritime rights-in contrast to his predecessor Rodrigo Duterte, who was more reluctant to criticise the superpower. — AFP



NEW YORK: China's Ambassador to the UN Zhang Jun speaks at a United Nations Security Council meeting during a vote on a draft resolution calling for an immediate end to violence in Myanmar and release of political prisoners, at UN headquarters in New York. — AFP

## UN Security Council adopts first ever Myanmar resolution

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council called for Myanmar's junta to release Aung San Suu Kyi Wednesday as it adopted its first ever resolution on the situation in the turmoil-ridden Southeast Asian country. The 15-member Council has been split on Myanmar for decades and was previously only able to agree on formal statements about the country, which has been under military rule since February 2021. Suu Kyi, 77, has been a prisoner since the army toppled her government almost two years ago and violently cracked down on dissent.

Wednesday's resolution "urges" the junta to "immediately release all arbitrarily detained prisoners," including Suu Kyi and ex-president Win Myint. It also demands "an immediate end to all forms of violence" and asks for "all parties to respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law."

The adoption marked a moment of relative Council unity in a year in which divisions have been heightened by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "Any opportunity for the Security Council to speak with one strong, united voice on any issue and especially on Myanmar would be much welcomed," Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's spokesman said ahead of the vote.

The text was adopted with 12 votes in favor. Permanent members China and Russia abstained, opting not to wield vetoes following amendments to the wording. India also abstained. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the resolution sent a "strong message" from the world that the junta "must end its violence across the country" and free prisoners.

"While we applaud the adoption of this resolution, the Council still has much more work to do to advance a just solution to the crisis," Blinken said, calling for greater efforts to restore democracy.

## First successful resolution

Diplomats said the only existing Council resolution regarding Myanmar was the one the UN passed in 1948 approving the country's membership to the world body. In 2008, the Council failed to adopt a draft resolution on Myanmar after Beijing and Moscow cast vetoes. Then in December 2018, Britain made another attempt following the Rohingya crisis that saw 700,000 people flee Myanmar to neighboring Bangladesh but a vote was never held. Britain began circulating a draft text of Wednesday's resolution in September. Several amendments were made to ensure its passing, UN watchers say.

Language relating to the Council's determination to use all its powers should Myanmar fail to adhere to the resolution were reportedly dropped. Several members also objected to a provision requesting the UN secretary-general to report to the Council on the situation in Myanmar every 60 days.

Instead, the resolution calls for the secretary-general or his envoy to report back by March 15, 2023 in coordination with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Council had issued one unified statement on Myanmar since the coup ended the country's brief period of democracy.—AFP

## Philippines jails Spaniard on small arms charges

MANILA: The Philippines has jailed a Spanish man after he was convicted for weapons possession, nearly five years after his arrest, the Philippine justice department said Thursday. Army counter-terrorism troops in January 2018 arrested Abdelhakim Labidi Adib, 20 at the time, at a checkpoint on the southern island of Basilan, a stronghold of armed Islamist militants.

They alleged Labidi Adib, a Spanish citizen of Tunisian descent who described himself as a tourist, carried grenades and bomb-making equipment in his backpack. They also accused him of being a sympathiser of Abu Sayyaf, a local armed rebel group with ties to the Islamic State that has been blamed for deadly bombings and beheadings of kidnap victims.

A second man who was accompanying the convict

escaped, authorities said. Labidi Adib agreed to plead guilty to charges of three counts of possession of a loaded small arm, for which a Basilan court gave him prison terms of between eight and 14 years each, the justice department said in a statement.

Under the Philippines' penal code, multiple penalties are served simultaneously in order of severity, with the maximum duration not more than three times the length of the most severe one. "Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin 'Boying' Remulla lauded state prosecutors for securing the conviction of a suspected terrorist," the statement added.

Labidi Adib was arrested eight months after Abu Sayyaf gunmen along with other pro-Islamic State allies seized the centre of Marawi city, the main Muslim city in the mainly Catholic nation. The attack sparked a five-month battle that destroyed much of the city and left more than a thousand people dead, before the city was recaptured by Philippine forces with intelligence assistance from the US military.

Labidi Adib arrived in the Philippines in October 2017, around the time that the Marawi siege ended, the military had said earlier. — AFP



MANILA: File photo shows Abdelhakim Labidi Adib (C) being escorted by Philippine soldiers as he arrives at the Department of Justice (DOJ) building in Manila. — AFP

## Afghan women stage street protest against university ban

KABUL: A small group of Afghan women staged a defiant protest in Kabul on Thursday against a Taliban order banning them from universities, an activist said, adding that some were arrested. In the latest move to restrict human rights in Afghanistan, the Taliban's minister for higher education on Tuesday ordered all public and private universities to bar women from attending. "They expelled women from universities. Oh, the respected people, support, support. Rights for everyone or no one!" chanted the protesters as they rallied in a Kabul neighbourhood, footage obtained by AFP showed.

A protester at the rally told AFP "some of the girls" had been arrested by women police officers. Two were released, but several remained in custody, she added, speaking on condition of anonymity. Around two dozen women dressed in hijabs, some wearing masks, could be seen raising their hands and chanting slogans as they marched through the streets.

## Activists reject Greek migration smuggling charges

ATHENS: A Norwegian human rights group helping migrants in Greece on Thursday rejected smuggling charges brought forward this week by a Greek prosecutor against its founder and another prominent activist.

Aegean Boat Report said the lawsuit "can only be described as frivolous, if not an aggressive effort to intimidate us." On Tuesday, a prosecutor on the Greek island of Kos said Aegean Boat Report founder Tommy Olsen and Greek Helsinki Monitor

Women-led protests have become increasingly rare in Afghanistan since the Taliban took over the country last August, after the detention of core activists at the start of the year. Participants risk arrest, violence and social stigma for taking part. The women had initially planned to gather in front of Kabul University, the country's biggest and most prestigious educational institution, but changed locations after the authorities deployed a large number of security personnel there.

Tuesday's late-night announcement triggered international outrage, with the United States, the United Nations and several Muslim nations denouncing it. The ban caused disbelief, coming less than three months after thousands were allowed to sit for university entrance exams. "Afghan girls are a dead people... they are crying blood," said Wahida Wahid Durani, a journalism student at the University of Herat, who was not at the protest. "They are using all their force against us. I'm afraid that soon they will announce that women are not allowed to breathe."

Since seizing power, the Taliban have imposed many restrictions on women. Most teenage girls are barred from secondary school, women have been pushed out of many government jobs, prevented from travelling without a male relative and ordered to cover up outside of the home, ideally with a burqa.—AFP

spokesperson Panayote Dimitras were part of a "criminal organisation" to facilitate the illegal entry of asylum seekers into Greece, court sources said.

"Neither we, nor as far as we know the Greek Helsinki Monitor have ever formed a criminal organisation," the organisation said. "The 'charge' is that we actually are informing the Greek authorities of the location of people who have entered Greece in the hope of finding safety, both assisting the legal rights of those people, and assisting the Greek authorities to carry out their own legal duties."

"We very much hope the Greek courts can save the government the embarrassment of either having their most recent attack on us dismissed by the court or shown to be the aggressive effort to deter us from doing our jobs that it in fact is," the group said. A trial date has yet to be set. Tens of thousands of people fleeing Africa and the Middle East seek to

## Cambodian court convicts 36 oppn figures

PHNOM PENH: A Cambodian court handed out jail terms Thursday to 36 opposition figures, including exiled leader Sam Rainsy, in the latest mass trial against opponents of strongman ruler Hun Sen, a rights group and lawyer said.

Rainsy has lived in France since 2015 to avoid jail on multiple convictions he says are politically motivated, including a life sentence handed down in October for allegedly ceding territory to a foreign entity. Eleven politicians from his now-dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) were sentenced to seven years in jail and stripped of their rights to vote or stand for office for five years, rights group Licadho said.

A further 22 activists were sentenced to five years in prison, while three defendants received suspended sentences in a case related to an attempt by exiled opposition politician Mu Sochua to enter Cambodia in January 2021.

Only three of the activists are in detention. The other 33, who are either abroad or on the run, were convicted in absentia by the Phnom Penh Municipal court. "I am so disappointed with the ruling," the defendants' lawyer Sam Sokong told AFP, adding he will discuss with his clients whether to appeal against the verdicts.

Licadho's deputy director Am Sam Ath told AFP the international community regarded the trial as politically motivated. In a separate case, the same court concluded a long-delayed treason trial against top opposition leader Kem Sokha on Wednesday, with a verdict due on March 3.

Roughly 60 opposition figures, including dual US-Cambodian citizen Theary Seng, were convicted in June in a mass treason trial that rights groups also condemned as politically motivated. Critics say 70-year-old Hun Sen, Asia's longest-serving leader, has wound back democratic freedoms and used the courts to stifle opponents, jailing scores of activists and human rights defenders. He has vowed to stand in a national election next year, while also supporting his eldest son Hun Manet to succeed him. Hun Sen has promised to crush the exiled Rainsy and continues to squeeze political challengers ahead of the 2023 election. — AFP



Sam Rainsy

enter Greece, Italy and Spain in hope of better lives in the European Union. On Friday, a two-month-old baby was recovered dead from a migrant wreckage off the island of Lesbos.

Humanitarian organisation MSF Sea later said that police blocked its team from reaching the migrants for two hours and coastguards did the same with another team. The body of another baby, believed lost by its mother who was among another group of migrants that landed on December 9, was found near Lesbos on Wednesday.

Aegean Boat Report on Thursday said Greece has "illegally pushed-back tens of thousands of men, women and children, killing some, beating many and robbing almost all, in the process." Greece has denied all pushback claims, and insists its coastguard is doing its utmost to save migrant lives at sea. — AFP

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2022

# Business

## Kuwait's economic recovery continues, fiscal and external balances improving

### IMF mission holds discussions with CBK, concludes visit to Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has published a statement on Thursday released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the occasion of the conclusion of its mission's visit to Kuwait. The mission held discussions with the Kuwaiti authorities and the CBK officials during December 11-18, 2022. At the conclusion of the mission, the head of the IMF mission Yasser Abdih issued the following statement:



CBK Governor  
Basel Al-Haroon

- Inflation has been contained so far, supported by monetary policy tightening and energy and food subsidies. Banks remain well-capitalized and liquid.
- The outlook is subject to uncertainties, including potential repercussions from the global economic slowdown and externally-induced volatility in oil prices and output.

"Kuwait's economic recovery continues. Strong vaccination efforts and the authorities' swift and decisive responses to the COVID-19 crisis have allowed for the relaxation of all social distancing restrictions and supported economic recovery. Overall real GDP growth is estimated to have rebounded from -8.9 percent in 2020 to 1.3 percent in 2021. It is projected to further increase to above 8 percent in 2022, supported by increased oil production, high oil prices, and sustained improvement in domestic demand.

In 2023, growth is likely to moderate, reflecting slowing external demand and oil production cuts under the OPEC+ agreement. Direct adverse spillovers from the Russia's war in Ukraine have been contained so far given the limited trade and financial linkages with both countries.

"Inflation has been contained, benefiting from monetary tightening and limited passthrough from higher global food and energy prices supported by administered prices and subsidies. With higher oil prices and output, the overall fiscal and current account surpluses increased significantly from last year.

"With strong bank buffers and prudent over-

sight and proactive monitoring of financial risks by Central Bank of Kuwait, the banking system has weathered the recent shocks well. Banks continue to be well-capitalized and liquid, financial soundness indicators are healthy, and private sector credit growth remains strong.

"The authorities continue to implement measures to improve fiscal revenue collection and spending efficiency. Efforts are ongoing to promote digital transformation, advance financial technology, and invest in green energy.

"Nevertheless, the outlook is subject to uncertainties and risks surrounding the external environment, including potential impacts of



monetary policy tightening in major advanced economies and further slowdown in global economic activity. And volatility in oil prices and production, stemming from external factors including the geopolitical environment, could weigh on activity and macroeconomic balances. Delays in key fiscal and structural reforms could amplify the risk of procyclical fiscal policies, and hinder progress toward more economic diversification and higher competitiveness.

"The IMF mission team expresses its appreciation to the authorities for their hospitality and the candid and productive discussions. We look forward to continuing our dialogue and close collaboration."

*Note: End-of-Mission press releases include statements of IMF staff teams that convey preliminary findings after a visit to a country. The views expressed in this statement are those of the IMF staff and do not necessarily represent the views of the IMF's Executive Board. This mission will not result in a Board discussion.*

## Abu Dhabi begins passport-free travel trials

**ABU DHABI:** The next time you are traveling through the Abu Dhabi International Airport, chances are that you will not need to take out your passport several times as Abu Dhabi Airport is set to launch an advanced biometric technology, which uses a passenger's facial features as their passport to offer a seamless experience throughout their travel journey. A technology company in Abu Dhabi is working to make passengers' airport experience fully contactless. Next50 said the first phase of its Smart Path project was under way and would eventually result in passengers using biometric data, such as face scans, in place of boarding passes, passports and any other documents required to fly. The project is being carried out in collaboration with a French identity-related security services company named Idemia, and Swiss aviation IT company Sita.

Next50 uses artificial intelligence and next-generation biometric technology that will initially be employed at various 'touchpoints' across the airport. These include self-service baggage counters, electronic immigration gates and boarding gates.

The technology will eventually be used at all touchpoints, eliminating the need to exchange boarding passes and passports with staff. Currently, biometric data is used at e-gates at Abu Dhabi airport but passengers must still present their passport.

"We are excited to be leading the biometrics project at the UAE capital's state-of-the-art international airport as part of the emirate's digital transfor-



ABU DHABI: UAE begins passport-free travel trials at Abu Dhabi International Airport.

mation vision," said Next50 chief executive Ibrahim Al-Mannaee. "Once the project is fully realized, the airport will be the only airport in the region with biometric solutions implemented across all customer touchpoints, contributing to Abu Dhabi Airport's vision to become the operator of the most technology-driven airport in the world, providing a seamless journey to all its passengers.

"We are proud to be joining forces with Idemia and Sita, and offering our expertise in artificial intelligence and data sciences to make this initiative a reality."

Once the project is completed, passengers will

have a completely contactless "kerb to gate" journey through the airport, reducing wait times and shortening queues. Initiatives such as these have been fast-tracked since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted companies to search for contactless alternatives to daily tasks. "The airport of the future will be driven by technology that enables safe, seamless and easy travel every step of the way," said Hani El Assaad, Sita's Middle East and Africa president. "This latest deployment showcases the power of Smart Path to deliver a fluid journey where a passenger's face becomes their boarding pass, from check-in to boarding." —Agencies

## Aramco issues warning over low oil capacity

**LONDON:** The global oil market remains tight according to Saudi Aramco, the largest oil producer in the world. And that does not bode well for a world that still relies heavily on fossil fuels.

"Today there is spare capacity that is extremely low," Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser said at a recent conference in London. "If China opens up, [the] economy starts improving or the aviation industry starts asking for more jet fuel, you will erode this spare capacity."

Nasser warns that oil prices could quickly spike - again. "When you erode that spare capacity the world should be worried. There will be no space for any hiccup - any interruption, any unforeseen events anywhere around the world." If you share Nasser's view, here are three oil stocks to bet on. Wall Street also sees upside in this trio.

Meanwhile, oil prices rose for a fourth straight day on Thursday after rallying by about 3 per cent in the previous session on a large drop in US crude stocks. Brent, the benchmark for two thirds of the world's oil, was 1.62 per cent higher at \$83.53 a barrel at 1.33 pm Kuwait time on Thursday. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, was up 1.7 per cent at \$79.61 a barrel. Brent was 2.8 per cent higher at \$82.20 at the time of closing on Wednesday while WTI was up 2.7 per cent. US crude stocks fell by 5.9 million barrels last week, about three times more than analysts had estimated, data from the US Energy Information Administration showed. —Agencies

## EU gas price cap will be of limited use, say experts

**PARIS:** EU nations have adopted a mechanism to cap natural gas prices, but experts say it will likely have only a limited impact on reducing what businesses and households pay—and could harm efforts to purchase supplies next winter.

### How does the price cap work?

Natural gas is traded on wholesale exchanges where utilities and even some large industrial firms can buy supplies. The European benchmark price for gas, a contract called Dutch TTF to be delivered the following month, is currently around 95 euros (about \$100) per megawatt hour. In August, it briefly spiked to 345 euros. The European price cap will be triggered if two conditions are met: If the benchmark price rises above 180 euros per megawatt hour over three consecutive days, and if it exceeds a reference price for liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices by at least 35 euros.

Once triggered, the cap remains in place for 20 days—unless the benchmark price falls back below 180 euros for three consecutive days, or a supply emergency in the EU is declared.

### Are fuel bills going to fall?

It is hard to judge the impact of the mechanism because it hinges on a double constraint of very high prices which may rarely happen. "The ultimate impact of it is very uncertain," said Simone Tagliapietra at the



ZIERBENA, Spain: Tugboats help the vessel LNG Ogun (center), a gas tanker sailing under the flag of Bermuda, as she leaves the Port of Bilbao bound for the port of Bonny, in Nigeria, after her stopover at the Bizkaia Bay Gas (BBG) regasification plant in Zierbena, 20 km away from Bilbao, on December 21, 2022. —AFP

Bruegel think tank. But if there are tensions in world gas supplies—especially due to heightened Chinese demand—certain conditions could combine to trigger the cap, Katja Yafimava from Oxford Energy said.

"Any potential problems with supplies, cold weather snaps, and insufficient demand reduction could all contribute towards these two conditions being met at the same time," she said. Ultimately however, the cap aims to prevent "extreme volatility", she added rather than bringing down bills. "But this has nothing to do with lowering energy prices overall, which will indeed remain high with this price gap."

The impact for consumers will be negligible, warned oil and gas analyst Thierry Bros. "There will be no impact for individuals and very little for manufacturers," he said. "There is not necessarily a direct link between the wholesale price and the price you pay for electricity or gas."

Governments have already spent 700 billion euros to "limit the rise in prices and prevent the price from being passed on" to consumers, he added. Acting on the wholesale price will mainly have consequences for the small number of manufacturers that buy directly from the wholesale market. —AFP

## Germany asks EU to rein in Twitter

**BERLIN:** Germany appealed to the European Union on Thursday to consider regulating "abrupt" and "arbitrary" decisions at Twitter since Elon Musk's takeover. Economy ministry state secretary Sven Giegold of the Green party wrote to the EU Commission citing his "great concern" about policy zig-zagging at the troubled social media platform. In the letter Giegold also posted on Twitter, he said the Commission should carry out the necessary reviews as soon as possible to declare Twitter a "gatekeeper" under the bloc's new Digital Markets Act.

The designation subjects companies with a dominant market position to particular scrutiny. He also called for the complementary Digital Services Act, which comes into force in February 2024, to prevent "capricious deplatforming" of users. The DSA was designed to combat online hate speech, disinformation and piracy in Europe at a time when much of the internet content seen by EU citizens is controlled by US-based companies.

Giegold cited his concerns about "Twitter's platform rules and their abrupt changes and arbitrary application" in the letter to Commission Executive Vice President Margrethe Vestager and Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton. "The EU should use all the possibilities at its disposal to protect competition and freedom of speech on digital platforms," he said. —AFP



Business

# Turkey hikes minimum wages for third time to cushion inflation

## Economic crisis hits Turkey's poor the hardest

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday announced the third major minimum wage hike in a year to try and cushion the impact of a historic jump in consumer prices ahead of crunch elections. More than 40 percent of Turkey's workforce earns the lowest income allowed by law.

Erdogan relied on support from the working classes to rise to power nearly two decades ago-and will need it again to secure re-election in polls which are due by next June. But Turkey's poor have been hit the hardest by an economic crisis that has seen the official annual inflation rate reach 85 percent.

On Thursday the Turkish leader said the country would boost the monthly take-home pay to a minimum of 8,500 liras (\$455). The minimum wage stood at 2,826 liras in December 2021. It was raised to 4,253 liras last January and then to 5,500 in July. But an accompanying plunge in the lira's value means that the wage has been raised only fractionally in dollar terms in the past year.

### 'Unsustainable'

Turkey's latest economic crisis started when Erdogan—a lifelong opponent of high interest rates—pressured the central bank to bring down chronically high consumer prices by lowering borrowing costs. Conventional economic theory urges policymakers to fight inflation by curbing demand and raising the price of doing business through higher interest rates.

Erdogan's approach set off a currency crisis that saw the lira lose nearly half its value in a matter of weeks late last year. The government has responded by spending its reserves on currency support measures and imposing complex economic rules aimed at bringing inflation under control.

Erdogan promised on Thursday that inflation will slow to 20 percent by the end of next year. "We will



ISTANBUL: People shop at Grand Bazaar in Istanbul in this file photo.

witness a rapid decline of inflation rates starting this month," he said in televised remarks. Analysts expect inflation to start falling sharply because the data will be compared to readings from a period 12 months ago when prices were soaring at breakneck pace.

But they also think it will remain substantially elevated until Erdogan either reserves course or a new government embraces economic orthodoxy. The central bank on Thursday showed no signs of

comprise by keeping its benchmark interest rate at nine percent.

Turkey's official inflation reading of 84.39 percent means that banks lose 75.39 percent of a loan's value if they lend money for a year at the official interest rate.

This threatens to cripple lending and dramatically slow economic growth. "Economic growth will continue to slow in the first half of next year, and it's very

possible that President Erdogan puts pressure on the (central bank) to loosen policy even more ahead of next year's election," Nicholas Farr of Capital Economics wrote in a note to clients. Attempts to force Turkish exporters to sell dollars "and foreign financing have helped stabilize the currency in recent months, but this is unsustainable and we are forecasting it to fall by around 20 percent against the dollar by end-2023," Farr said. — AFP



## ADNOC to acquire nearly 25% stake in Austria's OMV

ABU DHABI: State oil giant Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) has confirmed it will acquire a 24.9 percent stake in Austria-based global energy and chemicals group OMV AG (OMV) from

Mubadala Investment Company (Mubadala). The transaction will increase ADNOC's shareholdings in both Borealis and Borouge, thereby expanding the company's footprint in the chemicals sector, according to a statement on Wednesday.

OMV holds a 75 percent stake in Borealis. The transaction is in line with ADNOC's strategy to grow its business globally. It also aligns with Mubadala's long-term investment strategy, the statement said. "The transaction marks the next major milestone for ADNOC as it accelerates its ambitious domestic and international

chemicals growth strategy and also aligns with Mubadala's long-term investment strategy," the statement said.

"As we continue to meet the growing global demand for lower carbon energy, we are fast-tracking the delivery of our growth strategy and expanding our footprint across key strategic markets and sectors," added Sultan Al-Jaber, UAE Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and ADNOC Managing Director and Group CEO. The transaction is still subject to certain closing conditions and regulatory approvals. — Agencies



شركة الصفاء للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 22 DECEMBER 2022

(965) 22 675 140  
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.  
alsafatinvest.com  
research@alsafatinvest.com  
alsafatinvestment  
al-safat-investment-company

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,081	1,075	1,085	1,068	17	9,555,250	-12	-1.10%	13.21%	1,075	1,092	17.7	2.07	2.3%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	321	315	321	315	6	4,450,626	-6	-1.87%	18.55%	310	316	16.6	1.44	2.1%	1.26
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	194	195	197	190	7	10,269,895	1	0.52%	-6.97%	194	203	35.1	0.62	2.0%	1.15
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	221	212	222	211	11	2,732,884	-9	-4.07%	-11.31%	212	217	21.3	0.78	2.2%	1.29
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	825	804	828	800	28	41,430,279	-24	-2.90%	6.30%	796	815	27.1	3.32	1.4%	1.17
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	815	797	816	793	23	2,503,818	-19	-2.33%	11.88%	797	813	51.6	3.14	0.6%	1.09
204	National Investments	Financial Services	246	242	250	236	14	1,222,214	-7	-2.81%	10.50%	237	244	17.7	0.98	18.7%	1.86
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	112	115	116	106	10	20,322,903	2	1.77%	-19.01%	110	116	-	0.56	4.5%	0.99
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	75	72.2	75	71	4	3,850,995	-3	-3.99%	-38.81%	70.1	73	-	0.42	12.6%	1.23
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	106	106	107	104	3	22,226,669	-1	-0.93%	-39.01%	106	111	15.5	0.78	2.7%	1.09
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	864	852	864	842	22	694,992	-7	-0.81%	13.89%	850	875	17.8	1.89	1.5%	1.02
501	National Industries	Financial Services	224	218	225	211	14	26,420,481	-7	-3.11%	-9.53%	217	221	10.8	0.95	5.2%	1.51
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,156	1,180	1,218	1,088	130	507,467	-18	-1.50%	35.48%	1,176	1,202	11.5	1.15	5.0%	1.02
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	800	803	810	790	20	861,594	2	0.25%	-5.75%	790	820	8.5	1.60	7.4%	0.92
603	Agility	Industrials	715	681	715	671	44	22,331,758	-36	-5.02%	-13.52%	656	687	44.5	1.25	2.5%	1.58
605	Zain	Telecommunications	571	550	575	546	29	13,146,160	-22	-3.85%	-7.56%	546	571	12.6	1.97	6.0%	0.79
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,376	3,379	3,410	3,301	109	582,866	2	0.06%	4.81%	3,350	3,400	7.1	3.40	11.8%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	204	202	209	193	16	14,473,832	-4	-1.94%	-7.34%	195	206	-	0.76	0.0%	1.17
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,757	1,846	1,925	1,757	168	860,241	30	1.65%	43.10%	1,820	1,880	14.3	11.11	2.4%	1.40
821	Warba Bank	Banking	233	232	234	224	10	22,025,611	-3	-1.28%	-15.33%	229	240	23.2	1.26	0.0%	1.09
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	409	396	409	376	33	3,539,810	1	0.25%	-31.42%	380	405	-	1.22	4.1%	0.49
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	340	358	373	339	34	6,427,185	10	2.87%	-3.24%	358	371	23.9	1.50	2.7%	0.73
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	189	183	190	182	8	3,015,241	-5	-2.66%	-19.74%	182	189	15.4	1.73	9.6%	0.48
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,149	2,035	2,177	2,005	172	713,562	-94	-4.42%	0.74%	2,032	2,094	20.9	6.43	3.2%	0.99
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	815	801	818	800	18	1,252,606	-10	-1.23%	-9.39%	800	830	11.5	4.01	5.9%	0.53

\* As of end of week closing

## Business

# Food price inflation tears into British household budgets

## UK economy shrinks more than previously thought

**LONDON:** About half the adults in the UK are buying less when they go shopping for food and concern over Christmas food prices is far higher than last year, according to data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The poorest appear to be the hardest hit, with 61 percent of those living in the most deprived areas buying less food compared with last year, as opposed to 44 percent in the least deprived areas, the ONS said.

Despite overall inflation, including housing costs, falling slightly last month, food and soft drink inflation rose 16.5 percent, the highest increase since September 1977. Price increases for food and soft drinks are having the greatest effect on record when it comes to driving up the overall inflation rate. They added 1.51 percent to overall inflation in November, the largest contribution since the start of the National Statistics series in 2006. Basic everyday food items recorded sharp increases in prices. For half of the items in a basket of 30 basic grocery products, prices rose by more than the official rate of food price inflation of 15 percent between September 2021 and September 2022. Three of those items posted price rises of above 40 percent: vegetable oil (65 percent), pasta (60 percent) and tea (46 percent). With Christmas only days away, 81 percent of adults surveyed by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) said they were concerned about the cost of food during Christmas and New Year, up from 62 percent in the same period last year.

### Missed meals

The FSA also found rising food prices might be having a knock-on effect on health, with nearly a quarter of survey participants saying they had

skipped or reduced the size of a meal because they could not afford to buy food. The latest ONS opinions and lifestyle survey found 16 percent of adults in Britain were somewhat or very worried their food would run out before they had money to buy more, while 6 percent said their household had run out of food and could not afford more.

In further gloom for the UK hospitality sector, the survey also about three in five adults reported eating out less, both at restaurants and ordering in takeaways. The inflation gap between low and high-income households is at its largest since March 2009, the ONS said. In the year to October, annual inflation was 10.5 percent for low-income and 9.1 percent for high-income households.

The UK economy contracted more than was previously estimated in the third quarter, the latest Office for National Statistics figures show. The ONS said UK gross domestic product fell by 0.3 percent between July and September, revised from an earlier estimated fall of 0.2 percent.

The ONS has also revised its GDP estimates for the first half of the year. First-quarter growth was revised downwards from 0.7 percent to 0.6 percent, and the second quarter from 0.2 percent to 0.1 percent. GDP is now estimated to be 0.8 percent below where it was before the pandemic struck, down from the previous estimate of 0.4 percent, the ONS said.

In terms of output, the services sector grew by 0.1 percent in the third quarter, while the production sector fell by 2.5 percent, including drops in all 13 manufacturing sub-sectors. Construction also fell, by 0.2 percent. "Our revised figures show the economy performed slightly less well over the last year than we previously estimated, with manufac-



**LONDON:** Despite overall inflation falling slightly last month, food and soft drink inflation rose 16.5 percent, the highest increase since September 1977.

turing and electricity generation notably weaker," said Darren Morgan, director of economic statistics at the ONS.

### Cost of living crisis

The cost of living crisis continued to squeeze household budgets in the third quarter. Disposable

income fell by 0.5 percent, its fourth consecutive quarterly drop. "Household incomes continued to fall in real terms, albeit at a slower rate than in the previous two quarters, while, taking account of inflation, household spending fell for the first time since the final COVID-19 lockdown in the spring of 2021," said Morgan. —Agencies

## EU court: Amazon can be liable when sellers breach trademarks

**NEW YORK:** Online retail giant Amazon can potentially be held responsible when third-party sellers on its website misuse trademarks, the European Court of Justice said on Thursday.

Lower courts in Belgium and Luxembourg asked the EU's top court for an opinion on a case brought by French shoemaker Christian Louboutin. The firm argued Amazon itself was breaching its trademark by hosting adverts for shoes from third-party sellers featuring its trademark red sole.

The ECJ agreed, saying Amazon users would not necessarily be able to tell if a product was being offered by Amazon or a third-party seller. "Amazon itself makes use of the sign registered by Louboutin where the user of its site has the impression that it is Amazon which is marketing, in its name and on its behalf, shoes of the trademark," said an ECJ press statement released in French.

The legal opinion does not decide the Louboutin case, which will revert to the courts in Luxembourg and Belgium. But the opinion is binding on national courts in the EU from now on.

"This is a victory for all the brands that defend their expertise," said Louboutin chief executive Alexis Mourot. Amazon said it was still studying the opinion.

The French shoemaker is famous for its red-soled footwear and claimed sellers on Amazon were offering "identical" products without the firm's consent. Louboutin argued that "the disputed advertisements formed an integral part of Amazon's commercial communication", according to the ECJ press statement. The court agreed, distinguishing Amazon from sites such as eBay, which operates purely as a marketplace for other sellers and does not offer its own products.

Amazon, the court pointed out, displays its own adverts alongside those of third-party sellers and offers the sellers marketing, storage and shipping services. As a result, users could have the impression that Amazon was offering the disputed products. Amazon, along with fellow US tech giants like Apple, Google and Meta-has faced a slew of legal cases across the EU. On Tuesday, Amazon settled two EU antitrust inquiries concerning its treatment of third-party sellers. —AFP

## Bankman-Fried in US to face fraud charges

**NEW YORK:** FTX co-founder Sam Bankman-Fried arrived in the United States from the Bahamas in FBI custody on Wednesday, US media reported, facing criminal fraud charges after the spectacular collapse of the crypto exchange. FTX and its sister trading house Alameda Research went bankrupt last month, dissolving a virtual trading business that had been valued by the market at \$32 billion.

Prosecutors allege Bankman-Fried cheated investors and misused funds that belonged to FTX and Alameda Research customers. US Attorney Damian Williams announced Wednesday the 30-year-old would be "transported directly to the Southern District of New York" on arrival in the United States.

The plane carrying Bankman-Fried arrived Wednesday night, US media reported.

Earlier in the Bahamas—where FTX is headquartered—he had waived his right to challenge the US extradition request, the island nation's attorney general said. US prosecutors last week charged Bankman-Fried with conspiracy, wire fraud, money laundering and election finance violations.

He "was orchestrating a massive, years-long fraud, diverting billions of dollars of the trading plat-

## Crypto firm Binance endures wild weeks in wake of FTX collapse

**NEW YORK:** Even by the extreme standards of cryptocurrency trading, the past few weeks have been a wild ride for Binance, the world's biggest exchange for crypto assets. After the collapse of its rival FTX in a hail of allegations of fraud and criminality last month, trust in the entire sector has crumbled.

Customers pulled more than \$3 billion from Binance in a single day last week as part of a three-day frenzy that saw more than \$6 billion withdrawn. On Friday, accountancy firm Mazars, engaged by Binance to provide a "proof of reserves" report, abruptly halted work with all crypto firms because of "public misunderstanding" of what they were providing.

A "proof of reserves" report is not a full audit and gives no information about liabilities.

Media reports suggested US prosecutors were still weighing up money-laundering and sanctions-busting charges against the company and possibly its co-founder and CEO Changpeng Zhao. The firm has

refused to comment on the inquiry.

Sharing the background, sources said the Pakistan government is utilizing a credit facility extended by KPC against supply of diesel oil under the term contract with PSO since 2000. All the procedural formalities of this arrangement were advised by the finance division, whereby, a joint account of DG [Oil]/ KPC liaison office was opened with NBP, Karachi.

The PSO deposits rupee equivalent with the NBP after 30 days from the bill of lading date of each shipment. After 90 days from the bill of lading date, NBP transfers the cargo cost to KPC, Kuwait. Exchange cover for an additional 60 days, if any, has to be borne by the GoP.

The credit facility is extended every year through a written request from the minister for petroleum division to his counterpart in the government of Kuwait.

In April 2020, the NBP account witnessed a huge shortfall on account of exchange losses,

form's customer funds for his own personal benefit and to help grow his crypto empire," they said.

Five of the eight counts against Bankman-Fried carry a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison each. The SEC separately accused him of violating securities laws.

### Dramatic collapse

US Attorney Williams said two key figures in the case—Alameda Research CEO Caroline Ellison and FTX co-founder Gary Wang—had pleaded guilty to charges related to the FTX collapse and that they were cooperating with authorities. Their charges were "in connection with their roles in the frauds that contributed to FTX's collapse," he said, but did not provide further details.

Williams's office did not respond to an AFP request for comment on the charges.

Separately, the SEC and the Commodity Future Trading Commission (CFTC) announced Wednesday they had filed civil suits against Ellison and Wang and that the two were cooperating, which should lead to a more lenient judgment. The CFTC estimates that \$8 billion in funds were misappropriated from FTX customer accounts. After its founding in 2019, FTX rose spectacularly to become a leading player in the crypto world.

Bankman-Fried appeared on the covers of finance and tech magazines, and drew in huge investments from prominent fund managers and venture capitalists. He was also lionized in the halls of politics, becoming a spokesman for the industry on regulatory issues in Washington, and contributing tens of millions of dollars to the Republicans and the

Democrats. But it all imploded dramatically in November when a media report said Alameda's balance sheet was heavily built on a token created by FTX with no independent value—and exposed Bankman-Fried's companies as being dangerously interlinked.

Bankman-Fried was arrested at his Nassau apartment on December 12 at the request of federal prosecutors in New York. A Bahamas permanent resident, he spent the past nine days in prison, weighing his choices before telling the Nassau magistrate court Wednesday that he would not fight extradition. —AFP

Bankman-Fried was arrested at his Nassau apartment on December 12 at the request of federal prosecutors in New York. A Bahamas permanent resident, he spent the past nine days in prison, weighing his choices before telling the Nassau magistrate court Wednesday that he would not fight extradition. —AFP

### Investors 'confused and scared'

Zhao's public appearances have hardly helped to calm the jitters. In one recent interview with CNBC he claimed the firm "kind of forgot" about part of a \$2.1 billion payment that Binance received from FTX last year. Zhao said a "big chunk" had been paid in FTX's now worthless in-house token, but sat untouched for 18 months before Binance remembered and transferred the sum, then worth \$580 million.

"Is forgetting about over half a billion dollars supposed to make me feel more confident in Binance's ability to properly run an exchange," Genevieve Roch-Decter of Grit Capital wrote in an opinion piece for Coindesk, a crypto news outlet. Critics point out that Zhao is prone to making confusing and sometimes contradictory

public statements. He claims to want transparency but Binance refuses to divulge even basic company information such as where it is registered, let alone submit to a full audit, like a publicly-traded firm would have to undergo.

Zhao cozies up to regulators in some jurisdictions but reportedly keeps his main business well away from prying eyes in the Cayman Islands. He stresses his firm's solidity and competence but his personal Twitter feed paints a picture of a one-man band backed by interns. —AFP

which was likely to result in default in remittances to KPC, Kuwait. Accordingly, the matter was presented before the ECC of the cabinet, which approved a supplementary grant of Pakistani rupees 11.7 billion for transfer of funds in the NBP account. It ultimately helped in avoiding any international default.

The account has been operating satisfactorily for the last two years. Credit facility for the last year expired on December 31, 2021 and remittance of last cargo of 2021 was made on March 25, 2022.

The NBP account balance as of March 25, 2022 was around rupees 153 million. Extension of the facility for the current year by government of Kuwait was issued in April 2022. However, the account has witnessed actual exchange losses of about Rs17 billion up to the last remittance made on December 2, 2022 owing to prevalent upheaval in the rupee-dollar parity during this period. —Agencies



**NASSAU, Bahamas:** FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried (center) arrives at the Nassau, Bahamas, courthouse on December 21, 2022. —AFP



public statements.

He claims to want transparency but Binance refuses to divulge even basic company information such as where it is registered, let alone submit to a full audit, like a publicly-traded firm would have to undergo.

Zhao cozies up to regulators in some jurisdictions but reportedly keeps his main business well away from prying eyes in the Cayman Islands. He stresses his firm's solidity and competence but his personal Twitter feed paints a picture of a one-man band backed by interns. —AFP

## Pakistan's petro division worried about extra funds

**ISLAMABAD:** The petroleum division of Pakistan's energy ministry is said to have expressed its concerns on the finance division's 'apathy' with regard to provision of additional funds required to bridge the upheaval in the rupee-dollar parity, sources close to the secretary petroleum revealed.

The petroleum division, sources said, conveyed its distress after the finance ministry refused to support a proposal for allocation of additional funds of Pakistani rupees 17 billion to meet shortfall on account of exchanges with respect to payment to Kuwait Petroleum

## Nigeria raises cash withdrawal limits after public outcry

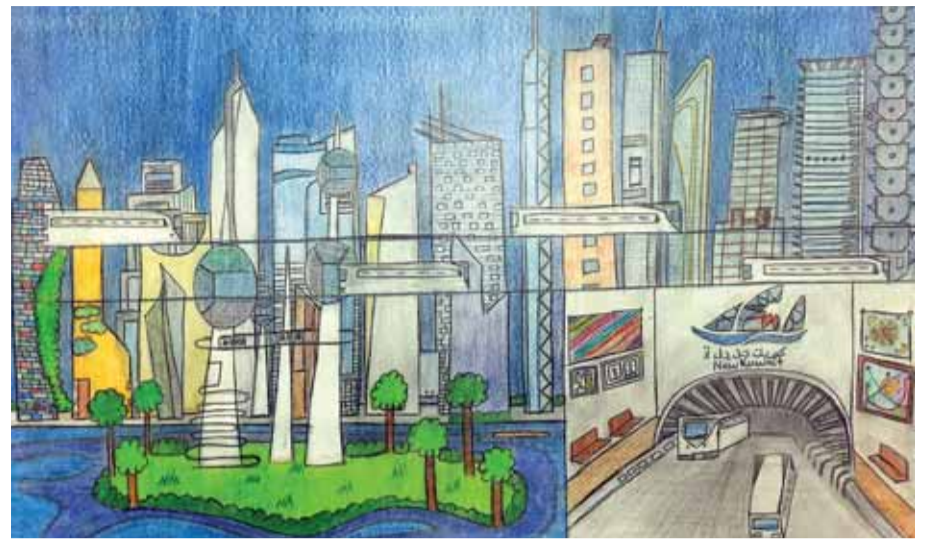
**LAGOS:** Nigeria's central bank has announced substantial increases in limits on weekly cash withdrawals following pressure from the public. The decision late Wednesday came two weeks after the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) imposed restrictions on weekly cash withdrawals to limit the use of cash in the economy. The CBN has previously expressed concerns over currency counterfeiting, the volume of money outside the banking system and huge ransom payments to kidnappers and bandits. "The maximum weekly limit for cash withdrawal across all channels by individuals and corporate organizations shall be N500,000 (\$1,100) and N5,000,000, respectively," the CBN said in a statement. "The CBN recognizes the vital role that cash plays in supporting underserved and rural communities and will ensure an inclusive approach as it implements the transition to a more cashless society," the bank added. —AFP

Lifestyle



Hamad Al-Musaibeh, Corporate Relations Department Manager at Zain (second right), Advertising and Marketing Manager Taleb Kanjo (right), Amal Nasser Al-Jufaira one of the jury members (second left), Rania Al-Rashed (left) present an award to the winner Shadan Alawadhi (center) in the special needs category. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Student Art Competition 2022



Painting by winner Shadan Alawadhi in the special needs category.

# STUDENTS OVERJOYED AT WINNING KUWAIT TIMES ART COMPETITION

By Faten Omar

Kuwait Times concluded the student art competition titled "Kuwait, Years from Now" by awarding the winners during the closing ceremony. More than 1,000 students from 80 schools participated under the strategic partnership with Zain. The father of Leon Prasad, who won first place in the 12-14 years category, revealed this is the third time his son won the Kuwait Times competition. "My son started drawing when he was two years old. I work on projects and used to give him my sheets to draw on the back," he said. He added Leon's

mother encouraged him and developed his artistic skills, pointing out that his son has won several awards in other art competitions as well.

The father of Emily Mathew, who won second place in the 12-14 years category, said: "We are proud of her. She put in a lot of effort. Before the deadline, she stayed up all night to finish her drawing, and one day she also missed school to complete the painting.", Sivesh Senthilkumar, third-place winner in the 12-14 years category, said: "I thank Kuwait Times for organizing such a wonderful contest, which helped us showcase our talent. The topic provided a

broad and vivid scope to express what we foresee and imagine. I enjoyed painting and this was a great experience for me."

For Ummehani Fulabhai, third-place winner in 15-18 years category, the art competition gave her the chance to deliver her message to the world. "My painting focuses on telling people to let go of the past and focus on the future of Kuwait. I got inspired from the news, where people still hang on to the past and do not concentrate on developing the country," she said.

Art Coordinator Khalid told Kuwait Times his school has been participating

in the Kuwait Times art competition for years. "The artworks of our winning students in the special needs category were great. The school has been participating for years, and the competition was usually held in February. We love to encourage the students - 52 students participated from our school and three won," he said.

The competition ran from Oct 10 to Nov 13, 2022, with 25 students winning. In 12-14 years category, first place was awarded to Leon, 14. Second place went to Emily, 14, and third place was awarded to Sivesh, 13. Adhidev Sumesh, 14, was fourth and in fifth place

was Hannah Siju, also 14 years old.

In 15-18 years category, first place was awarded to Tamara Hamdan, 15. Second place went to Ummehani, 17, and third place was awarded to Rataj Ibrahim, 17. Al Lulu Al-Waiwaib, 17, was fourth and in fifth place was Aljoud Al-Otaibi, 17.

In special abilities category, first place was awarded to Shadan Al-Awadhi, her second win in a row. Second place went to Najla Al-Azemi, and third place was awarded to Jana Yousef. Kinda Maged was fourth and in fifth place was Jenan Al-Mhanna.



Photo shows the second-place winner Najla Alazemi (center) in the special needs category.



Photo shows the third-place winner Jana Yousef (left) in the special needs category.



Photo shows the fourth-place winner Kinda Maged in the special needs category.



Photo shows the fifth-place winner Jenan Qais Al-Mhanna in the special needs category.



Photo shows the winner Leon Marian Prasad in the (12-14 category).



Photo shows the second-place winner Emily Elizabeth Mathew in the (12-14 category).



Photo shows the third-place winner Sivesh Senthilkumar in the (12-14 category).



Photo shows the fourth-place winner Adhidev Sumesh in the (12-14 category).



Photo shows the fifth-place winner Hannah Theresa Siju in the (12-14 category).



Photo shows the second-place winner Ummehani Fulabhai in the (15-18 category).



Photo shows the third-place winner Rataj Ibrahim in the (15-18 category).



Photo shows the fourth-place winner Al Lulu Al Waiwaib in the (15-18 category).



Photo shows the fifth-place winner Aljoud Al Otaibi in the (15-18 category).

## Lifestyle | Features



Father Maximilian Schiefermueller is seen in the library of the Benedictine Abbey in Admont, Austria.—AFP photos



# FAIRYTALE ABBEY LIBRARY TAKES ONLINE STARDOM IN ITS STRIDE



A detail of the library of the Benedictine Abbey in Admont, Austria is pictured.

Ancient monasteries in deepest provincial Austria do not normally feature on the bucket lists of the TikTok generation. Nor do libraries. But the Admont abbey library in the small Styrian town—which claims to be the largest monastic library in the world—is also the most Instagramable, with Baroque interiors so breathtaking they almost look like they have been Photoshopped.

"Go for Baroque in Austria and visit the Admont Abbey library," Oprah Winfrey's book club urged its two million members last year. And Britain's Daily Mirror gushed that the library "could give Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel a run for its money with its beauty." Once far from the beaten track, the near 950-year-old Benedictine abbey now struggles on some days in summer to accommodate all the influencers and selfie hunters who want to immortalise themselves amid its frescos and chequerboard marble floors reminiscent of the library in Disney's "Beauty and the Beast".

#### Media-savvy monks

Two of its 23 monks are active in the monastery's online promotion, as at ease



A detail of the library of the Benedictine Abbey in Admont, Austria is pictured.

with concepts like "content" as with the finer points of theology, even offering "online spiritual advice". A virtual tour of the library is also available. "We have succeeded, together with the monks of our house, to transmit content that captivates and interests people," communications manager Mario Brandmueller told AFP. The abbey's Facebook reach has rocketed to 25 million people per month — 2,500 times its audience back in 2018. From being something of a local gem nes-

ted amid the mountains of central Austria, it has become an international "crowd puller", Brandmueller said, with photos and videos of the 18th-century library featured on travel and culture platforms in a dozen countries.

The abbey's promotional work even earned it an Austrian government prize for "special achievements in the field of public relations and institutional communication". But this summer the monastery was pushed to its "organizational limits" han-

dling the 15,000 visitors a month it was getting, although Brandmueller said more visitors could still be accommodated in winter.

#### Fashion shoots

The library's 70-metre-long hall is packed with 70,000 books. While it was opened in 1776, the oldest manuscripts date from the eighth century and were miraculously spared from a 1865 fire that engulfed much of the town and the monastery. One of the library's hidden architectural gems is a secret staircase leading to a reading platform. But it is only accessible to the masses on the virtual tour.

Father Maximilian Schiefermueller, 41, who takes care of the archives, told AFP that as well as receiving queries from researchers and historians, they also get very "diverse requests... from people who want to do a photo shoot to a fashion show" within its hallowed halls. "So you have to be very careful, and I'm also very strict to evaluate what makes sense... After all, it's a monastery." —AFP

## Nobel-winner Ishiguro pens Oscar-tipped 1950s remake 'Living'

Nobel laureate Kazuo Ishiguro has been obsessed for half a century with "Ikiru," a classic Japanese film about an aging bureaucrat who after being diagnosed with cancer races to find meaning in what remains of his monotonous life. The Japanese-born British novelist and movie buff, 68, began to imagine a remake of Akira Kurosawa's heartbreaking masterpiece, still set in its original 1950s era, but transplanted to London. "I'm one of these terrible people who come up to filmmakers and say 'Look, here's a great idea for a film, please go and make it, and let me know when you've done it,'" joked Ishiguro.



The 2017 Nobel Literature Prize laureate, British writer Kazuo Ishiguro, speaks during a press conference in Stockholm.

But when he pitched the idea of a remake "that married the material of the old Kurosawa movie to a certain study of Englishness and particular kind of English gentleman," Hollywood producer Stephen Woolley quickly persuaded the author to pen the screenplay himself. The result is a critically adored drama which has already earned Golden Globes and Critics Choice Awards nominations for its star Bill Nighy, and is a frontrunner for the best adapted screenplay Oscar.

The film plays on the "many parallels between Japanese and English culture," particularly in the 1950s when both countries were rebuilding from the ruins of World War II, Ishiguro, who won the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature, told AFP. Echoing Kurosawa's original, "Living" follows the sudden realization of Nighy's Mr Williams character that he has achieved nothing in his decades of robotic, bureaucratic stasis.

Facing his own mortality, and unable to open up to his family, the London civil servant finally decides to help a group of housewives who have begged him for years to help construct a modest playground for their children. The film is about how, with an effort, "even if you've got a small, stifling life, you might be able to find something... that tips it over into being something magnificent, that you can be proud of," Ishiguro said.

But Ishiguro said "Living" is also a metaphor for modern life-in particular, a warning about the sense of detachment many people feel in their jobs today. "Not being able any more to connect up the contribution you make at work to anything out there in the real world... You don't even know how it links up with a guy down the corridor in your office," said Ishiguro. "I think our world has become even more like that now with a virtual world, after the pandemic."

#### 'Terribly sorry'

Nighy, most widely known for playing rakish, extroverted characters in movies such as "Love Actually" and "About Time," puts in a deeply restrained performance. The interesting challenge was having "to express quite big things with very little," Nighy told AFP during the film's AFI Fest premiere in Hollywood last month. "That degree of restraint that people required of themselves in both countries during that period, I find fascinating," he said.

"In a psychiatric establishment, they would probably declare it deeply unhealthy," said Nighy, noting that buttoned-up men like his character would even "apologize for dying." "You know what I mean? 'Terribly sorry, but I think I have to die now.'" Ishiguro has tackled similar themes in "The Remains of the Day," a Booker Prize-winning novel about an overly stoic, self-sacrificing butler at an English stately home, wistfully reflecting on his earlier life.

That book became an Academy Award-nominated film starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson. For Ishiguro, it is high time that Nighy gets spoken about in the same terms as those Oscar-winners. "He's one of our great, brilliant actors, but I always felt he'd never had a chance to dominate a film," said Ishiguro.

"I always felt, if you give him a central big part that's the correct part, we will actually know definitively that he is one of the great actors of our generation." Ishiguro wrote the screenplay with Nighy in mind, even naming the lead character after his dream actor. "I must have been very good in a previous life," joked Nighy. "Living" is released in US theaters Friday. —AFP



Yoga instructor Galina Tkachuk (center) teaches in a studio named Ram, for its Indian owner, in Kyiv. —AFP photos

## Ukraine's yogis breathe through wartime blackouts

The women filed into the yoga studio, on the ground floor of an otherwise pitch-black apartment block, for an afterwork session that was specially tailored to Ukraine's current period of deprivation. With power and heat cut off by Russian strikes on energy infrastructure, they wore thick sweatshirts and wool socks over their customary tank tops and leggings. Their instructor, Galina Tkachuk, led them in rapid breathing exercises-called Kapalabhati-that were intended to warm them up as quickly as possible.

And ahead of the final resting pose, or Shavasana, she swaddled them in heavy blankets to keep them from shivering. By the time it was over, Tkachuk felt she had succeeded in providing a brief but necessary break from the stresses of Ukraine's ten-month-old war, made worse in recent weeks by midwinter energy outages in the capital, Kyiv, and elsewhere.

Some of the women had even shed their extra clothing, making the studio more closely resemble how it would in normal times. "Everyone is looking for a way to survive and stay sane in this situation, and yoga is a good option," said Tkachuk, standing in the dim light of the studio's single lamp. "How does it help? It distracts from various negative thoughts. You don't think about anything [but] inner peace, positivity," said Viktoriya, a 44-year-old yoga student and bank employee. "Of course it's cold, you see I'm in a sweater... but you have to adapt to the current conditions."



Yoga instructor Galina Tkachuk teaches in a studio named Ram, for its Indian owner, in Kyiv.

came. I did not expect it, there really were a lot," Tkachuk said. Among them was Maria Mykhaylenko, who credited a regimen of "yoga, tea and meditation" with helping her through the war.

"The fact that there is no heating here is not a problem, you can dress warmer," she said, adding that she especially likes it when the studio is lit with candles. Frequent internet cuts in the studio's neighborhood mean students often can't register for classes ahead of time, making it impossible to predict how many will show up on any given day. But Tkachuk said these glitches were easy to ignore as she focuses on the benefits for those who do make it. "In general, it is good for mental and physical health... and not only during the war," she said. "Now this need has simply intensified." —AFP



Yoga group members make exercises in a studio named Ram, for its Indian owner, in Kyiv.

Lifestyle | Features



### Chicken tikka masala inventor dies aged 77

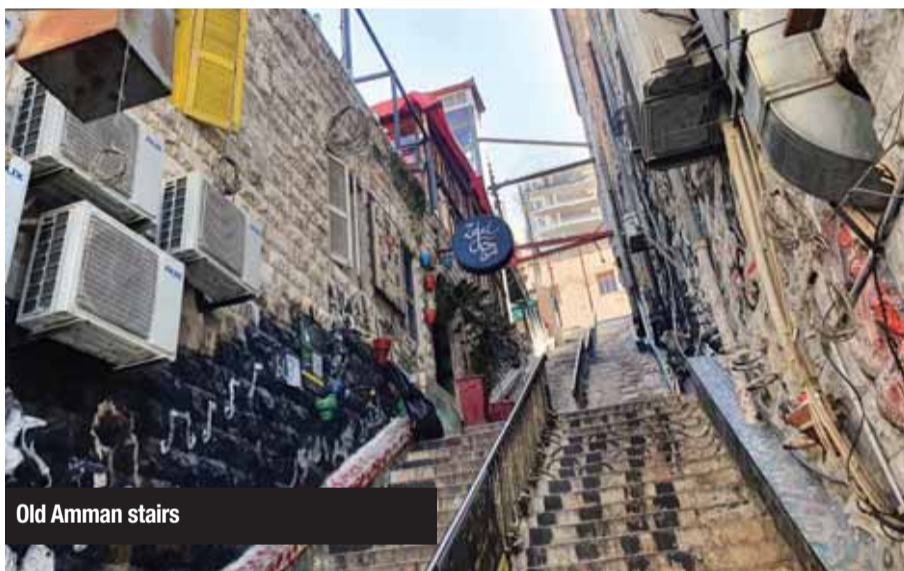
A chef from Glasgow, who claims to have invented the curry dish chicken tikka masala, has died at the age of 77, a family member told AFP on Wednesday. Ahmed Aslam Ali, who invented the dish by improvising a sauce made from a tin of tomato soup at his restaurant Shish Mahal in the 1970s, died on Monday morning, his nephew Andleeb Ahmed said. "He would eat lunch in his restaurant every day," Ahmed said. "The restaurant was his life. The chefs would make curry for him. I am not sure if he often ate chicken tikka masala." Ahmed said his uncle was a perfectionist and highly driven.



"Last year he was unwell and I went to see him in hospital on Christmas Day," Ahmed said. "His head was slumped down. I stayed for 10 minutes. Before I left, he lifted his head and said you should be at work." In an interview with AFP in 2009, Ali said he came up with the recipe for chicken tikka masala after a customer complained that his chicken tikka was too dry. "Chicken tikka masala was invented in this restaurant, we used to make chicken tikka, and one day a customer said, 'I'd take some sauce with that, this is a bit dry,'" Ali said. "We thought we'd better cook the chicken with some sauce. So from here we cooked chicken tikka with the sauce that contains yogurt, cream, spices."

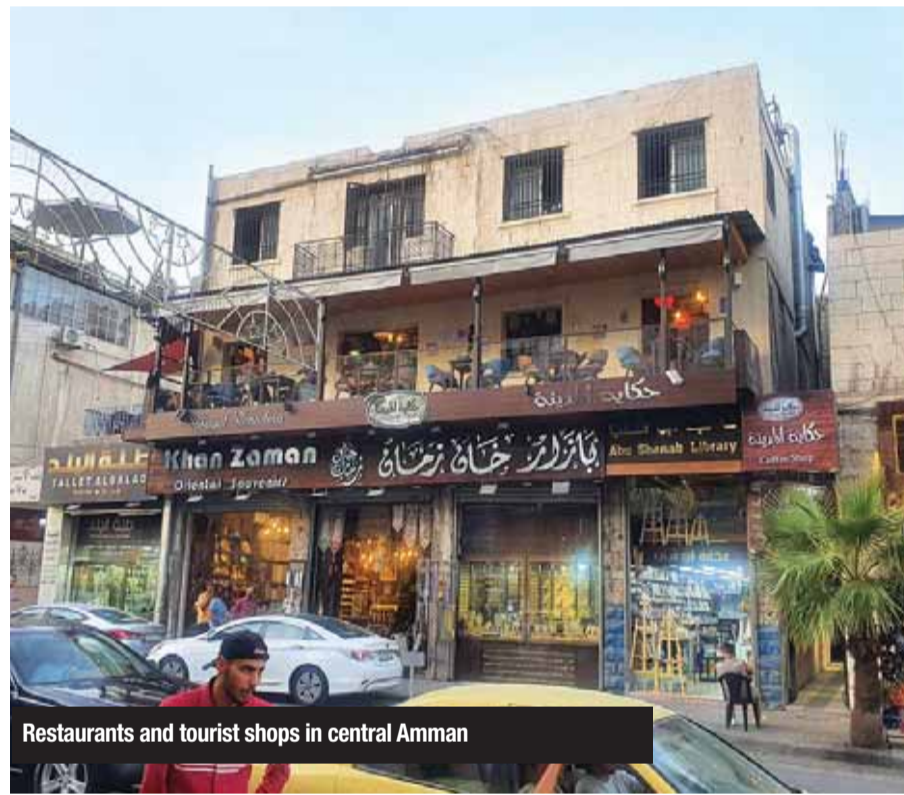
The dish went on to become the most popular dish in British restaurants. Although it is difficult to prove definitively where the dish originated, it is generally regarded as a curry adapted to suit Western tastes. Ali said the chicken tikka masala is prepared according to customer taste. "Usually they don't take hot curry, that's why we cook it with yogurt and cream," he said. Supporters of the campaign to grant the dish protected status point to the fact that former foreign minister Robin Cook once described it as a crucial part of British culture. "Chicken tikka masala is now a true British national dish, not only because it is the most popular, but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences," Cook said in a 2001 speech on British identity. Ali, originally from Punjab province in Pakistan, moved with his family to Glasgow as a young boy before opening Shish Mahal in Glasgow's west end in 1964. He said he wanted the dish to be a gift to Glasgow, to give something back to his adopted city. In 2009, he campaigned unsuccessfully for the dish to be granted "Protected Designation of Origin" status by the European Union, alongside the likes of Champagne, Parma Ham and Greek Feta cheese. —AFP

## Heritage houses transformed into commercial projects that liven up Amman



A project to restore heritage buildings, some of which date back about 100 years, has restored the momentum of the center of the Jordanian capital, Amman, which is packed with people from the city's residents and visitors. The process of converting these buildings into commercial projects, most of which are restaurants, well-known markets and tourist shops, liven up these houses built since the start of the last century and contributed to the urban development of Amman.

The Roman, Byzantine and Islamic monuments that are located in downtown further transformed the uses of buildings into commercial projects that meet the needs of tourists who visit Jordan to view its ancient features. The most prominent of which are the remains of the ancient city of Philadelphia such as the Roman Theater, the Odeon Theatre, the Nymphaeum and the Citadel with its Byzantine, Roman and Islamic monuments, for instance the Umayyad Mosque. — KUNA



### Conjuring up magic at a Budapest kindergarten

An inner-city neighborhood in Budapest is tapping into the legacy of a famous magician born in the area over a century ago to help immigrant children integrate at kindergarten. The eighth district is one of the poorest in the Hungarian capital, home to ethnic Romas, Asians filling labor shortages, as well as Middle Eastern and African immigrants and middle-class Hungarian families.

Around one in 10 children in district kindergartens are not native Hungarian speakers but local officials have conjured up a plan to address that. Their answer? Calling in award-winning professional magician Botond Kelle to help show staff

simple tricks to teach five- and six-year-olds. "When the kids do the tricks themselves, they practice the names of colors for example, and how to perform and



Children practicing magic tricks at the Viragoszoru (Flower Garland) kindergarten in Budapest, Hungary.

speak in Hungarian," Kelle tells AFP. With its 44-letter alphabet and no fewer than 35 verb endings, Hungarian is a notoriously tough language to crack. "Magic is an international language that seriously develops communication," says local council employee Gabor Bernath, who came up with the project.



This photo shows children enjoying the Christmas show of a magician at the Viragoszoru (Flower Garland) Kindergarten in Budapest, Hungary.

**'Pearl merchant'**  
At the Viragoszoru (Flower Garland) kindergarten on the ground floor of a tower block, 39-year-old Kelle regularly pops in. "They (the kids) can feel themselves as magicians, it gives them a great sense of achievement," he adds. Afterwards, Kelle dazzles his young audience of Chinese, Hungarian and Vietnamese children with a Christmas show. To delighted gasps and shrieks, he changes Rudolf's nose from blue to red.

Then he transforms a sheet of paper into falling snow, before magically coloring in a Santa Claus picture, with the help of a puzzled volunteer. The project's launch has been timed to commemorate internationally renowned magician Rodolfo, who was born into poverty in the same neighborhood 111 years ago and who died in 1983.

"Rodolfo learned his first trick from a grateful Chinese pearl merchant whom he rescued from drowning in the river Danube," Bernath said. "When Chinese kids hear that, they are even more enchanted by the magic." Famed escape artist and magician Harry Houdini was also born in Budapest in 1874, before he and

his family moved to the United States when he was a boy.

**'Extra energy'**  
Kelle, who has performed across Hungary for over 10 years, says one of the children's favourite tricks is making a red ball vanish, then reappear in a vase. "It's an easy trick," says Kelle. "But to perform it, kids have to know what to do in a certain order and think about what the audience experiences, so it is quite complex," he adds. "For some, the performance part is more difficult, for others the trick mechanics are more 'tricky,'" he laughs.

Child development specialist Valeria Toth, 54, admits she was "sceptical" at first, not least about her own ability to learn magic tricks. But she says, she now "smuggles" elements of magic into all her development classes.

"I saw how well these tricks can be used to develop abilities like motor skills, self-control, logical thinking," Toth told AFP. "It literally brings magic into children's lives, and an extra energy to teaching." — AFP



Picture shows professional magician Botond Kelle (left) and child development specialist Valeria Toth during an AFP interview at the Viragoszoru (Flower Garland) kindergarten in Budapest, Hungary.



In this file photo British director Mike Hodges poses for portraits during the 2004 Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah. — AFP

### 'Flash Gordon' director Mike Hodges dies aged 90

Mike Hodges, the British director of gritty 1970s crime drama "Get Carter" and 1980 film "Flash Gordon", has died at the age of 90, media reported Wednesday. He passed away last Saturday at home in Dorset, southwest England, his long-time friend and producer Mike Kaplan told The Guardian and US trade publication Variety.

Hodges first shot to recognition writing and directing 1971 British gangster film "Get Carter", which also helped establish Michael Caine as an emerging acting star. Both men immediately collaborated again in the 1972 comedy thriller "Pulp".

Eight years later Hodges directed arguably his biggest film, "Flash Gordon", about the comic-strip character created in the 1930s. Other notable credits during his decades-spanning career include "The Terminal Man" (1974), "Croupier" (1998) and his final feature film, 2003's "I'll Sleep When I'm Dead". British writer and broadcaster Matthew Sweet was among those who paid tribute to Hodges. "A true master. A furious restless talent. An unassailable body of work. Loved the films. Loved the man," he tweeted. — AFP

## Sports

# United advance into League Cup quarters; Charlton stun Brighton

## Rashford marked his return from World Cup duty with a brilliant solo goal

### News in brief

#### Poland coach sacked

**WARSAW:** Czeslaw Michniewicz has been sacked as Poland coach following a last-16 appearance at the World Cup in Qatar, the Polish Football Federation (PZPN) announced on Thursday. Poland finished second in their group, beating Saudi Arabia, drawing with Mexico and losing to eventual champions Argentina. In the last 16 for the first time in 36 years, they went out after a tame 3-1 defeat at the hands of eventual runners up France. "Czeslaw Michniewicz will cease to occupy the position of coach of the national team on December 31, 2022," the PZPN said in a statement. Heavily panned at home for Poland's approach during the tournament, Michniewicz was further criticized by the PZPN for a "lack of vision on the functioning and the future of the team". The federation said it would "soon" start the search for a new coach. Appointed in January 2022, the 52-year-old Michniewicz replaced the Portuguese Paulo Sousa who left suddenly for Brazil to take the reins at Flamengo.

#### Arsenal demolish Zurich

**PARIS:** Arsenal demolished Zurich 9-1 in the Women's Champions League on Wednesday as Lyon grabbed the last place in the quarter-finals with a 0-0 draw at Juventus. Norwegian international Frida Maanum hit a hat-trick for 2007 champions Arsenal with Caitlin Foord and Swedish star Stina Blackstenius both claiming two goals apiece. Kim Little, with a penalty, and Japan's Mana Iwabuchi completed the rout for Arsenal who finished top of Group C with 13 points from six games. The London side could easily have finished with double figures, ending the game in Switzerland with 36 attempts on goal, 15 of which were on target. Defending champions Lyon, who have won the continental crown on eight occasions, only needed a point in Italy to move into the last eight.

#### Mbappe returns to training

**PARIS:** France star Kylian Mbappe returned to training with Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday just three days after he ended up on the losing side despite scoring a hat-trick in the World Cup final. The 24-year-old cast a despondent figure in the aftermath of France's loss to Argentina-led by his PSG team-mate Lionel Messi in a penalty shootout, despite his goals twice bringing the 2018 champions level. However, although PSG players have been given 10 days off Mbappe was pictured at the French champions training ground. "Kylian Mbappe returned to training on Wednesday," tweeted PSG. Mbappe, who finished top scorer at the World Cup with eight goals, was not expected back till January and PSG did not say whether he would be available for selection for their Ligue 1 match with Strasbourg on December 28. His return to training comes the day after a documentary on France's campaign shows Mbappe giving his team-mates a rousing half-time talk in Sunday's final following a limp first-half which saw them trail 2-0.

#### England recall Archer

**LONDON:** Jofra Archer is poised to make an eagerly-anticipated England comeback in the new year after being named Thursday in a 14-strong squad for a three-match one-day international series in South Africa. Sussex fast bowler Archer made a dramatic entry onto the international stage in 2019 when he became one of the stars of England's 50-over World Cup triumph. But he has not played international cricket since March 2021 due to injury. The 27-year-old Barbados-born quick suffered several elbow problems, which led to two operations, before his hopes of a return to action were dashed by a stress fracture of the lower back in May that ruled him out of the 2022 English season. Archer, however, played for the second-string England Lions in a warm-up match against the Test side in Abu Dhabi last month ahead of the senior team's 3-0 whitewash of Pakistan. Just six balls into the practice match, Archer hit Zak Crawley on the helmet with a bouncer.

#### Williams accepts wildcards

**WELLINGTON:** Venus Williams will roll back the years next month, with the 42-year-old accepting wildcards to play in the main draws of both the Australian Open and the Auckland WTA tournaments, it was announced Wednesday. The seven-time Grand Slam champion, who last took the court at September's US Open playing doubles with her sister Serena, will be in the singles field in Auckland ahead of the Australian Open, which starts January 16. It will mark Venus Williams's 22nd appearance at Melbourne Park, where she made her Australian Open debut 25 years ago and reached the finals in 2003 and 2017. Her most recent appearance was a second-round exit in 2021. "I am very excited to be returning to Melbourne to compete at the Australian Open," Williams said in a statement. — From AFP

**LONDON:** Marcus Rashford marked his return from World Cup duty with a brilliant solo goal as Manchester United advanced into the quarter-finals of the League Cup on Wednesday with a 2-0 win over Burnley while Premier League rivals Brighton were knocked out by third-tier Charlton. United's first game since the World Cup was also their first since Cristiano Ronaldo's dramatic departure from Old Trafford and an announcement by owners the Glazer family that they were prepared to sell the football giants. The Red Devils went ahead in the 27th minute through a close-range finish from Denmark's Christian Eriksen, who also featured at Qatar 2022.

Rashford, who scored three goals for England at the World Cup, doubled United's lead against second-tier Championship leaders Burnley, managed by former Manchester City star Vincent Kompany, just before the hour mark in superb style. The England forward went on a run from inside his own half and into the visitors' box before drilling a shot low into the net. "There is space in front of you and you're almost waiting for the right time to get a pass off but the gap opened and thankfully it went in," Rashford told Sky Sports.

#### 'No time to feel sorry'

This was Rashford's first match since England's agonizing World Cup quarter-final loss to France, with the forward saying: "It was such a disappointing feeling to be knocked out and you have to pick yourselves up. "There is no time to feel sorry for yourself. You need to pick up results and thankfully we did that today." United manager Erik ten Hag added: "There is still room for improvement but I am pleased with the win. "The players are hungry after the World Cup break." Burnley boss Kompany was proud of his side's performance, saying: "We didn't roll over, we were aggressive, we were on front foot, we created some chances." Brighton bowed out on spot-kicks three days after their Argentina star Alexis Mac Allister won the World Cup with Argentina in a penalty shoot-out.

Mac Allister was not involved on Wednesday after



**MANCHESTER:** Manchester United's English striker Marcus Rashford (left) shoots and scores his team second goal during the English League Cup fourth round football match between Manchester United and Burnley, at Old Trafford on December 21, 2022. — AFP

being given time off following his World Cup heroics and was thus spared any involvement away to south-east London side Charlton. A goalless draw saw the game go to penalties, with an extraordinary shoot-out starting with Pascal Gross, Jayden Stockley and Leandro Trossard all hitting the woodwork. Brighton keeper Jason Steele saved from George Dobson and Jesurun Rak-Sakyi. That left Solly March with the chance to win the game but the Seagulls star shot high over the crossbar.

Addicks goalkeeper Ashley Maynard-Brewer then saved Moises Caicedo's penalty, with Sam Lavelle scoring the decisive goal at The Valley as League One Charlton booked their place in the quarter-finals with a 4-3 shoot-out win. "I'm sorry for the result and sorry for our fans, we wanted to win the game and play in the quarter-finals," said Brighton manager

Roberto De Zerbi. "We had opportunities to score. And in penalties you can lose." Charlton interim boss Anthony Hayes, in charge of his last match before Dean Holden, the club's fifth manager in less than two years, takes over, said: "It was a special night. It gives everyone a lift."

Nottingham Forest, four-time winners of the League Cup, had no such problems against lower league opposition, the top-flight strugglers defeating Championship high-flyers Blackburn Rovers 4-1. Forest went ahead at Ewood Park through Brennan Johnson's 13th-minute penalty before Scott Wharton made amends for conceding the spot-kick by equalizing on the stroke of half-time. But further goals from Jesse Lingard, Taiwo Awoniyi and Johnson again took Forest into the quarter-finals for the first time since 1994. — AFP

## Tomoooh Sports Club in Oman

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Tomoooh Sports Club left for Oman to participate in the Oman Para Athletics Meeting. The event is organized by Oman Paralympic Committee under the supervision of the International Paralympic Committee from December 21-December 26. Chairwoman of Tomoooh, head of the delegation said the participation is at the invitation of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) and is considered a quality move in the club's athletics participations. She said that this is an opportunity to interact with other international athletes as eight clubs, representing six countries will be participating with their best in addition to the host country Oman. Assistant Sports Manager Hanan Al-Zayed said the players prepared well through training programs, in addition to several local and foreign participations.



## Tadhamon Futsal Team and Fatat Club face off

**KUWAIT:** Tadhamon Women Futsal team will meet Fatat Club on Saturday in the seventh round of URC league. The match will be preceded by that of Kuwait and Fatayat Al-Oyoun. Fatat lead the standings with 15 points on goal difference with Tadhamon. Saturday's match may decide the sole lead. The two teams have met twice - Fatat won 5-1 in the third round, then Tadhamon avenged the loss with a 4-2 win in the fourth round.



## Arab Masters: Al-Salali stuns Mansouri

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The second day of the 2nd Arab Masters Tennis Masters Tournament held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex was full of surprises, as top seed, Tunisian Iskander Mansouri, was stunned by Egypt's Akram Mohammed Al-Salali in three sets 1/6-6/3-6/7. Moroccan Yassine Dlimi had an easy win over Bahrain's Fares Abdelkareem 6/0-6/0 in the first group.

In the second group, Kuwait's Bader Al-Abdullah lost to Jordan's Mousa Alkotop in a hard fought match 3/6-6/7, while Lebanon's Benjamin Hassan defeated Saudi Arabia's Amar Alhagabani 6/2-6/1 and Egypt's Mohammed Safwat defeated Algeria's Toufik Sahtali 6/3-6/4. Essa Qabazard of Kuwait lost to Lebanon's Hassan Ibrahim 3/6-4/6 in third group, as Kuwait's Yaqoub Mohammad lost to seventh seed Tunisian Mohamed Oukaa 3/6-1/6. Jordan's Abedallah Shelbayeh beat Saudi Arabia's Saud Alhagabani 6/0-6/0.



Akram Al-Salali



Ali Al-Shatti

The fourth group saw Kuwait's Ali Al-Shatti lose to second seed Tunisian Aziz Dougaz 1/6-1/6, while Egypt's Kareem Maamoun defeated Algeria's Rayan Dylan 6/0-6/3 and Moroccan Walid Ahouda defeated Syrian Yacoub Makzoume 6/3-6/4. Kuwait Tennis Federation Board Member and Treasurer Ali Al-Daihani lauded the high technical levels Arab players are showing so far, adding "current tournament revealed a notable improvement at the technical level for many players, and this indicates Arab

federations care for the game".

Daihani said the second Arab masters tournament has a good number of young tennis players participating, which also indicates the increased popularity of the game in many Arab countries. Tunisian player Mansouri spoke about the tough competition, adding the players' levels are close to each other, adding this is the first time he played in Kuwait and was impressed with the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex.

Sports

# Qatar World Cup promotes and showcases Arab culture

## Football fiesta created an atmosphere for peace

By Faten Omar

DOHA: Selecting Qatar to host the FIFA World Cup 2022 was a successful choice. Fans from around the world praised the presence of Arab culture and were surprised to learn that Arab stereotyping is false and prejudiced and fabricated by haters. Argentinean Juli Ledezma told Kuwait Times the atmosphere was heartwarming. She loved seeing people from different parts of the world coming together and showing admiration, respect and love to one another.

"The World Cup in Qatar was a wonderful opportunity for Arab culture to be showcased around the world. It allowed Arabs to present themselves to the world, away from prejudices and unjust criticisms against Qatar and the region in general," she said. Ledezma stressed Qatar's organization of the World Cup will have an impact on the competition in future host countries. "The organization by Qatar will leave a legacy in the competition. It also allowed people to understand what Qatar is."

Alejandro Salvino, who also attended the first Argentina game against Saudi Arabia, came from Madrid to watch his country Argentina win the World Cup. He praised Qatar's organization and how it made transportation free. "Everyone who visited Qatar will return to their countries and relay to their families and friends the truth about the Arab world. They will brag about the sights they saw in Qatar, and the last thing they will talk about is football," he said.

Argentinean Matias Villarruel came to Qatar with his friends by bike from Cape Town to attend the

World Cup. They got tickets for the match at the last minute. "We are travelers who came to Doha riding bicycles. We started our journey in Cape Town, and rode 10 thousand kilometers across countries," he said. He praised the people of Qatar and how generous they are. "This trip was on a budget, and people here helped us a lot with accommodation and food. The people are very friendly."

Qataris put on a well-organized tournament. Filiamas Veritas, retired journalist and media consultant in the US, told Kuwait Times. She said Qatar organized the best World Cup. "I have covered a lot of such events, and I think this is the best organized World Cup that I have seen in more than the 10 World Cups I have covered. I'm so proud of the people of Qatar and what they have accomplished for the World Cup, not just for the Arab region but for the entire world. They have brought people together. They have created a great atmosphere for peace all around the world," she said.

"We are feeling very sad about the end of the World Cup. We had the best organized World Cup," said Hamad, a Qatari. "I am originally from Qatar and I'm really happy to see these kinds of interactions with fans with our culture. Reality is so much different than what the media says. The truth always reveals itself against hypocrisy," he said.

"We were glad to have the chance to meet different people, who introduced us to different cultures, beliefs and races. I attended several matches around the world, and I never seen the vibe of celebrations, even from the teams that lost. I think it's because there was no alcohol, people are sober and



LUSAIL: A France supporter (right) with the France national flag and the FIFA World Cup Trophy painted on his face cheers during the Qatar 2022 World Cup final football match between Argentina and France at Lusail Stadium. —AFP

enjoying themselves. I hope FIFA considers banning alcohol inside stadiums. People are safer and many are enjoying," Hamad added.

Meanwhile, an employee at Doha International Airport said the decision to take the World Cup to Qatar upturned the small nation, expressing sadness

for not having more interactions with fans from around the world. He added he is proud of Qatar for welcoming all visitors from around the world with an open heart, hoping for a beginning of a change and a start to bringing Western countries closer to Arab countries and respecting cultures.

## Aborted WCup bus parade a snapshot of charm and vice

BUENOS AIRES: Millions of Argentines who crammed the streets of Buenos Aires to celebrate an unforgettable moment with Lionel Messi and his World Cup winning teammates instead found themselves at a giant party bereft of its hallmark bus parade. Friends, families, even rival fans traveled from across the country to the capital to bask in the glory of a first world title in 36 years.

Yet most ended up missing the main show after the chaotic bus trip was aborted nearly five hours after it began, with police deciding it could not go on for security reasons. Despite the disappointment, the festivities continued for many, with the day becoming an exhibition of Argentines' effervescent passion for football. With almost everyone dressed in the team's distinctive blue and white jersey on a baking hot day, a unified presence masked the deep social fissures and economic inequality of a country grappling with years of financial turmoil.

It was an unprecedented party with an estimated five to six million people taking to the streets of Buenos Aires. "I can't explain this (feeling) with words but with emotion," Paola Zattera, 43, who works in administration, told AFP. She was six years old the last time there was a World Cup victory parade in Buenos Aires, when the late Diego Maradona was the people's champion. She said she "didn't understand much" about what was going on back then but this time was determined to make the most of it. "I don't care if I only see them from afar. I'm here and this is historic!"



BUENOS AIRES: Fans of Argentina wait for the bus with Argentina's players to pass through the Obelisk to celebrate after winning the Qatar 2022 World Cup tournament in Buenos Aires. —AFP

### 'We can't organize anything'

From early morning there was a constant swarm of people flowing down every road leading to the iconic Obelisk monument in central Buenos Aires, where the World Cup winners were due to end their 30-kilometer (18-mile) victory parade. The fans had come from far and wide.

"We made the decision yesterday at five o'clock in the afternoon. We booked a hotel at the Obelisk and got on an airplane at four in the morning," 42-year-old night club owner Cristina Vazquez, from the southern tourist hub of Bariloche, told AFP. "We're from Rosario, Messi's city," said merchant

Luciano Peralta, 41, referring to the star's hometown some 300 kilometers northwest of the capital. "There is hope at every World Cup but this team is very close to the Argentine people who identify a lot with them."

People from every walk of life mingled among the heaving crowds that even included families with small children and babies. It was one party no one was prepared to miss, even after celebrating long into the night on Sunday after Argentina won the World Cup by beating France on penalties. And yet, as so often before in Argentina, there was a sting in the tail. —AFP

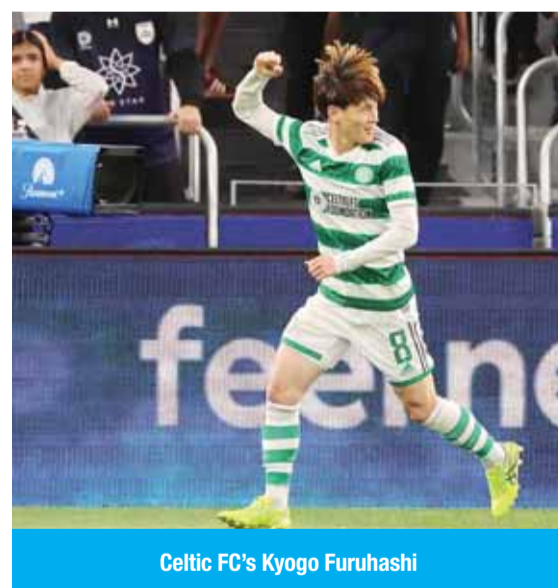
## Furuhashi strikes as Celtic go nine points clear

GLASGOW: Kyogo Furuhashi scored the winner as Celtic defeated Livingston 2-1 on Wednesday to restore their nine-point lead at the top of the Scottish Premiership. The Japan striker was on target at the end of the first half after the champions had taken the lead at Parkhead through an own goal from Ayo Obileye. But first-half stoppage time saw Livingston captain Nicky Devlin pull a goal back in his 100th Premiership appearance. Celtic dominated the first half but were less fluent after the interval, although Liel Abada, who set up both their goals, had a goal disallowed after a lengthy VAR review.

Hoops manager Ange Postecoglou was left frus-

trated by his side's failure to kill off the game. "I thought the performance wasn't one of our best," he told the BBC. "The first half was OK-but I'm disappointed that we had balls across the box and we didn't have bodies in those areas." The Australian added: "At 2-0 the game should have been over for us. When you're faced with teams sitting back you've got to find ways of getting in behind."

Celtic went ahead in the 23rd minute when Abada's powerful centre deflected off Obileye's knee and flew into the roof of the net from six yards out. Furuhashi had two shots saved before he doubled the lead, the forward getting ahead of Obileye to turn in a low cross from Israeli star Abada for his 12th goal of the season. Livingston, however, stunned the home crowd when, barely 90 seconds later, Devlin, capitalizing on hesitancy in the Celtic defense, poked the ball past former England goalkeeper Joe Hart. Former Rangers midfielder Stephen Kelly nearly equalized with a well-struck volley from 20 yards, his shot producing an acrobatic save from Hart. —AFP



Celtic FC's Kyogo Furuhashi

## Audit: Tokyo Games cost 20% more than organizer reported

TOKYO: Last year's pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics cost 20 percent more than the final figure reported by the organizing committee, according to an analysis by Japan's audit board. A report issued late Wednesday found the Games cost 1.7 trillion yen (\$12.9 billion), up from the 1.42 trillion yen reported by Tokyo 2020 earlier this year.

The audit board said organizers had incorrectly failed to include some Olympic-linked government spending on items including anti-doping measures, athlete training, Japanese food at the athletes village and the Olympic stadium. And its report urged the government in the future to "reveal the total costs in a timely manner when it is substantially involved in a major event." The 2013 bid for the Tokyo Games estimated the event would cost just 734 billion yen, but costs gradually ballooned, with a pandemic postponement adding to the bill.

Asked about the costs Thursday, government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters "the government takes the points raised seriously and will respond appropriately", without offering details. The Games were held a year later than planned because of the pandemic - the first Olympics postponed in peacetime - and spectators were banned from nearly all events, which were held under strict COVID-19 countermeasures. Japanese prosecutors are currently investigating a string of bid-rigging allegations associated with sponsorship deals at the Tokyo Games.

On Thursday, a former executive of a major clothing company appeared in court on allegations of bribing a Tokyo 2020 official and admitted offering money to secure sponsorship rights for his firm, national broadcaster NHK said. The corruption scandal has cast a shadow over the northern city of Sapporo's bid for the 2030 Winter Olympics. Officials there this week announced they would stop holding promotional events for the bid and now hold a nationwide poll to gauge support. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Kaizen center	25716707
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Rawda	22517733
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Adaliya	22517144
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Khaldiya	24848075
Chest Hospital	24849400	Kaifan	24849807
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Shamiya	24848913
Adan Hospital	23940620	Shuwaikh	24814507
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Nuzha	22526804
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9		

### Clinics

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, ABDUL KHADER holder of Indian Passport No. Z3284430 having permanent address Telangana India 500005, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: Abdul Khader Omer and Surname: Bawazeer. (C#2823)

I, Ahla Haroon Rasheed D/o Haroon Rasheed from India, Kerala, Thrissur, 680616 have changed the surname of my minor daughter from ZAIRA FEDIL KAREEM (of Passport No. V9363964) to ZAIRA SHAAZ AHLA and she shall hereafter be known as ZAIRA SHAAZ AHLA. (C#2824) - 23-12-2022

I, Aryan Ajeshkumar viswanathan holder of Indian Passport No: S9920926 (A1ackel vadakkathil, Njakkanel p.o, krishnapuram, kollam, Kerala, India) residing in Kuwait at present, hereby change my name as Aryan Ajesh (C#2821) - 21-12-2022

Emergency 112

## Cavs thump Bucks, Raptors end Knicks' winning streak

### Dosunmu shines as Bulls down Hawks 110-108

**MIAMI:** Giannis Antetokounmpo scored a season high 45 points and grabbed 14 rebounds but couldn't stop his Eastern Conference leading Milwaukee Bucks from falling to a 114-106 defeat to the Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday. Cleveland had lost their previous two meetings with the Bucks this season but with Donovan Mitchell scoring 36 points they delivered a strong fourth quarter to ensure victory. Mitchell was 15 of 16 at the free throw line, including nine of nine in the fourth, but was also ably supported by 23 points from Darius Garland and 19 points from Jarrett Allen.

The Cavaliers are 16-2 on home court, the best record in the NBA. "We needed it," said Allen, "We lost on their court twice and we needed to show them that we are here to play," he added. Those two defeats had seen Cleveland fade in the third quarter and Allen said it was crucial that they stayed on top of their game throughout. "That gives us a lot of satisfaction, we didn't let the third quarter stop

Dosunmu grabbed the rebound and won the second straight game for Chicago. DeRozan had 28 points for Chicago, who had let an 18 point lead slip, while Trae Young topped scoring for Atlanta with 34 points. The Brooklyn Nets produced the third biggest first half tally in NBA history as they led defending champions the Golden State Warriors 91-51 at the interval before going on to win 143-113.

The Nets' seventh straight win adds to the misery for the depleted Warriors who lost by 38 points to the New York Knicks on Tuesday and were again without Stephen Curry. Kevin Durant top scored for Brooklyn with 23 points and the Nets had nine players make double figures, allowing them to cope with the absence of Kyrie Irving who was ruled out with calf tightness. The Boston Celtics, second in the East, have now lost five of their last six games, including three straight defeats after losing 117-112 at home to the Indiana Pacers.

Jayson Tatum put up 41 points for the Celtics but the Pacers, who had opened up a 30 point lead in the second quarter, were able to hold on for the win with Tyrese Haliburton scoring 33 points. The Orlando Magic made it seven wins out of eight as they came back from 15 points down in the second half to beat the Rockets 116-110 in Houston. German Franz Wagner scored 25 points for the Magic with rookie Paolo Banchero putting up 23 points and claiming 13 rebounds.

us, we came out and attacked, defended and did it all," he said.

In New York, the Knicks' eight game winning streak came to an end with a surprise 113-106 loss at home to the Toronto Raptors. Pascal Siakam enjoyed a career high 52 points as the Raptors tasted victory after six straight losses. "It felt good to win," said Cameroonian Siakam, "It didn't matter if it was on the road or at home we just wanted a win," he said. "We have been going through a tough time and now the most important thing is to build on it," he added.

There was late drama in Atlanta where Ayo Dosunmu's buzzer-beating lay-up gave the Chicago Bulls a 110-108 win over the Hawks. Demar DeRozan missed from the left but

#### NBA's Curry relieved

In another development, four-time NBA champion Stephen Curry said he was relieved that he won't need surgery on his partially dislocated left shoulder, but had no timetable for his return. Curry suffered the injury when he tried to make a steal during the reigning NBA champion Golden State Warriors' 125-119 loss at Indiana on Wednesday. An MRI showed the extent of the damage and confirmed he would not need an operation to repair the shoulder. "From what I know about shoulder injuries and situations like that, avoiding surgery is great news," Curry said. "I'll try to figure out how to get pain-free quickly, get the strength back and work my way back into it appropriately." The 34-year-old superstar guard, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player, said he would have missed at least the remainder of the season if surgery had been required. "Surgery would have been four to six months," Curry said. "Nobody was trying to deal with that right now." Curry will be sidelined indefinitely as he prepares for rehabilitation work to begin once his shoulder no longer hurts. "I've just got to trust the plan we have and do my work," Curry said. — AFP

### Pele's cancer worsens



**SAO PAULO:** In this file photo, Brazilian football legend Pele kisses a ball, during a presentation in Leipzig. — AFP

**SAO PAULO:** The hospital treating Brazilian football great Pele announced a "progression" Wednesday in his cancer, as well as kidney and heart problems. Pele, 82, is being treated in the general ward but "requires greater care related to renal and cardiac dysfunctions," said the Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo. Considered by many to be the greatest footballer of all time, Pele was hospitalized in Sao Paulo on November 29 for what his medical team called a re-evaluation of his chemotherapy treatments, which he has been receiving since having surgery to remove a colon tumor in September 2021.

Doctors have also diagnosed Pele - whose real name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento - with a respiratory infection. Earlier this month, Pele's daughters Kely Nascimento and Flavia Arantes sought to reassure fans about his health, denying reports that Pele had been placed in end-of-life care. "Edson Arantes do Nascimento presents cancer disease progression and requires greater care related to renal and cardiac dysfunctions" a hospital statement said Wednesday.

He was not in intensive care, it added. Just minutes after the hospital announcement, Nascimento and Arantes said on Instagram their father would not be home for Christmas. "Our Christmas at home has been suspended," they wrote. "We decided with the doctors that, for various reasons, it would be better for us to stay here with all the care that this new family at Einstein gives us!"

Pele scored more than 1,000 goals in one of the most storied careers in sport. He is the only player in history to win three World Cups (1958, 1962 and 1970). "The King" has been in fragile health in recent years, and his public appearances have grown rare. But he remains active on social media. He posted regularly online during the Qatar World Cup, including a message of support to Brazil star Neymar after the "Selecao" crashed out of the tournament in a quarter-final loss to Croatia. — AFP

Ayo Dosunmu #12 of the Chicago Bulls

### Messi agrees to stay at PSG

**PARIS:** Lionel Messi will celebrate his World Cup triumph by agreeing to stay at Paris Saint-Germain, local media claimed Wednesday, as he attempts to steer the French side to an elusive Champions League title. The 35-year-old, who led Argentina to victory in the World Cup final against France in Qatar last weekend, will pen a one-season extension to his current deal in the French capital which expires in the summer. Le Parisian and RMC Sport reported that Messi will sit down with PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi and other top club officials when he returns after his World Cup break.

Messi joined PSG in 2021 on a two-season deal with an option for another year after having spent his entire professional career with Barcelona. The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner collected four Champions League titles in 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2015 in Spain as well as 10 La Liga crowns. On Sunday, he inspired Argentina to a penalty shootout win over France in the World Cup final after the epic match had finished 3-3 in extra-time. Messi, named player of the tournament, scored twice in the game with PSG teammate Kylian Mbappe grabbing a hat-trick for France.

#### Guardiola salutes

Meanwhile, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola paid tribute to Julian Alvarez and Lionel Messi following Argentina's World Cup triumph. City

striker Alvarez was a central figure as Argentina won the World Cup for the first time since 1986, with Sunday's dramatic penalty shoot-out win over France in an outstanding final in Qatar representing the summit of a brilliant career for Messi, who enjoyed club success under Guardiola at Barcelona.

Former City defender Nicolas Otamendi was also a member of Argentina's victorious team, with Guardiola saying Wednesday: "For Julian, we are delighted. He played a lot and his contribution was amazing for the team, for the way they played. We have a world champion in our team." "We are incredibly happy for him. Congratulations to him, for Nico Otamendi and, of course, personally for Leo Messi, for Argentina as a country, well deserved champions." Messi's performance cemented his place as one of the greatest players in football history, not that Guardiola, who twice won the Champions League with him at Barcelona, needed any additional proof.

"Everyone has an opinion but nobody can doubt he's there. I've said many times, for me, he's the best," he said. "It is difficult to understand how a player can appear and do what he's done in the last 10-15 years." "The people who saw Pele or (Alfredo) Di Stefano, or (Diego) Maradona - they can say their favorites." "In these opinions, they can have a sentimental approach. "If he (Messi) had not won the World Cup, my opinion about what he has done for world football would not change, but it is normal for people that it depends on if they win. "For him it is the final achievement of an incredible career."

#### City tackle Liverpool

City returned to action following the World Cup break with a League Cup quarter-final at home to



**BUENOS AIRES:** Argentina's Lionel Messi (left) holds the FIFA World Cup Trophy as the team parades on board a bus after winning the Qatar 2022 World Cup tournament in downtown Buenos Aires. — AFP

trophy holders Liverpool on Thursday. The last encounter between the Premier League rivals in October led to several unsavoury incidents on and off the field. Leading figures have since tried to dampen down the tensions that have surfaced in recent seasons when both clubs have been vying to be crowned champions of England.

Guardiola, asked if he had a message for the fans, also told a pre-match press conference on Wednesday: "Be supporters and support your

team unconditionally in the good moments and bad moments." City had 16 players away at the World Cup. Ilkay Gundogan and Kevin De Bruyne played in a friendly against Girona last week but Rodri, Aymeric Laporte, Nathan Ake and Manuel Akanji have only been back in training a few days. Those involved with England and Portugal, along with goalkeeper Ederson, were due to report back later, while Alvarez will not return to action until next week. — AFP