



**3** Kuwait welcomes Russia and Ukraine deal on grain exports



**5** Trump, Pence hold dueling rallies as rivalry intensifies



**5** Armed groups battle in Tripoli, killing 16



**16** Kuwait 1st International Boxing Championship



# Minister Al-Mousa vows 'no cover up' of public fund crimes

## Government, private sectors urged to increase number of Kuwaiti staff



Ali Al-Mousa

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Public Works Ali Al-Mousa commented on reports that the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) has referred two ranking officials at the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) to the Public Prosecution. "There will be no cover up of any suspected crime of encroachment on public funds regardless of the suspect's position," Mousa said in a statement Saturday. "We will continue to support efforts that protect state and citizens' rights and public funds."

Nazaha referred ranking officials and other

staffers of PAAAFR to the Public Prosecution under graft charges. The defendants are accused of violating articles 9 and 10 of Act No 1 (1993) on protection of public funds, and are suspected of committing the crime of counterfeiting stipulated in Act 2 (2016) and its executive statutes on the founding of PAAAFR, according to a statement from Nazaha. The anti-graft agency reaffirmed its resolve to pursue thoroughly the investigations into all serious reports of graft and protect the safety of reporters with a view to ensuring full protection of public funds.

### Kuwaitization policy

In another development, the Council of Ministers has asked government entities to increase the number of citizens working in 18 economic sectors where Kuwaitis are present in small numbers. Despite the importance of these sectors economically, the percentage of citizens remains less than seven percent of total expat employees.

The council has warned against the continuation of this unsustainable situation as it will create a serious flaw in the employment situation in Kuwait. This

Continued on Page 6

## WHO triggers highest alert on monkeypox

**GENEVA:** The World Health Organization on Saturday declared the monkeypox outbreak, which has affected nearly 16,000 people in 72 countries, to be a global health emergency - the highest alarm it can sound. "I have decided that the global #monkeypox outbreak represents a public health emergency of international concern," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a press conference.



**FLORIDA:** A healthcare worker prepares to administer a vaccine to a person for the prevention of monkeypox during a vaccination event at the Pride Center in Wilton Manors, Florida. — AFP

He said a committee of experts who met on Thursday was unable to reach a consensus, so it fell on him to decide whether to trigger the highest alert possible. "WHO's assessment is that the risk of monkeypox is moderate globally and in all regions, except in the European region where we assess the risk as high," he added. Monkeypox has affected over 15,800 people in 72 countries, according to a tally by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published on July 20.

A surge in monkeypox infections has been reported since early May outside the West and Central African countries where the disease has long been endemic. On June 23, the WHO convened an emergency committee (EC) of experts to decide if monkeypox constitutes a so-called Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) - the UN health agency's highest alert level.

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## More than 20 killed in south Iran floods

**TEHRAN:** Flooding in southern Iran has killed at least 21 people and left others missing following heavy rainfall in the largely arid country, state media reported on Saturday. "Twenty-one people were killed and two are still missing," in the floods that affected several towns in and around Estahban county in the southern province of Fars. Hossein Darvishi, provincial head of the Red Crescent Society, was quoted as saying by state TV.

Videos posted on local media and social media showed cars caught in the rising waters of the Roodball river and carried away while parents tried to rescue their children from the vehicles. The governor of Estahban, Yousef Kargar, said "around 5:00 pm yesterday, heavy rains... in the central parts of Estahban County led to flooding," according to state news agency IRNA. Estahban is 174 kilometers east of the provincial capital Shiraz. The tragedy happened on a summer weekend in Iran, when families tend to head to cooler areas such as riversides, lakesides and valleys.

## Russian missiles hit Odessa port, key to grain deal

**KYIV:** Russian missiles struck Ukraine's key Black Sea port of Odessa Saturday, officials said, in an attack Kyiv described as a "spit in the face" of a deal signed by the warring neighbors a day earlier to resume grain exports blocked by the conflict. Two cruise missiles hit terminal infrastructure, regional authorities said on social media, casting a shadow over the landmark agreement hammered out over months of negotiations aimed at relieving a global food crisis caused by stalled deliveries that sent wheat prices tumbling.

"The Russian missile (strike) is (Russian President) Vladimir Putin's spit in the face of

## Outrage as reporter sneaks into Makkah

**RIYADH:** A Saudi who allegedly helped a non-Muslim enter the holy city of Makkah has been arrested, police in the kingdom said, after online backlash against a journalist from Zionist entity. The journalist, Gil Tamary of Zionist Channel 13, on Monday posted a Twitter video of himself sneaking into Makkah, Islam's holiest city, in defiance of a ban on non-Muslims.

"A number of local people and sightseers (from other areas) who had gone to the riverside and were present in the river bed were caught in the flood due to the rise in the water level," Kargar added. Iran has endured repeated droughts over the past decade, but also regular floods, a phenomenon made worse when torrential rain falls on sun-baked earth. Photos released by Iran's Red Crescent Society showed rescuers walking on cracked dry soil while others worked among reeds.

In 2019, heavy inundations in the country's south left at least 76 people dead and caused damage estimated at more than \$2 billion. In January two people were initially reported killed in flash flooding in Fars when heavy rains hit the area, but the toll rose to at least eight there and elsewhere in Iran's south. Scientists say climate change amplifies extreme weather, including droughts as well as the potential for the increased intensity of rain storms.

### Drying up

Like other nearby countries, Iran has suffered chronic dry spells and heat waves for years, and these are expected to worsen. In the last few months, demonstrations have occurred against the drying up of rivers, particularly in central and south-western Iran. Last November, tens of thousands of people gathered in the parched riverbed of the country's Zayandeh Rood

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Turkish President Recep (Tayyip) Erdogan, who made enormous efforts to reach an agreement," said foreign ministry spokesman Oleg Nikolenko. The first major accord between the countries since the February invasion of Ukraine aims to ease the "acute hunger" that the United Nations says faces an additional 47 million people because of the war. Nikolenko said Russia would bear "full responsibility for deepening the global food crisis" if the agreement were jeopardized by the assault.

"The enemy attacked the Odessa sea port with Kalibr cruise missiles. Two of the missiles were shot down by air defenses. Two hit port infrastructure," Sergiy Bratchuk, a representative of the Odessa region said in a statement on social media. The hostility between Moscow and Kyiv had spilled over into Friday's signing ceremony in Istanbul - delayed briefly by disputes about the display of flags around the

Continued on Page 6

Makkah regional police have "referred a citizen" to prosecutors for alleged complicity in "transferring and facilitating the entry of a (non-Muslim) journalist", a police spokesperson said in comments reported by the official Saudi Press Agency. SPA did not name the journalist but said he is an American citizen, whose case has also been referred to prosecutors "to take the necessary procedures against him in accordance with the applied laws".

Despite growing behind-the-scenes business and security contacts, Saudi Arabia does not recognize Zionist entity and did not join the 2020 US-brokered Abraham Accords that saw the Jewish state establish ties with two

of the kingdom's neighbors, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

In his roughly 10-minute clip, Tamary visits Mount Arafat, where robed Muslim pilgrims gather to pray during the climax of the hajj pilgrimage each year. He makes clear he knows that what he's doing is outlawed but says he wanted to showcase "a place that is so important to our Muslim brothers and sisters". Tamary's justification, and subsequent apology, did little to quiet angry Saudi social media responses. The controversy followed US President Joe Biden's visit to both Zionist entity and Saudi Arabia last week.— AFP



**ESTAHBAN:** People stand on a bridge above a river, after flooding caused by heavy rainfall in southern Iran's Estahban county, that reportedly killed at least 21 people. — AFP

river, which runs through the central city of Isfahan, to complain about the drought and blame officials for diverting water. Security forces fired tear gas when the protest turned violent and said they arrested 67 people.

Last week, official media said Iranian police had arrested several suspects for disturbing security after they protested the drying up of a lake once regarded as

the Middle East's largest, Lake Urmia, in the mountains of northwest Iran, began shrinking in 1995 due to a combination of prolonged drought, and the extraction of water for farming and dams, according to the UN Environment Program. In neighboring Iraq in December, 12 people died in flash floods that swept through the north of that country, despite severe drought.— AFP



**ODESSA:** Ukrainian rescuers work outside a house destroyed following a Russian airstrike in a village in the Odessa region, amid the Russian military invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

## Local

# Kuwait's Amir congratulates Egypt on July 23rd Revolution Anniversary

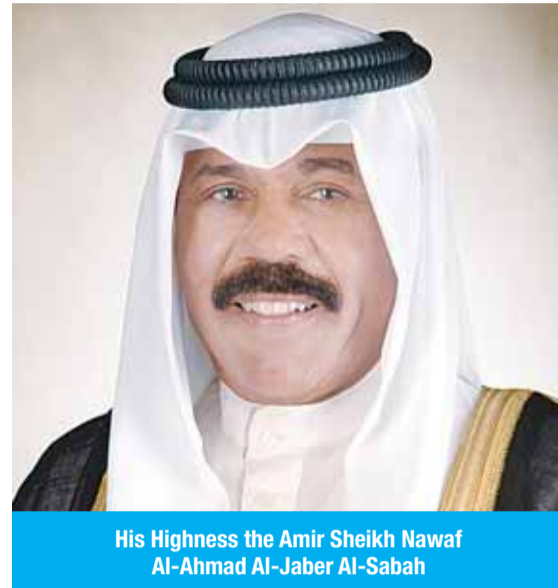
## Egypt can't steer away from global challenges - president

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday sent a cable to Egyptian President AbdelFattah Al-Sisi, congratulating him on the anniversary of the July 23rd Revolution. In the cable, His Highness the Amir hailed historical and firm relations between Kuwait and Egypt, wishing the Egyptian president good health and wellness and to Egypt and its people progress and prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also sent a cable to President Sisi, congratulating him on the anniversary

of the July 23 Revolution and wishing him good health and wellness. Furthermore, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar congratulatory cable to the Egyptian President.

Egyptian President AbdelFattah Al-Sisi said on Saturday that his country cannot isolate itself from sweeping world challenges and changes on the basis of its geographical location and regional and international role. Sisi made the remark in a televised speech marking the 70th anniversary of the July 23rd, 1952, saying that

the revolution had triggered drastic changes not only in Egypt but in the entire world as well. He emphasized that these challenges could be only overcome by earnest and sustained work, citing the country's recent economic, social, political and security dimensions in this regard. The Egyptian leader noted that his country has made major accomplishments over recent years, especially in the fields of infrastructure, new urban communities, energy and localization of industry, reflecting Egypt's strong will for progress and development. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



Egyptian President AbdelFattah Al-Sisi

## Kuwait restates political settlement in Syria

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait has reiterated that the longstanding crisis of Syria should be resolved by political, rather than military, means, based on UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2254. The remark was made by First Secretary of Kuwait's Permanent Delegation at the UN Fahad Hajji at a UN General Assembly session, held to discuss how to promote the UN system.

The session focused on Russia's use of veto at the UNSC against a draft resolution tabled by Norway and Ireland to renew the necessity of ensuring cross-border humanitarian aid to Syria. Hajji said the solution should be based on a consensual settlement that could meet the legitimate ambitions of Syrian people and safeguard their country's unity, sovereignty and independence, just as enshrined in UNSC Resolution 2254. The Kuwaiti diplomat emphasized that no sustainable and comprehensive peace could be reached in Syria unless justice and accountability are ensured. He lamented that the use of veto by some UNSC permanent members in several

cases has undermined the decision-making process at the Security Council, which, in some cases, has consequently failed to live up to its due responsibilities.

He pointed out some creative initiatives urging the UNSC permanent members to give up objecting to draft resolutions that are meant to fight crimes against humanity, along with annihilation and war crimes. In this context, he noted a French-Mexican initiative that called on the permanent members not to use the veto in view of mass atrocities. He boasted that the State of Kuwait has pursued a purely humanitarian line towards the Syrian tragedy only out of its unwavering belief in necessary backing for the Syrian people in a bid to ease out their humanitarian anguish.

The Kuwaiti diplomat cited Kuwait's hosting of UN-sponsored donor conferences during 2013, 2014 and 2015 as a clear-cut and unequivocal paradigm in this respect. However, he underlined the significance of ensuring humanitarian aid to the needy in Syria in a secure, sustainable and unrestrained manner, hoping that the UNSC could overcome its divisions over the Syrian crisis, including humanitarian, political and chemical aspects. —KUNA



Fahad Hajji

## Chinese senior official lauds wise policy of Kuwait



BEIJING: Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister for West Asian and North African Affairs Wang Di meets Kuwait Ambassador to China Sameeh Essa Johar Hayat. —KUNA photos



Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister for West Asian and North African Affairs Wang Di presents a memento to Kuwait Ambassador to China Sameeh Essa Johar Hayat.

BEIJING: Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister for West Asian and North African Affairs Wang Di said Saturday the wise and balanced policy of the dexterous political leadership of the State of Kuwait helped strengthen security and peace in the region. The People's Republic of China takes a strategic approach to its relations with the State of Kuwait and stands ready to cement cooperation in all economic, commercial, investment, cultural and academic areas, he said. The Chinese official made the comments during his meeting with Kuwait Ambassador to China Sameeh Essa Johar Hayat whose term in office is about to expire.

Di said the bilateral ties make great strides in all fields in the recent years thanks to the diplomatic representation of Kuwait in China, which grew to four premises - an embassy in Beijing and

three consulates general in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Both countries deepened mutual trust through a range of agreements and MoUs, and maintain fruitful coordination on the regional and international scales. They maintained solidarity and exchanged assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Chinese official noted.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Hayat said Kuwait attaches great importance to the development of the friendly relations with China. The government and people of Kuwait are confident that the friendship and cooperation with China will make outstanding achievements in the coming stage, he affirmed. China maintained its position as Kuwait's biggest trade partner in the past five years even during the COVID-19 pandemic, he said, attributing the achievement to the wise political leaderships of both sides. —KUNA

## Kuwaiti diplomat opens new premises of Consulate General in Shanghai



SHANGHAI: Consul General Mishal Al-Shamali is seen at the new premises of Kuwait's Consulate General in Shanghai. —KUNA

SHANGHAI: Consul General Mishal Al-Shamali recently opened the new premises of the Consulate General of the State of Kuwait in Shanghai city, east China. Speaking to the press on the sidelines of the ceremony, he expressed gratitude to the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry, the Foreign Affairs Office of Shanghai People's Government and the Shanghai Municipality for the limitless support to the diplomatic mission. "The restrictions related to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Chinese city and elsewhere forced delaying the inauguration of the new premises but, thanks to the efforts of the consulate staffs and the cooperation of Shanghai Municipality, we were able to overcome these conditions," Shamali noted. On the diplomatic relations between Kuwait and China, the Kuwaiti diplomat said the two countries celebrated the 51st anniversary of

establishing the relations on ambassadorial level on March 22, 2022. "Early this year, Kuwaiti Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Dr. Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah paid a landmark visit to China and held fruitful talks with Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. "The visit gave momentum to cooperation which grew steadily in all areas," Shamali recalled. He affirmed that the Consulate General in Shanghai was ready to offer services to Kuwaiti citizens. The new premises is located at Unit 1601- 1604, 16th floor, No. 68 Middle Yincheng Road, in the financial district of Lujiazui, Pudong Area, Shanghai, he said, welcoming contacts via the phone No.+ 86021-58952151, Fax:+86021-58952153, the emergency No.+ 8616621771561 and the Email: shanghai@mofa.gov.kw. —KUNA

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Local

# Kuwait welcomes Russia, Ukraine agreement to resume grain exports

## UN Chief says world 'desperately needs' agreement

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Foreign Ministry welcomed Friday Russia and Ukraine signing of a UN and Turkey-brokered agreement to resume their grain exports via the Black Sea. In a press statement, the ministry commended the deal, hoping it would enhance food security, fill the shortage in global grain supplies and help rein in grains' price hikes. The ministry appreciated the great efforts exerted by the mediators: the United Nations and Turkey, to reach this agreement. It lauded Russia and Ukraine's inking of the deal which demonstrated their eagerness to meeting the global needs of grains and averting a global food crisis. The ministry hoped the agreement would signal an important step towards a political settlement to the conflict in a way that enhance world security and stability.

In the presence of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, an agreement was signed by Turkey, Russia, Ukraine and the UN to resume the grain shipments from three Ukrainian Black Sea ports.

The long-awaited deal, struck at the Dolmabahce Palace in Istanbul on Friday, will help reduce the global food crisis. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Guterres appreciated Turkey's "facilitation and persistence" which culminated in today's event. He also thanked the Russian and Ukrainian delegates for setting their differences aside, overcoming the obstacles and agreeing this important initiative.

**'World needs it'**

"This initiative must be fully implemented because the world so desperately needs it," Turkey's Anadolu Agency (AA) quoted the UN chief as say-

ing. The deal is "beacon of hope in the Black Sea," he said, stressing, "It will bring relief for developing countries on the edge of bankruptcy and the most vulnerable people on the edge of famine." Guterres added that the deal would open corridors for grain exports from the three important Black Sea ports of Odesa, Chernomorsk and Yuzhny.

Meanwhile, President Erdogan said the deal will have positive impacts on millions of people around the globe and will resolve the global food crisis. The deal guarantees safe grain shipments from the Ukrainian seaports to their respective destinations, he said. President Erdogan thanked his Russian and Ukrainian counterparts for supporting and facilitating this initiative. He voiced hope that the deal will be a prelude to ending the conflict between the two neighbors. He renewed the call for Russia and Ukraine to reach a negotiated settlement to the ongoing conflict, with a view to promoting the world security and stability.

**Kuwait appreciates UN, Turkey's efforts**



"The war in Ukraine has spillover on all countries of the world, this is why we urge putting an end to it as early as possible," President Erdogan underscored. The Turkish-mediated deal, based on a UN-led plan reached last week, provides for setting up a coordination center in Istanbul to carry out joint inspections at the entrance and exit of the harbors. The launching of the center is expected to take three weeks, which means that the flow of grain shipments stuck at Ukrainian harbors will resume by mid-August, according to UN estimates. The deal with 120-day term is renewable automatically without further negotiations. This period is enough to load up to 25



ISTANBUL: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (left) and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sit at the start of the signature ceremony of an initiative on the safe transportation of grain and foodstuffs from Ukrainian ports, in Istanbul, on July 22, 2022. —AFP

million tons of wheat and other cereals from the three Ukrainian seaports, which will help alleviate the food crises in many importing countries.

**EU welcomes agreement**

The European Union welcomed the agreement signed. "This is a critical step forward in efforts to overcome the global food insecurity caused by Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Its success will depend on the swift and good faith implementation of today's agreement," said EU High Representative Josep Borrell in a statement. "We

also commend Turkey for its important role in brokering this agreement and in supporting its implementation," he said. The European Union has been supporting the relentless efforts of Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths and UNCTADs Under-Secretary General Rebecca Grynspan, under the leadership of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, to find ways to unblock Ukrainian agricultural exports, said Borrell. The EU remains committed to helping Ukraine bring as much of its grain into global markets as quickly as possible, he added. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Ahmadi Municipality inspectors raided several residences in Sabah Al-Ahmad City to inspect violations where homeowners rent residences to bachelors illegally. The inspectors cut power from 22 houses that were found in violation of regulations.



## LAPA launches 'Green Path' program

**KUWAIT:** LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA) launched the 'Green Path' program in cooperation with "Shamiya Youth" natural reserve under the patronage of Al-Kout nutrition group. The training program targets youth of both genders aged 16 to 22 years, and received as a first stage 24-25 trainees for a month at a rate of four hours from Sunday to Wednesday. Lectures for two days will precede field trainings during which youth will learn scientific facts related to types of agriculture and its influence on the atmospheric changes.



**KUWAIT:** The Patients Helping Fund carried out religious and cultural quizzes during recent visits to hospitals. Fund workers distributed gifts to patients in various hospitals around Kuwait.

In my view

## Main takes from trafficking in persons report



By Atyab Al-Shatti

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Last week was rampant with discussions over the US state's department issuance of the Trafficking in Persons report 2022. The report on Kuwait highlighted several stories of human trafficking and visa trade that went viral in the country which were also reported by national and international media channels such as the suspicious Bangladeshi MP act which involved visa trade. Another case was the lack of shelters for male victims of human trafficking which is duly a result to the non-existence of shelters in Kuwait for all purposes, since the only operating shelter is the female domestic workers' shelter. Furthermore, the report addressed the overall government efforts to combat any form of human rights' violation, which does not include operating or providing any type of shelters in general. The report also discussed the role of the judiciary system in implementing law 91 for the year 2013 regarding combating human trafficking and smuggling of migrants. The efforts which were put up in the report collectively worked to gather information from various sources, whereas the data base and statistics stated therein reflect the depth of the search undertaken to come up with this report.

Yet, while page 334 touches down upon the definition of visa trade in the light of the gaps and shortfalls of visa conditions and kafala system in Kuwait through highlighting grave incidents that took place, it was fundamental for the report to include critical implications related to unregistered newborns which was coincidentally exposed through the pandemic. This topic concerns a generation deprived from minimum human life standards, health, education and recognition before the government. This crisis was uncovered during the lockdowns where it was impossible for many migrants to seek ways of earning money. These individuals faced another challenge to return to their country of origin, related to identity verification documentation which was always difficult and almost impossible for laborers victimized by the visa trade; a form of human trafficking that was not highlighted in the report.

Moreover, visa 18 consists of regular job visa and small project visa. The difference relies in the fact that the small projects' visa 18 does not permit the worker to transfer to any job unless it was in the same type of work, constraining and limiting mobility of a migrant worker in the market; a condition that must be revoked by the law and considered as a sign of human trafficking.

Confiscating passports is a violation by the national laws and was stipulated within the report, yet was never addressed as a sign of human trafficking, nor ever linked to the fact that human trafficking cannot be easily detected because victims mostly fear to speak up. Confiscating the passport is a violation for which an employer will be fined for, but is it an efficient penalty? Or can't it relate to a bigger crime being committed in any way?

Human trafficking bodies in countries worldwide have significant mechanisms to combat this crime. In the Netherlands, I was taught that low wages are signs of human trafficking, while unreasonable discounts to grab customers and many ways would expose workers to severe exploitations and many signs that lead to crimes hidden under the silence of employees. Exchanging experiences shall assist in the formation of a stronger alliance to end human trafficking.

## Local

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## News in brief



Minister Fahad Al-Shuraian

### Establishments can change to one person company

**KUWAIT:** Commerce and Industry Minister Fahad Al-Shuraian issued a ministerial decision allowing the transfer of an individually owned establishment as "General trading and contracting", to a one person company. The decision (89/2022) said it is possible to transfer the individual establishment with active license for general trading and contracting into a one person company provided that one of the following conditions is met: Establishment has one active commercial agency; The individual establishment must have active business contracts; The establishment must be registered at a government entity.



### Live-fire exercises Mon and Tuesday

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti air and naval forces are set to carry out live-fire exercises for a couple of days starting on Monday, announced the Kuwaiti Army on Saturday. The exercises will take place at the sea shooting range located 16.5 nautical miles east Ras Al-Julaia as far as Qaruh Island and six nautical miles east Ras Al-Zour as far as Umm Al-Maradem, the army said in a press statement. It, therefore, advised seafarers to steer clear of these areas for their own safety.



### Afia new cards September 16

**KUWAIT:** The new Afia health insurance cards for retired citizens will be in effect Friday September 16, the Health Ministry said. Health insurance supervisor at the health ministry Dr Adnan Al-Rasheed said the current cards will remain effective until September 15. He said distribution of the new card will start Sunday.



### Kuwait oil up to \$108.93 pb: KPC

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwaiti oil rose by 70 cents to \$108.93 per barrel on Saturday, compared with \$108.23 pb a day earlier, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) announced Saturday. Globally, the Brent crude went down by \$1.65 to \$94.70 pb and so did the West Texas Intermediate by 66 cents to \$103.20 pb.

## Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** An aerial view of Kuwait City shows the capital's landmark buildings and the Green Island touristic site. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Al-Ula, land of civilizations and world's largest open museum

**RIYADH:** Al-Ula Governorate, situated to the northwest of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is located in an area rich with a history of living evidence and cultural backgrounds that were formed by successive civilizations dating back to more than 200,000 years ago. Al-Ula has been a destination for journeys of travelers and explorers and is still one of the most important locations for historical explorations due to what it enjoys of antiquities. Before Islam, Al-Ula was known as Dadan, as mentioned in the books of the Assyrians and old Arabic books. It was also known as Wadi Al-Qura, but its name was connected to the heritage of the Nabataeans, Dadans and Lihyans. Al-Ula also houses human and historical monuments, including the Hegra site that was built by the Nabataeans, which was registered as the first UNESCO world heritage site in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Al-Ula includes the two kingdoms of Lihyan and Dadan, over two consecutive eras spanning between the 9th century BC till the end of the 2nd century BC or the start of the 1st century BC, in addition to "Al-Ula Old Town" that was a hub for Hajj caravans around 1,000 years ago. Al-Ula combines all elements of historical and geographical attraction for its being one of the most important archaeological sites in the world whose monuments tell the history of human civilizations and are characterized by a natural beauty and qualitative human heritage, which all make it a main target as the biggest living museum in the world and allow it to provide a unique global tourist experiment as per the work of the Royal Commission for Al-Ula.

#### Saudi Vision 2030

As per the Saudi Vision 2030 to maximize benefits of the historical heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on July 20, 2017 issued two Royal Decrees to establish the Royal Commission for Al-Ula and form its board of directors under the chairmanship of Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, where the commission aims at developing Al-Ula in a way that accords with its historical value and civil status and what it enjoys of archaeological sites and to realize the economic and cultural interests emanating from the Saudi Vision 2030. On April 24, 2021, Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Royal Commission for Al-Ula, launched the design vision of the "Journey Through Time" Masterplan, with the aim of reviving and rehabilitating the main archaeological site in Al-Ula in a responsible and sustainable manner amidst a unique cultural and natural environment, where the project is considered a main station under the program to develop Al-Ula and change it into a pioneering global destination for arts, heritage, culture and nature, in realization of the Saudi Vision 2030 targets.

The "Journey Through Time" Masterplan consists of three main phases and its first phase is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2023, where the development strategy, upon completion in 2035, aims at providing 38,000 new jobs and contributing SAR 120 billion to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's GDP. The Masterplan also provides a special historical map for civilizations that inhabited Al-Ula Oasis over 7,000 years of the

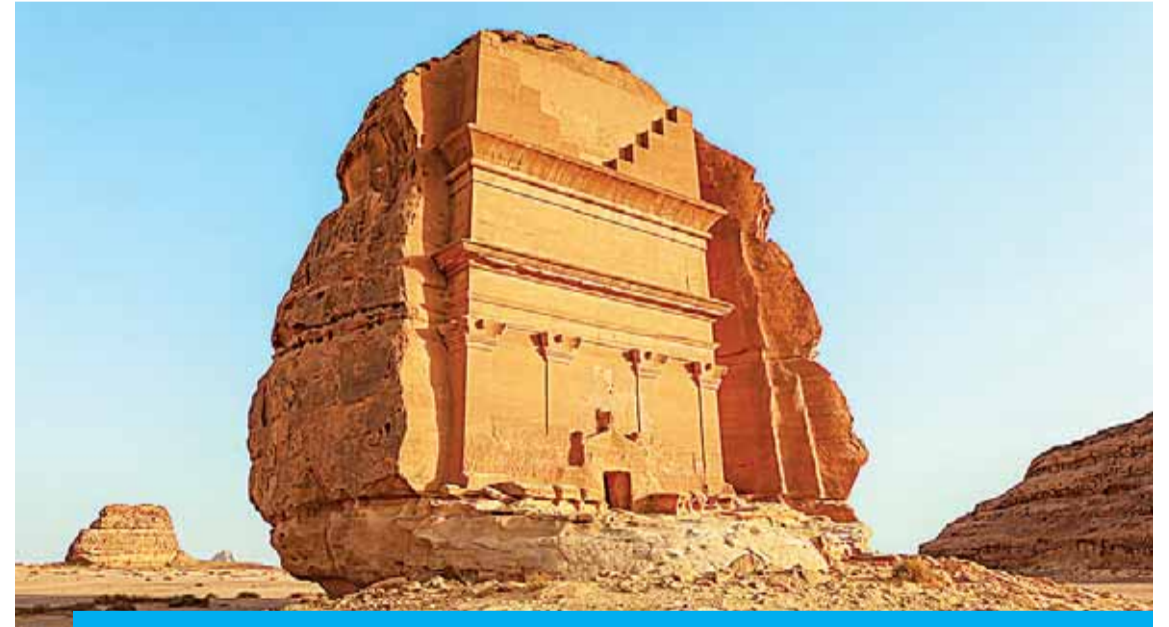
human history through utilizing the heritage, cultural, natural and geological richness of the area through the participation of its distinguished community with the development process to preserve Al-Ula heritage and draw the future via opening new chapters to explore its untapped history and build a future heritage that can be a source of pride. Under the Masterplan, five districts over a distance of 20 kilometers of Al-Ula center will be established in inspiring and main stations through the courses of the Journey Through Time, starting from the center of the Al-Ula Old Town in the south passing through Dadan Oasis center, Jabal Ikmah Oasis and the Nabataean Oasis till reaching the Hegra Historical City in the north.

The Journey Through Time Masterplan constitutes a national investment in Al-Ula community through the commission's commitment to supporting and empowering the community participation, where the Masterplan includes providing community services, amenities and a set of cultural and educational facilities in a bid to realize a cultural economy and improve the living conditions of individuals and families. Also, the Masterplan will contribute to the revitalization and rehabilitation

of the cultural oasis, and the sustainable development of its agricultural community, as a commitment to developing the agricultural sector in Al-Ula. The Masterplan also stresses the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's commitment to preserving and protecting world heritage, especially that it is based on intensified scientific studies on human patterns and the environmental and geological development in Al-Ula under the supervision of a team of Saudi and international experts over the past four years to realize integration with the nature and celebrate the cultural and historical heritage of the governorate.

tainability in the prehistoric times, archaeological communications and records, supervising archaeological sites and preserving them, and administering the site and archaeological elements. The institute will be specialized in studying and analyzing archaeological pieces, contents and their stories, in addition to the top advanced scientific methods and global practices to explore antiquities and maintain heritage. Also, 80 percent of the total Al-Ula area will be allocated for nature reserves to revive plants and restore ecosystems, including protecting wild animals and relocating them and preserving their natural habitats.

In June, 2022, UNESCO, during its recently held 34th meeting, registered the Harrat Uwayrid Reserve in the Man and the Biosphere Program, after the reserve met all standards required for its registration. The Harrat Uwayrid Reserve is considered the biggest nature reserve in Al-Ula among other five reserves, and it contains 19 endangered species of animals, 43 bird species (including 8 kinds of birds of prey) and 55 species of rare plants. A research study by the University of Cambridge, through the biggest archaeological excavations in the world that are still ongoing,



A landmark archeological site in Al-Ula.

revealed the historical importance of Al-Ula, where the study reached a conclusion that the mustatils, which translates to "rectangles" in Arabic, (prehistoric monuments made of sandstone walls) that were found in Al-Ula are older than Egypt's pyramids and UK's Stonehenge.

According to the field research work that was published by the University of Cambridge, these mustatils belong to prehistoric times. According to the study, these mustatils have not received considerable attention until field research showed that these antiquities are complex in terms of architectural point of view more than it was believed in the past, and that they include chambers, entrances and sanding stones that can be interpreted as being facilities to perform rituals dating back to the end of the sixth millennium BC, where recent excavations have uncovered the oldest evidence for worshipping cattle in the Arabian Peninsula, where the mustatils are considered among the oldest stone antiquities and one of the oldest archaeological construction methods that the world has ever known about. —KUNA

#### Kingdoms Institute

The Kingdoms Institute, one of the plan's flagship components, is located in Dadan Oasis, where its design is inspired by the Dadan civilization to be one of the top engraved buildings in mountains opposite to the archaeological site. The institute includes seven basic programs and archaeological research areas, the top of which being: preserving rock arts, inscriptions, languages, agriculture, sus-



Lanka's security forces demolish main protest camp

## Ex-Trump aide Bannon found guilty of contempt of Congress

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ROTTERDAM, Netherlands: Ukrainian women and children refugees are seen aboard the Holland America Line cruise ship Volendam in the Merwehaven port of Rotterdam, on July 22, 2022. — AFP

# Shifting views on Ukrainian refugees

## Several hundred volunteers monitor online disinformation

**PRAGUE, Czech Republic:** When Dominika Sokur speaks to her children in the playground, she overhears hostile reactions that she believes are being fuelled by disinformation. "When we come to the playground, people go: 'Ah, the Ukrainians have come, let's get out of here'," said Sokur, 41, a Czech married to a Ukrainian who lives in the town of Holubice north of Prague.

"I have overheard them complaining that we get to ride buses and visit the zoo for free."

The attitude illustrates rising resentment against Ukrainian refugees in parts of Europe that experts link to false social media posts about Ukrainian refugees and the benefits they receive. "Even my 65-year-old dad, who is not pro-Russian and supports Ukraine, is asking me what's all this talk about Ukrainian Nazis. The disinformation is simply everywhere," Sokur said.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February, European nations have taken in almost six million refugees, according to the UN refugee agency.

Countries including the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania and Slovakia opened their borders, homes and wallets to help those fleeing the war.

But runaway inflation, especially rampant in eastern Europe, has created a sense of economic dread that feeds disinformation portraying refugees as ingrates siphoning off resources from needy locals.

### Disinformation across borders

From Warsaw to Bucharest, social media have been flooded with images of luxury cars with Ukrainian license plates and unsourced, anonymous claims that wealthy-looking Ukrainians have been spotted standing in line for government aid.

Comments express resentment and anger against the politicians supposedly helping Ukrainians instead of taking care of their own population.

The online claims vary from country to country, but they carry the same underlying message: Ukrainians

are taking resources away "from us". "Refugees are always mentioned in the context of non-working immigrants waiting for benefits, luxury cars and so-called 'health or benefit tourism'," the Czech Elves, a network of several hundred volunteers monitoring online disinformation, said in their June report.

In Poland a recent article on a blog known to spread disinformation misleadingly claimed that Ukrainian refugees were getting free shopping vouchers while needy Poles were left empty-handed.

In Romania, a Facebook post said sweepingly that "90 percent of those who cross the border are from the rich class, those who can afford to give 1,000-1,500 euros bribe to Ukrainian customs to cross over to us".

In the Czech Republic, which has accepted the biggest number of refugees per capita, a viral post falsely stated that a Ukrainian family of four can collect as much as 90,000 koruna (about \$3,700) per month

in aid — far more than the income of an average Czech family. Contrary to stereotypes shared on social media, most Ukrainian refugees start looking for work almost immediately after they reach the Czech Republic and often accept manual jobs in construction, healthcare or as cleaning personnel, according to data from the Czech labour office.

It is difficult to identify the main spreaders of such disinformation targeting Ukrainian refugees but such posts often feature on accounts linked to far-right parties. Whipping up anti-Ukrainian sentiment bears the hallmarks of Russian propaganda, according to Gesine Schwan, political science professor and former presidential candidate for Germany's Social Democratic Party (SPD) who has written extensively about refugees. "Russia is extremely good at taking something that happened and misinterpreting it in such a way that it creates resentment," Schwan told AFP in a telephone interview.—AFP

## Trump, Pence hold duelling rallies as rivalry intensifies

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump and his ex-wingman Mike Pence, who went from White House partners to bitter rivals, held duelling rallies Friday in Arizona, where an upcoming Republican primary election offers an early test of their potential 2024 showdown.



PRESCOTT VALLEY: Former President Donald Trump (L) embraces Republican candidate for governor Kari Lake at a 'Save America' rally in support of Arizona GOP candidates on July 22, 2022 in Prescott Valley, Arizona. — AFP

The convergence of campaign events came a day after a congressional hearing on the US Capitol assault, in which a White House security official said members of Pence's Secret Service detail feared they would die as rioters stormed the building.

Trump, who like Pence is considering running for president in 2024, has savaged his former vice president for what he describes as a failure to block the certification of the 2020 election results and send the process

back to the US states. Such a plan had been cooked up by Trump aides who supported his discredited theory that the election was stolen, but Pence ultimately decided that the action would be illegal. During the January 6, 2021 insurrection, Trump tweeted an attack on Pence, saying he "didn't have the courage to do what should have been done to protect our Country." Administration officials testified at Thursday's hearing that the social media post poured fuel on the fire and turned rioters against the vice president. In extraordinary revelations at the hearing, a White House national security official who testified under anonymity said "members of the VP detail at this time were starting to fear for their own lives."

Trump's gathering Friday in the central Arizona town of Prescott Valley was part of a series of "Save America" rallies he has held to boost his favored candidates ahead of Republican primary elections.

Earlier in July, he held an event in Alaska to support Kelly Tshibaka, a challenger to the state's incumbent senator, Lisa Murkowski, who was one of the few Republicans to vote to impeach Trump after the January 6, 2021 insurrection.

### 'Yesterday's grievances'

In Arizona, a state he narrowly lost in 2020, Trump campaigned for Kari Lake, a far-right gubernatorial candidate who supports his false claim that the election was stolen. Lake, a former TV news host, took the stage in the crowded stadium first, declaring that in Arizona, "We will no longer accept corruption, and I know for a fact we will no longer accept rigged elections."

The former president, leaving the crowd to wait more than two hours, began his speech by focusing on immigration—a major campaign topic in the state which shares a large border with Mexico. But it did not take long before he turned his attention to the 2020 election.

"The election was rigged and stolen and now our country is being systematically destroyed because of it!" he shouted, with the crowd roaring in response. Pence made stops in Phoenix and southern Arizona for governor-hopeful Karrin Taylor Robson, a more traditional Republican than Lake who also has the backing of the state's term-limited governor.—AFP

## Libya militia clashes kill 16

**TRIPOLI:** At least 16 people were killed and 52 wounded in fighting between armed groups in Tripoli, the health ministry said Saturday, following the latest politically driven violence to hit the Libyan capital.

The fighting began on Thursday night and extended into Friday afternoon. The toll revises up an earlier figure of 13, including three civilians, provided by the ambulance service. The clashes were between two armed groups with major clout in the west of the war-torn country: the Al-Radaa force and the Tripoli Revolutionaries Brigade.

Several sources said one group's detention of a fighter belonging to the other had sparked the fighting, which extended to several districts of the capital. On Friday, another group called the 444 Brigade inter-

vened to mediate a truce, deploying its own forces in a buffer zone before they too came under heavy fire, an AFP photographer reported. "All the wounded received medical care in hospitals" in Tripoli, the health ministry said in a statement. It did not provide an update on how many civilians were among the dead. Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah's government suspended interior minister Khaled Mazen after the fighting, replacing him on an interim basis with Bader Eddine al-Toumi, the local government minister.

Mitiga, the capital's sole functioning airport, was closed for several hours on Friday before it reopened late in the day. Libya has been gripped by insecurity since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011, leaving a power vacuum armed groups have been wrangling for years to fill.

Tensions have been rising for months in Libya as two prime ministers vie for power, raising fears of renewed conflict two years after a landmark truce ended a ruinous attempt by eastern military chief Khalifa Haftar to seize Tripoli by force.—AFP

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- Applications that do not meet the requirements and are incomplete will be excluded and this is considered an official apology.
- Receiving the request does not mean accepting it.

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## International

# Ex-Trump aide Bannon found guilty of contempt of Congress

## 'We may have lost the battle here today but we're not going to lose this war'

WASHINGTON: A federal jury found Donald Trump's former aide Steve Bannon guilty of contempt of Congress on Friday for defying a subpoena to testify before lawmakers investigating the assault on the US Capitol. Bannon, who led Trump's 2016 presidential election campaign, was among hundreds of people called by a House of Representatives committee to address the storming of Congress by Trump supporters on January 6, 2021.



'If I go to jail, so be it'

The 68-year-old Republican strategist did not appear on the summons date or provide requested documents, and was indicted on two charges of contempt of Congress. The 12-person jury deliberated for less than three hours before finding Bannon guilty of both misdemeanor charges.

Bannon, who served as Trump's strategy chief at the White House before being sacked in 2017, faces a minimum of 30 days in jail and a maximum sentence of a year for each count. Sentencing was set for October 21.

"We may have lost the battle here today but we're not going to lose this war," Bannon said after the ver-



WASHINGTON: Former White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon (C) arrives at the US District Court House as his trial for contempt of Congress continues, in Washington. — AFP

dict. "I stand with Trump and the Constitution." Later, in an interview with Fox News, the former investment banker said there would be "a 'We may have lost the battle here today but we're not going to lose this war' ahead. 'If I go to jail, so be it,'" Bannon said. Bennie Thompson and Liz Cheney, the chair and vice chair of the House committee, welcomed the verdict, saying "no

one is above the law." "The conviction of Steve Bannon is a victory for the rule of law and an important affirmation of the Select Committee's work," they said in a statement.

"Just as there must be accountability for all those responsible for the events of January 6th, anyone who obstructs our investigation into these matters should

face consequences." Presenting the government's case, prosecutor Amanda Vaughn told the jury that Bannon had made a "deliberate decision" not to obey the subpoena.

### A 'real' January 6 Committee

Bannon's attorneys did not call any witnesses during the brief trial and he did not testify in his own defense. Bannon's lawyer Evan Corcoran denied his client had ignored the subpoena, saying the date was "the subject of ongoing discussions and negotiation" and "flexible."

The decision to hold Bannon in contempt was politically motivated, Corcoran said. Vaughn said the House committee had cause to believe Bannon and other Trump advisors may have information on links between the White House and the Capitol rioters.

According to the committee, Bannon spoke to Trump the day before thousands of his supporters stormed Congress in an effort to block the certification of Democrat Joe Biden's election victory. They had been egged on by Trump in a fiery speech near the White House, during which he repeated his false claims of election fraud. After refusing to testify for months, Bannon finally agreed to cooperate with the House investigation, a move prosecutors dismissed as a "last-ditch attempt to avoid accountability." In his Fox News appearance, Bannon called for a "sweeping victory" for Republicans in the upcoming November midterm elections. He called for a "real January 6 committee" to be established to look into unsupported conspiracy theories, such as the Capitol assault being instigated by undercover US law enforcement. "We have to get to the bottom of it," he said. — AFP

## Macron hosts close ally Egypt's Al-Sisi

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday met Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in Paris for their latest talks aimed at tightening a relationship based on security and defence ties that has troubled activists. Macron hosted the Egyptian strongman at the Elysee Palace days after hosting UAE leader Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, himself a close ally of Sisi's secular administration. With growing concern over the effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine on global food supplies, the pair discussed ways to deal with the "economic, energy and global food security consequences of this conflict", the Elysee said in a statement.

Egypt is due to host the COP 27 climate summit in Sharm El-Sheikh in November and Macron and Sisi also discussed the fight against global warming. "The two presidents took stock of the main issues of bilateral cooperation, which are very dense in all areas," it added. Last year, Egypt's military ordered 30 more Rafale jets from French defence firm Dassault Aviation in a multi-billion-dollar defence deal confirmed by France. Macron has during his rule placed considerable emphasis on relations with Egypt and during a state visit in December 2020 gave Sisi France's highest award, the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, in a move that left rights activists aghast.

Activists have long expressed unease over Sisi's visits, saying that France should be doing more to raise concern about the estimated 60,000 political prisoners languishing in Egyptian prisons. In a nod to these concerns, the Elysee statement said: "As part of the dialogue of confidence between France and Egypt, they also addressed the issue of human rights."

There has been particular concern over the case of dissident Egyptian activist Alaa Abdel Fattah, who has

been on a hunger strike for more than 100 days after being sentenced in December to five years in prison.

Press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) had ahead of the talks urged Macron not "to ignore the fate of Alaa Abdel Fattah... and of all the detained journalists". France had secured promises of new energy supplies from the United Arab Emirates on Monday after talks between Macron and Sheikh Mohamed, known as MBZ. — AFP



PARIS, France: France's President Macron welcomes Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (L) upon his arrival at the Elysee Palace in Paris on July 22, 2022. — AFP

## 2 Americans die in Ukraine war zone

WASHINGTON: Two Americans have died in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, the US State Department said Saturday, as fighting rages there after Russia focused its firepower on the area months after invading the country. Ukraine has established an international legion for volunteers with varying degrees of previous military training, although the State Department did not confirm whether the pair were in the country for combat purposes.

"We can confirm the recent deaths of two US citizens in the Donbas region of Ukraine. We are in touch with the families and providing all possible consular assistance," a State Department

spokesperson said. The State Department said it had no further information "out of respect to the families during this difficult time."

US President Joe Biden and the State Department have warned US citizens against traveling to Ukraine to take part in the conflict. With many of the foreign fighters sent to the frontlines, there has been a steady trickle of reports of individuals killed, captured or missing.

At least two other Americans have been confirmed to have been killed so far in the invasion, which began in February. Moscow has said two more Americans, both former servicemen who were taken prisoner in the east of Ukraine in June, could face execution. Two British men and a Moroccan captured in fighting have been sentenced to death by the Russian proxy authorities in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, a Moscow-controlled swath of eastern Ukraine. — AFP

gerous and contagious than smallpox, which was eradicated in 1980. Ninety-five percent of cases have been transmitted through sexual activity, according to a study of 528 people in 16 countries published in the New England Journal of Medicine - the largest research to date. Overall, 98 percent of infected people were gay or bisexual men, and around a third were known to have visited sex-on-site venues such as sex parties or saunas within the previous month.

"This transmission pattern represents both an opportunity to implement targeted public health interventions, and a challenge because in some countries, the communities affected face life-threatening discrimination," Tedros said earlier, citing concern that stigma and scapegoating could make the outbreak harder to track. The European Union's drug watchdog on Friday recommended for approval the use of Imvanex, a smallpox vaccine, to treat monkeypox.

Imvanex, developed by Danish drugmaker Bavarian Nordic, has been approved in the EU since 2013 for the prevention of smallpox. It was also considered a potential vaccine for monkeypox because of the similarity between the monkeypox virus and the smallpox virus. The first symptoms of monkeypox are fever, headaches, muscle pain and back pain during the course of five days. Rashes subsequently appear on the face, the palms of hands and soles of feet, followed by lesions, spots and finally scabs. — AFP

## Russian missiles hit Odessa port...

Continued from Page 1

table and Ukraine's refusal to put its name on the same document as the Russians.

### 20 million tons of wheat

Ukraine had entered the ceremony by bluntly warning that it would conduct "an immediate military response" should Russia violate the agreement and attack its ships or stage an incursion around its ports. The two sides eventually inked separate but identical agreements in the presence of Guterres and Erdogan at Istanbul's lavish Dolmabahce Palace. "Today, there is a beacon on the Black Sea - a beacon of hope, a beacon of possibility, a beacon of relief," Guterres had said moments before the signing. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky later said the responsibility for enforcing the deal would fall to the UN, which along with Turkey is a co-guarantor of the agreement. The agreement includes points on running Ukrainian grain ships along safe corridors that avoid known mines in the Black Sea. Huge quantities of wheat and other grain have been blocked in Ukrainian ports by Russian warships and landmines Kyiv has laid to avert a feared amphibious assault.

Zelensky said that around 20 million tons of produce from last year's harvest and the current crop would be

## Minister Al-Mousa vows 'no cover...'

Continued from Page 1

will not only harm the Kuwaitization policy but will jeopardize government initiative to encourage Kuwaitis to take up jobs in the private sector. The sectors identified by the Council of Ministers, among others, are farming, fishing, transformative industries, sewage and trash management. The list also includes construction and building, financial and insurance activities, administrative services, arts and entertainment and activities that do not come under judicial jurisdiction.

## Hundreds protest against Tunisia constitution

TUNIS: Hundreds of people protested Saturday in Tunis against a draft constitution put forward by President Kais Saied, demanding his resignation two days before Tunisia votes on the disputed charter. The referendum will take place a year to the day after Saied sacked the government and suspended parliament in a decisive blow against the country's often chaotic young democracy. "Get out", the demonstrators yelled as they waved Tunisia's red-and-white flag at a gathering on Habib Bourguiba Avenue in the capital. "The people want the fall of Kais Saied; the people want the fall of the constitution," chanted those who rallied in response to a call by the National Salvation Front (FSN) opposition alliance.

Among the demonstrators, who numbered fewer than 1,000, were elected officials of the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, the political rivals of Saied. Tunisia is preparing to vote Monday on a draft constitution that would enshrine the vast powers that Saied has exercised since he sacked the government and suspended parliament on July 25 last year. His move was seen as a decisive blow against the crisis-ridden political system in Tunisia, and his rivals allege his constitution aims to restore an autocracy. "A year has passed and Saied has failed to manage the country and present a clear vision," Imed Khemiri, spokesman for Ennahdha, told the crowd. Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, a veteran opposition figure, also addressed the gathering that was closely monitored by police. — AFP

exported under the agreement, estimating the value of Ukraine's grain stocks at around \$10 billion. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told Kremlin state media he expected the deal to start working "in the next few days" although diplomats expect grain to only start fully flowing by mid-August. The United States, Britain and the European Union hailed the Istanbul agreement while urging Moscow to abide by its rules.

### More US military aid

Global alarm about grain has been accompanied by European fears that Russia is starting to use its stranglehold on energy exports as a geopolitical weapon in its standoff with the West. The grain deal was signed one day after Russia's restart of the Nord Stream natural gas pipeline eased concerns in Europe of a permanent shut off after a 10-day maintenance suspension. Analysts say the partial resumption of gas supplies was insufficient to ward off energy shortages in Europe this winter. The ornate halls of Istanbul's Dolmabahce Palace felt far removed from east Ukraine's Donbas war zone on another day of relentless shelling across the front.

Russia is trying to fight deeper into the war zone's Donetsk region after securing full control of neighboring Lugansk. On Friday, the United States signed off on another \$270 million in military aid to Ukraine, including rocket systems, artillery ammunition and armored command posts. Russian missile strikes on railway infrastructure and a military airfield in the central area of Kirovograd on Saturday killed at least three people and wounded nine, regional governor Andriy Raikovich said. — AFP

The report said the number of Kuwaitis working in farming, animal husbandry and fishing is only 380 although a total of 62,000 expatriate employees working in these sectors. Despite the importance of retail sector and automobile maintenance and servicing industry, less than 2,000 Kuwaitis are working in these segments. Although there are thousands of Kuwaiti graduates who are specialized in automobile and mechanical engineering, they are working in fields other than their expertise and specialization.

The report shows more than 42,000 expats work in the transformative industries while Kuwaitis remain less than 9,000. Transformative industries have employed 13,000 Kuwaitis against 128,000 expats while the number of Kuwaitis in the transport and warehousing sector is only 9,000 against 42,000 expats.

## WHO triggers highest alert...

Continued from Page 1

But a majority advised Tedros that the situation, at that point, had not met the threshold. The second meeting was called on Thursday with case numbers rising further, where Tedros said he was worried. "I need your advice in assessing the immediate and mid-term public health implications," Tedros told the meeting, which lasted more than six hours.

A US health expert sounded a grim warning late on Friday. "Since the last #monkeypox EC just weeks ago, we've seen an exponential rise in cases. It's inevitable that cases will dramatically rise in the coming weeks & months. That's why @DrTedros must sound the global alarm," Lawrence Gostin, the director of the WHO Collaborating Center on National and Global Health Law, said on Twitter. "A failure to act will have grave consequences for global health."

### Warning against discrimination

A viral infection resembling smallpox and first detected in humans in 1970, monkeypox is less dan-

## International

## Sri Lanka's security forces demolish main protest camp

'Don't attack peaceful protesters, instead listen to us'

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan security forces demolished the main anti-government protest camp in the capital Friday, evicting activists in a pre-dawn assault that raised international concern for dissent under the crisis-wracked country's new pro-Western president.

Troops and police Special Task Force commandos wielding batons and armed with automatic assault rifles charged on people blockading the sea-front Presidential Secretariat in Colombo. Hundreds of soldiers removed demonstrators' barricades and tents outside the colonial-era building, while the last remaining protesters on the premises—some were still on the steps—were baton charged away.

The operation came hours before new president Ranil Wickremesinghe appointed an old friend as prime minister and the ousted head of state's personal lawyer as foreign minister. Wickremesinghe was elected by legislators on Wednesday to replace Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled to Singapore and resigned after demonstrators chased him from his palace.

The remaining protesters—far fewer than the thousands who overran several government buildings earlier this month—have been demanding Wickremesinghe also quit. They accuse him of protecting the Rajapaksa clan who have dominated politics for much of the last two decades.

### 'Listen to us'

By sunrise, police commandos and soldiers barricaded the complex and the main roads leading to the area were cordoned off. Hundreds of activists demonstrated at a nearby designated protest site against the military action, demanding the new president resign and dissolve parliament to allow fresh elections.

"Don't attack peaceful protesters, instead listen to us," said student Dimmithu, 26. The activists insisted they would

continue their struggle. "The peoples' wish is system change, and parliament should be dissolved. It has no public mandate," said Basantha Samarasinghe, 45, a businessman and trade union leader.

Police said in a statement that security forces acted to clear protesters who were "illegally occupying" the presidential compound, with nine people arrested, two of whom were injured. Wickremesinghe later met with several Colombo-based diplomats and US ambassador Julie Chung tweeted that she expressed "my grave concern over the unnecessary & deeply troubling escalation of violence against protesters overnight".

"This is not the time to crack down on citizens," she added. The European Union said freedom of expression was essential for Sri Lanka to transition from its chaos. "Hard to see how restricting it severely can help in finding solutions to the current political and economic crises," the EU delegation in Colombo said. Human Rights Watch said more than 50 people were injured in the crackdown and

called on authorities to release the detained and prosecute those responsible for the violence.

"This action sends a dangerous message to the Sri Lankan people that the new government intends to act through brute force rather than the rule of law," the New York-based rights group said in a statement.

### Protesters demand president to quit



**Political rival**  
A foreign exchange crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic was exacerbated by mismanagement, critics say, with Sri Lankans left to suffer lengthy power blackouts and record-high inflation. The country's 22 million people have also endured months of food, fuel and medicine shortages.

On Friday, Wickremesinghe swore in his political rival Dinesh Gunawardena as the country's new prime minister.



**COLOMBO:** A demonstrators interacts with Police special task force personnel (R) standing guard while blocking a road as demonstrators take part in a protest march against Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe towards the Presidential secretariat office in Colombo. —AFP

The two men have been schoolmates and friends since the age of three but lead political parties that are ideologically opposed.

Wickremesinghe is a free-market champion and a West politician while Gunawardena is a staunch Sinhala nationalist who wants greater state control over the economy. "We have differences, but we have enough friendship to unite to deal with the main problem of the country, that is the economy," Gunawardena told reporters.

Wickremesinghe also swore in a new cabinet, largely re-

instating his predecessor's ministers but retaining the finance portfolio for himself to continue bailout talks with the IMF. He also replaced the foreign minister with Gotabaya Rajapaksa's personal lawyer Ali Sabry.

Officials said it was an "interim cabinet" that could be replaced "within weeks". Hours after Wickremesinghe—a six-time prime minister who had earlier extended a state of emergency—was elected, he warned protesters that occupying state buildings was illegal and that they would be evicted unless they left on their own. —AFP

## Mali says jihadist attack at key town thwarted

**BAMAKO, Mali:** Mali said it had repelled a suicide raid Friday by Al-Qaeda-linked jihadists at a town on the fringes of the capital that houses a base used by the ruling military. One of Africa's most troubled states, Mali is struggling with jihadist insurgents and political turbulence, experiencing two coups within the last two years.

"Suicide" attackers aboard two explosive-laden vehicles attacked an army depot at the garrison town of Kati, 15 kilometres (nine miles) from Bamako, the army said in a statement. The Malian armed forces "have... contained a desperate attempt by terrorists from the Katiba Macina", it said, referring to an affiliate of the Al-Qaeda jihadist group.

One soldier was killed and six other people including a civilian were wounded, while seven attackers were "neutralised" and eight were detained, it said. The attack, launched at around 0500 GMT, was mounted against "an installation of the army department for equipment, hydrocarbons and transport", it added.

Residents said they heard gunfire and explosions at dawn. "We were woken up at five o'clock by firing, by explosions,

we don't know what's going on," said one resident. Another source said: "Our base is being attacked."

Several hours later, an AFP correspondent heard detonations as special forces personnel were deployed in the area and helicopters flew over the base. By midday, the helicopters had landed, and normal life had resumed in the town.

### Goita's residence

The US embassy in Mali condemned the attacks "in the strongest terms", while African Union chief Moussa Faki Mahamat said he was encouraging all efforts to restore security. The depot lies outside a base that is a major hub for the ruling military, which has been behind a string of coups since Mali gained independence from France in 1960.

The camp is reputedly the residence of strongman Colonel Assimi Goita, who is Mali's transitional president, and Defence Minister Colonel Sadio Camara. The base was the springboard for mounting a putsch led by Goita in August 2020, and afterwards was used to detain the ousted elected president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.

After another coup the following May,



**KATI, Mali:** A crowd gathers around a man (not seen) suspected of taking part in thwarted "terrorist" attack after being beaten by a crowd, in front of the military base in Kati, Mali, on July 22, 2022. —AFP

the base was then used to hold Keita's successor, Bah Ndaw, and prime minister Moctar Ouane. Keita was forced out after mounting protests at failures to stem a jihadist campaign that erupted in northern Mali in 2012 and then spread to the country's volatile centre, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Across the three countries, thousands of civilians, troops and police have been killed and more than two million people have fled their homes.

### Turbulence

The camp at Kati has never been hit in the insurgency. Friday's attack came a

day after suspected jihadists carried out six simultaneous raids—also launched at dawn—on security positions in the regions of Segou and Mopti in the centre of the country and in Koulikoro, near Bamako.

In May 2021, the junta led by Goita staged a second coup, forcing out a civilian-led government. Since then, it has forged closer ties with the Kremlin, bringing in Russian personnel, while relations with other international partners have suffered. A spat with France has triggered a pull-out of French forces that have been fighting jihadists in Mali for nearly a decade. The withdrawal is expected to be completed in the coming weeks. —AFP

## Kenyan poll body slams arrest of vote contractors

**NAIROBI:** Kenya's electoral authority has condemned the "brazen" arrest in Nairobi of three officials from a company supplying electronic voting systems for next month's presidential poll. Police on Friday confirmed one foreigner had been detained carrying undeclared election stickers.

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) said the arrest of key personnel from Smartmatic International at Nairobi's international airport amounted to "intimidation, harassment and blackmail".

The employees, who were detained on arrival Thursday from Venezuela, were legally contracted to deploy and manage election technology infrastructure for Kenya's election on August 9, the IEBC said in a statement late Thursday.

"The brazen decision of the security authorities to arrest, detain and confine in a solitary hideout the three personnel without justification, is an exhibition of intimidation," it said. Police said the foreigners had been arrested at the capital's Jomo

Kenyatta International Airport with election-related stickers in their luggage.

"The arrest, impounding and subsequent investigations into the material was necessitated by the sensitivity of elections material," said national police spokesman Bruno Shioso. Police were not informed such material was being imported, he said, adding the stickers were also not declared or accompanied by an IEBC official as required by law.

The suspect had been released from custody following investigations, Shioso said. The IEBC said the detentions would have "the inevitable effect of hampering the deployment of technology in the forthcoming General Election".

"Technology plays a central role in elections and the Commission wonders what the intention behind the holding of the technical personnel is meant to achieve," it said. In a second statement late Friday, the IEBC demanded a "cessation of harassment of personnel of legitimately contracted service providers" and called for the release of all electronic devices seized during the arrest.

### 'Free and fair'

The police "confiscated all electronic items including mobile phones, laptops and flash disks in the custody of the said personnel", which contained "important and



**KIAMBURU, Kenya:** Presidential flag bearer of the Kenya Kwanza political coalition, who is also Kenya's deputy President, William Ruto (C-R), waves to a crowd of his coalition's supporters, with a gubernatorial candidate from his coalition, Kimani wa Matangi (C-L), during a roadside campaign rally. —AFP

sensitive information" on the upcoming elections, the commission said.

"The said personnel were compelled to give passwords to the confiscated phones and gadgets, resulting in a violation of their right to privacy," Smartmatic, a London-based company, says it has successfully deployed secure election technologies in

more than 30 countries.

Electronic voting and tallying has proved deeply contentious in past Kenyan polls. Kenya's highest court ordered a re-run of the 2017 presidential election after citing widespread irregularities in the electronic transmission of results and mismanagement by the IEBC. —AFP

## Abe murder suspect to undergo mental examination

**TOKYO:** The man accused of assassinating Japan's former prime minister Shinzo Abe is set

to undergo an examination of his mental condition around the time of the incident, local media reported Saturday. Abe was gunned down on the campaign trail on July 8 in the western city of Nara, two days before the country's upper house elections.

His accused killer Tetsuya Yamagami is in custody and reportedly targeted Abe because he believed the former leader was linked to the Unification Church. On Friday, the Nara District

Court approved a request by the local public prosecutors office for a psychiatric examination of 41-year-old Yamagami, the Asahi Shimbun and other local media reported, citing unnamed investigative sources.

The examination is expected to wrap up in late November, the reports said. Investigative questioning of the suspect will be halted during the mental examination. Prosecutors will determine whether Yamagami can bear criminal liability

based on the examination before making a decision on whether to indict him, the reports said.

Abe was Japan's best-known politician, maintaining a prominent place in public life even after resigning in 2020 for health reasons. He was also a divisive figure who faced cronyism allegations and was criticised for his staunch nationalist views. Prosecution and court officials could not immediately be reached to confirm the local media reports. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Yemen mine blast

**HODEIDA:** Four children were killed Thursday in the Houthi rebel-controlled western Yemeni city of Hodeida after one of them stepped on a landmine, a medical source and a father said Friday. The source said a group of seven children were walking through an empty lot near the airport of the Red Sea city, an area where mines pose a constant threat to civilians, when tragedy struck on Thursday. Three of them were killed on the spot while the fourth child died in hospital, he said, adding the victims were aged between 10 and 15. "The children went out in the morning while we were asleep... The surviving children came and told us about the accident," father Yahya Abdullah told AFP.

#### Wildfire destroys homes

**ATHENS:** Tourists and residents were evacuated on Saturday from a popular resort on the Greek island of Lesbos as a wildfire destroyed homes in the beachside village of Vatera. Firefighters deployed seven planes and a helicopter to fight the surging blaze, with reinforcements expected to arrive from northern Greece. The fire broke out at 10:00 local time (0700 GMT) on Saturday and is blazing on two fronts, heading towards the Vrisa village and another inside Vatera. West Lesbos mayor Taxiarchis Verros ordered the evacuation of the busy beach resort as a precautionary measure, acting on the advice of the fire brigade, Athens News Agency reported. He did not provide figures on how many were evacuated but there were several buses and small boats to take people away. At least two houses were ravaged by the fire, state TV ERT said.

#### Clashes over gold mine

**BUNIA:** Three people died as rival militias clashed for a second day on Saturday for control of a gold mine in DR Congo's troubled northeastern province of Ituri, the groups said. Scores of armed groups roam Ituri and neighbouring North Kivu, many a legacy of two regional wars a quarter of a century ago. Ituri and North Kivu have under an army-led "state of siege" since May 2021 in a bid to clamp down on the militias. Fighting began Friday around the Tulabo mine in Irumu territory between the Patriotic Resistance Force of Ituri (FRPI) and the Patriotic and Integrationist Force of the Congo (FPIC), residents said. "FRPI militiamen built a camp to exploit the Tulabo gold mine. It's a provocation. During the fighting to drive them out, two were killed and one died on our side," said Kabulano Nyamabo, an FPIC spokesman. An FRPI spokesman confirmed the two deaths. —AFP

SUNDAY, JULY 24, 2022

# Business

## Blame game as British port tries to clear traffic logjam

### UK blames on France for chronic backlog, but others said caused by Brexit

**LONDON:** The English Channel port of Dover on Saturday battled to clear a chronic backlog of summer getaway delays, which Britain blamed on France but others said was caused by Brexit. UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss risked a cross-Channel row by calling Friday's lengthy tailbacks "entirely avoidable" and urging Paris to act. Port officials blamed "woefully inadequate" understaffing of French border posts for ruining the start of the holidays for thousands of people.

Passengers go through both UK and French border checks at Dover before boarding ferries to northern France. Port of Dover chief executive Doug Bannister said Saturday was expected to be busier because of Friday's logjam. "We processed about 8,500 cars going out (on Friday). Today we were predicted to be around 10,000," he told BBC radio. Cars and lorries queuing for the port snaked through Dover, stretching kilometers (miles) up the M20 motorway leading to the town.

At 7 am (0600 GMT), P&O Ferries told travelers to allow at least three to four hours to reach the port and clear all security checks. Many faced six-hour waits or longer on Friday. "We believe there's around 3,000 HGVs (heavy goods vehicles) held on the M20," said the

leader of Kent county council, Roger Gough.

The situation had eased due to the arrival of more French border agency staff, he added, but said the situation overall remained "extremely serious". "The problem is that we have both very high volumes of passengers coming through and clearly a backlog in relation to HGVs," he said. Dover has previously been a bottleneck for delays since Britain left the European Union, its single market and customs area in January last year. The queues have been blamed on increased border checks and additional paperwork for freight traffic.

One French lawmaker, Pierre-Henri Dumont, said this weekend's travel chaos would happen again, calling it "an aftermath of Brexit". "We have to run more checks than before," Dumont, whose constituency includes the French Channel port of Calais, told BBC television.

Bannister agreed there were "increased transaction times" post-Brexit but said capacity had been increased and the port was confident of handling demand at peak periods. French authorities blamed an "unforeseen technical incident" in the Channel Tunnel for delaying the arrival of its border staff on Friday morning. But operator Eurotunnel rejected the explanation. — AFP



Eurotunnel and Dover ferry crossing delays blamed on 'unexpected incident' as holiday getaway plunged into chaos. — AFP

## US airlines post profits, but struggle to boost capacity

**NEW YORK:** Strong travel demand has enabled the biggest US airlines to return to profitability, but efforts to restore capacity back to pre-pandemic levels face manpower and cost challenges. For the first time in the COVID-19 era, both American Airlines and United Airlines reported profitable quarters without the benefit of government support programs.

Delta Air Lines also was profitable in the second quarter, but had previously reached this milestone in the third quarter of 2021. So-called "pent-up demand" for flying has led to brisk ticket sales despite high prices. American's revenues surged 12 percent compared with the same quarter in pre-pandemic 2019, reaching \$13.4 billion in the April to June quarter, the most ever. Delta's revenue jumped 10 percent to \$13.8 billion, while United's rose six percent to \$12.1 billion.

But all three carriers are running fewer flights than they were in that period, with Delta off the most at 18 percent. Strong pricing has enabled the industry to offset the hit from much higher jet fuel prices, as well as increased wages.

But carriers have struggled operationally as they have ramped up. The problems were especially bad in June, when bad weather, intermittent issues with air traffic control and staffing shortfalls at airlines led to widespread flight cancellations and delays. Overall, even with the better performance in the second quarter, "it's fundamentally a less profitable business" than before the pandemic, said Peter McNally, analyst at Third Bridge, a consultancy. For one thing, while business travel has come back partly, McNally believes it may never fully hit its pre-COVID level due to the greater use of virtual meetings. Corporate travel has traditionally been a huge driver of airline profits.

Costs are another issue. While jet fuel prices are expected to retreat somewhat in the third quarter, they remain well above historic levels. A shortage of pilots and other key personnel is also seen pressuring wages for the foreseeable future. And while customers have so far not been deterred by higher ticket prices, there are doubts about how much longer this behavior can continue, especially with persistent inflation.

### Will demand cool?

Airlines have been aggressively adding staff, but making the most of new hires takes time. "The chief issue we're working through is not hiring but a training and experience bubble," said Delta Chief Executive Ed Bastian, who said the carrier had added 18,000 new employees since 2021.

"Our active headcount is at 95 percent of 2019 levels, despite only restoring less than 85 percent of our capacity," Bastian said. American forecast that its third quarter will be between eight and 10 percent below pre-pandemic levels, while United sees a drop of 11 percent and Delta a fall of between 15 and 17 percent.

Just when the industry can fully restore capacity remains foggy. "It's dependent on the supply chains, aircraft manufacturers and ultimately, pilot supply to all get back in sync," said American Chief Executive Robert Isom. "There's not a day that goes by where we don't have issues with provisioning our aircraft with pillows, blankets, plastic cups, food," he said on an earnings conference call. "At various times, we have issues with fueling." Beyond such daily concerns, carriers are also factoring in macroeconomic challenges.

These include volatility in the oil market that has lifted jet fuel prices and "the growing likelihood of an economic slowdown or recession," said United Chief Executive Scott Kirby. McNally, the analyst, thinks some of the operational pressures could ease in the fall with the seasonal decline in travel, allowing airlines to catch up on hiring, training and planning. "However, revenues will cool as well," McNally said. Shares of American fell 7.4 percent to \$14.08, while United slumped 10.2 percent to \$37.44 and Delta declined 2.7 percent to \$31.96. — AFP

## Chinese real estate giant Evergrande ousts top executives

**BEIJING:** Embattled Chinese real estate giant Evergrande has ousted its CEO and CFO after an internal investigation into why banks seized over \$2 billion from the firm's property services arm, the company has said. The resignations come as Evergrande fights for survival and works to reach a restructuring agreement with debtors, to whom it owes an estimated \$300 billion.

The executives were forced to step down on Friday following an internal investigation into why banks unexpectedly seized 13.4 billion yuan (\$2 billion) in deposits from its real estate services unit, Evergrande Property Services. Investigators established the money was seized because it was being used as a guarantee to allow a "third party" to

obtain a loan, according to a statement from the company released late Friday night.

Funds obtained from that loan were then "diverted back to the Group via third parties and were used for... general operations", it added. "In view of this, the Board resolved to request" that the executives involved resign, including CEO Xia Haijun and chief financial officer Pan Darong, according to the statement, which was published on the website of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, where the firm is listed.

An executive director, Siu Shawn, has been named CEO. Once a leading light in China's real estate sector, Evergrande has in recent months scrambled to offload assets, with chairman Hui Ka Yan paying off some of its debts using his own personal wealth.

Evergrande's woes have had knock-on effects throughout China's property sector, with some smaller firms also defaulting on loans and others struggling to find enough cash. Long heavily dependent on loans to finance their massive developments, China's real estate firms have found themselves in trouble as a push by Beijing to reign in indebtedness has cut cash flows. — AFP



SHANGHAI, China: In this file photo taken on October 09, 2021 a partially illuminated sign of the Evergrande Center is seen at the Evergrande Center building in Shanghai. — AFP

## Libya's NOC says oil production set to hit 1.2m bpd

**TRIPOLI:** Libya's National Oil Corporation said its crude output will reach 1.2 million barrels per day within two weeks after production resumed at several of its oilfields this week. Current oil output at NOC is at 860,000 bpd, compared with 560,000 bpd on June 11, before resuming production, the state-owned company said. This is in line with the oil ministry's earlier declaration that output is at more than 800,000 bpd and is projected to hit the "normal" 1.2 million bpd rate by August.

The 1.2 million bpd figure was the average output in 2021, which was a significant recovery from 400,000 bpd in 2020, according to World Bank estimates. "National Oil Corporation and its companies achieved a relative increase in oil production, with current production reaching 860,000 barrels per day, while the pre-reopening production rate was 560,000 barrels per day," the NOC said.

"NOC is striving to increase production and bring it back to its normal rates of 1.2 million barrels per day in two weeks." Libya has Africa's largest oil reserves and hydrocarbons, which account for 95 percent of government revenues, making control of the industry a key point of contention between its rival governments.

Armed factions have also sought to control production and exports, in some cases attacking oil infrastructure, devastating Libya's economy. Libya's economic recovery, however, is gathering momentum, boosted by a large increase in hydrocarbon output in 2021, according to the African Development Bank. The economy is expected to expand by 3.5 percent this year and 4.4 percent in 2023, but this will depend on the stabilization of its political situation, security improvements and persistence of oil production, the lender added.

But rising prices, chronic power cuts and political deadlock have angered Libyans, who have taken to the capital Tripoli's streets to protest. Libya on July 1 shut down two of the country's biggest export terminals and an oilfield amid political turmoil in the country, with NOC declaring a state of force majeure, which refers to an unforeseen set of circumstances preventing a party from fulfilling a contract. The affected oil assets were Asida and Ras Lanuf terminals, and the El-Feel field, which is also known as the Elephant field. Their closures resulted in billions of losses to its economy.

Before that, earlier shutdowns at two other terminals, Brega and Zueitina, brought total economic losses to about 16 billion Libyan dinars (\$3.31 billion), NOC said at the time. The Central Bank of Libya had put the figure at about \$3.5 billion. The country's oil industry was thrown into further chaos last week when one of the country's two rival governments dismissed NOC head Mustafa Sanalla, even sending troops to occupy the company's headquarters. The armed units forced their way into NOC's Tripoli offices when Sanalla refused to leave. — Agencies



The headquarters of Libya's National Oil Corporation in Tripoli. The state-owned company said it is striving to increase oil production and bring it back to its normal rates. — AFP



ARLINGTON, United States: In this file photo taken on July 02, 2022, an American Airlines flight approaches to land at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP

## IMF adopts plan to better account for gender gaps

**WASHINGTON:** In response to multiple global crises disproportionately impacting women, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has adopted new policies to better consider gender in its work, the global crisis leader's managing director announced Friday.

"I am most pleased and proud to announce that the Executive Board today approved the IMF's first Gender Strategy aimed at integrating gender into the Fund's core activities," said Kristalina Georgieva in a

statement. She explained that the Washington-based organization would immediately begin implementing the strategy, which includes improving access to gender-disaggregated data as well as "setting up a robust framework to ensure that macro-critical aspects of gender are integrated in IMF country work."

"Successful implementation of this strategy will assist our member countries in achieving more inclusive and equitable economic growth and resilience," said Georgieva.

"When women do well, countries do well." A Bulgarian economist who has worked for decades in international development, Georgieva added that "well-designed macroeconomic, structural, and financial policies can support efficient and inclusive outcomes and equitably benefit women, girls, and society in general." — AFP



## Business

# Al-Sager: NBK successfully expanded its global footprint; focus on core banking

NBK Vice Chairman and Group CEO Isam Al-Sager speaks during an interview with CNBC Arabia

**KUWAIT:** Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and CEO of National Bank of Kuwait Group, said that NBK Group had the most profitable quarter on record in 2Q 2022, asserting the Group's sound financial position and its high asset quality, which supported lower cost of risk and contributed positively to uplifting the bottom-line.

In an interview with CNBC Arabia, Al-Sager commented on the Group's financial results in 1H 2022, indicating that in 2022, NBK continued to focus on core banking activities, which are the main pillar for the Bank's growth and profitability. NBK's operating income grew by 6.1 percent y-o-y, positively uplifting its bottom line.



Isam Al-Sager

Total loans and advances grew by 8.8 percent year-on-year, reflecting the growth achieved in both conventional and Islamic customer segments. Commenting on the bank's proposal to distribute 10 percent interim cash dividends, Al-Sager said: "This is the first time for NBK to distribute interim dividends, following the changes made to our articles of association, as we are comfortable in the Group's capacity to continue to generate profits as well as our confidence in the bank's solid financial position".

## Global economy bounces back

Responding to a question about the impact of the global economic slowdown on the banking sector, Al-Sager said: "I don't believe there will be a significant impact, as we witnessed positive trends in 1Q2022 and 2Q2022, so we are optimistic on the future financial performance in 2H2022. In 1H2022, we started seeing gradual recovery in business activities and increased momentum in consumer spending, despite the global economy facing stagnation risks, in addition to the escalating geopolitical turmoil and rising inflation.

Al-Sager highlighted that soaring oil prices, increased output, credit growth acceleration to its highest levels in over a decade, and robust consumer demand were all contributing factors that boosted Kuwait's economic recovery.

He also pointed out that higher oil prices provided a spell of relief for the GCC oil-exporting nations, as it eased pressures on public finances and positioned GCC governments to accelerate project award going forward. This strongly supports lending to the private sector and improves the operating environment.

As for his opinion on how higher interest rates and tighter monetary policies impacted NBK, Al-Sager sees that raising interest rates bodes well for the

## NBK posted highest quarterly profit on record for Group in 2Q 2022: Al-Bahar

**KUWAIT:** Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait said that NBK reported robust financial performance in 1H2022 and managed to post the highest quarterly profits on record for the Group in 2Q2022.



Shaikha Al-Bahar

In an interview with Bloomberg, Al-Bahar said that NBK continued to benefit from the good growth trends in revenue sources by focusing on core banking activities, in addition to the positive impact of the prudent provisioning approach, especially during the pandemic, as it reflected positively on the bank's profitability and reduced cost risks. Al-Bahar explained that NBK's strategy is focused on increasing revenues and profitability. "NBK's strategic milestones are focused on diversification and creating value for our shareholders," Al-Bahar stated, confirming that those strategies positions NBK to drive revenue growth and profitability.

On the interest income front, Al-Bahar highlighted that NBK's strategy to manage funding cost will continue to drive revenue growth going forward.

"In recent years, we became more active in capital

markets and have successfully issued senior notes at very attractive rates, boosting our diversification and financial stability," Al-Bahar said.

She indicated that NBK has focused in recent years on increasing retail deposits, which gave the Bank an advantage during the pandemic, as it recorded a significant increase in both current and savings account deposits, positioning the Group to benefit from higher interest rates.

Touching on inflation and its impact on the local operating environment, Al-Bahar mentioned that inflation rates are indeed at their highest levels, however, it's not that high when compared to the rest of the world, as it is driven basically by real estate and food, hinting that Kuwait has subsidies to support the nationals, which should be accounted for when calculating inflation impacts on the economy.

## Strong indicators

Al-Bahar pointed out that Kuwait's economy is showing very strong signs of recovery post-COVID and business sentiment has been improving in recent quarters although internationally there are more concerns now on the global economic outlook, as a result of increasing geopolitical tensions and high inflation, as well as other factors. "We believe the growth momentum will continue. Higher oil prices will help the growth in GDP, which is expected to inch higher to 8.8 percent. This would create good opportunities for banks, especially that there is a

massive pipeline of projects. This remains key to sustain Kuwait's infrastructure and improve its utilities and should bode well for lending to the private sector," Al-Bahar confirmed.

## Growth catalyst

Discussing key growth catalysts during 2H2022, Al-Bahar stated that the number one catalyst is the government projects, especially that we have a strong and good pipeline in the oil and gas sector and non-oil sector, as well as other initiatives. The focus is basically that the government will pursue lots of projects through the private sector, creating ample opportunities for banks and the private sector.

"Improved health conditions and easing lockdowns and restrictions post Covid-19 strengthened project activity in 2021, with the value of awarded projects reaching KD 1.5 billion," Al-Bahar said.

She added that it is expected that we will witness a revival of project tendering and awarding activities in 2022. Estimates indicate that there is a strong projects pipeline amounting to about KD 3.0 billion this year, so we look forward to reviving the momentum of this market.

## Mortgage law

Al-Bahar highlighted that the fundamentals of the housing market in Kuwait along with the very young population necessitate the existence of some housing finance mechanism.

"We also view the role of the banking sector to be imminent and central in supporting the government in securing that mechanism through a mortgage product and accordingly having a mortgage law is inevitable," Al-Bahar concluded.

bank's profitability. "Thanks to our strong brand name, we attract and retain low-cost deposits. This type of deposits is usually less sensitive to interest rates changes. Therefore, as the interest rates go higher, so would Net Interest Margin (NIM), ultimately reflecting positively on net interest income," Al-Sager confirmed.

"Although we expect similar trends in the future, as we continue to reap the benefits of rising rates, it is worth noting that competition is getting fierce, which may influence pricing and banks' competitiveness. This may also reduce the benefits that would be expected to be associated with the current cycle," Al-Sager added.

## Growth market

Speaking of NBK-Egypt and how its performance was impacted by the challenges facing emerging economies around the world, Al-Sager said: "Egypt is

considered one of the main markets where NBK strives to expand its activities. We are very optimistic about the economic outlook and the opportunities this market presents", adding that like other emerging markets, the Egyptian Pound depreciated, and inflation continues to rise, negatively impacting NBK-Egypt's contribution to the Group's overall profits. However, this situation creates a transient and limited impact that should resolve by itself once we adjust the baseline.

Al-Sager testified to the strength of the Egyptian economy, confirming that it has the ability to overcome these challenges thanks to its resilience as it reaps the benefits of the Economic Reform Program that the government was committed to implementing over the past few years.

"We seek to expand our retail banking services in the Egyptian market by investing in digital banking services, with focus on attracting new customers and

by taking the hassle out of everyday banking", Al-Sager stressed.

## Tough competition

Touching on the bank's strategy in dealing with the mergers and acquisitions among regional banks, Al-Sager said: "As a regional player, we have been competing in a market that has seen a lot of consolidation recently and that has not distracted us from our strategic goals or put us under pressure to follow the trend." "We were ahead of the curve, as we grew and expanded our footprint through acquisitions in our earlier growth phases. This allowed us to improve our diversification and the integration of our services across various markets. Today, we are gaining the benefits of this successful expansion strategy with all consolidation and integration risks behind us allowing us to focus more on better execution in our key markets," Al-Sager commented.



## Tata seeks £1.5bn aid to keep British steel plant open

**LONDON:** Indian steel giant Tata Steel said Friday it could close its major plant at Port Talbot in Wales unless it receives British government aid to help decarbonize production. "A transition to a greener steel plant is the intention that we have. But this is only possible with financial help from the government," Tata Group chair Natarajan Chandrasekaran told the Financial Times.

Chandrasekaran said the group had been embroiled in two years of discussions on obtaining 1.5 billion pounds (\$1.8 billion) from London and forecast an accord within 12 months. But he added "without this, we will have to look at closures of sites," including Port Talbot, Britain's largest steelmaking site which employs around half Tata's UK workforce of 8,000.

The Community trade union, the largest at Tata Steel, slammed a "shocking situation" it said had emerged without any consultation. "The unions have been working with our experts exploring low carbon options that will protect our country's steelmaking capacity, jobs and communities. That process is unfinished, but Tata's comments make a mockery of the company's commitments to an open and transparent dialogue with the unions," Community said. The union called on the firm's executives to "live up to their moral and social responsibilities to the workforce" and reach an accord with the government.

Unite union regional secretary Peter Hughes said no steelworks anywhere in the world had to date managed to decarbonize production without state aid. Hughes added: "Steel is a strategic industry and must be central to the UK's economic strategy."

Tata is targeting carbon neutrality by 2050 and also wants to reduce CO2 emissions on its UK activities by 30 percent by 2030. The FT reported the company wanted the aid cash to part-fund the closure of two blast furnaces at Port Talbot and replace them

with two less carbon intensive electric arc furnaces, a process costing an estimated three billion pounds. A UK government spokesperson told AFP: "Steel plays a critical role in all areas of the UK economy and Tata is a valued steel producer and significant employer in the UK." Tata Steel did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment. A slide in steel demand during the pandemic had already fuelled concerns as to the Port Talbot plant's long-term future after losses across two years of the health crisis came in at around a billion pounds.

Last year, Tata Steel had already announced 1,000 job losses in the UK. The industry is seeing the pollution it generates bring legal troubles amid climate change as evidenced last February when Tata faced a Dutch criminal investigation into alleged "intentional and illegal" pollution of surface water at a plant outside Amsterdam. — AFP

## French shipping, oil groups cut prices under pressure

**PARIS:** French oil group TotalEnergies and shipping giant CMA CGM announced price cuts on Friday as demanded by the government amid growing calls for windfall taxes on their profits. TotalEnergies said it would cut diesel and petrol prices at the pump by 20 euro centimes from September to November and 10 centimes thereafter.

CMA CGM published a reduction in its transport prices "to support the purchasing power of French households and the economy." French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire had singled out both companies in an interview with Le Monde newspaper on Wednesday, calling on them to "make an effort."

He has resisted calls from members of the ruling centrist party, as well as left-wing opposition parties, to impose windfall taxes on their profits. "We shouldn't fall into a sort of intellectual fraud which suggests that every French company has profited from the crisis," he told the newspaper.—AFP

## Zimbabwe braces for new gold coin

**HARARE:** Zimbabwe will next week introduce a gold coin aimed at battling a resurgence in inflation and easing the public's thirst for US dollars. The 22-carat coins, each weighing one Troy ounce (31.1 grams) and individually numbered, have been named Mosi-oo-Tunya ("the smoke that thunders") after the country's world-famous Victoria Falls.

They will be sold through banks from Monday at the prevailing international price for gold. The coin whose market value on Friday was \$1,725 — will be convertible to cash and be tradeable locally and internationally. Buyers will take physical possession of the coin and be issued with a certificate of ownership, with the option of placing the asset in the safety of a bank vault.

The government says the innovation aims at shoring up the economy at a time of galloping inflation and depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar. Instead of people "going to the parallel market to look for a store value (in the US dollar), we are giving them an alternative product they can invest in," the governor of the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, John Mangudya, said this month.

He told lawmakers that if the parallel currency market steadied, "money will have value and result in stable prices." The number of coins that will be minted has not been disclosed. Zimbabwe is a major source of gold, and they will be made from locally mined ore.

Inflation rose to 191.60 percent in June, the highest official rate in the world, according to Steve Hanke, a professor of applied economics at Johns

Hopkins University in Maryland. Confidence in the local dollar is so low that goods and services are mostly priced in greenbacks. The US dollar has been the currency of choice since 2008, when inflation spiraled so far out of control that the central bank issued a 100-trillion-dollar note, which has now become a collectors' item.

Economists and opposition are skeptical about the new coin's impact. "The coin is not going to have a significant effect in terms of stabilizing the macro economy," economist Prosper Chitambara told AFP, adding that most Zimbabweans were too poor to afford the coin.

## 'Arbitrary and capricious'

Takavafira Zhou, a political scientist at Masvingo State University, scoffed at the idea that the coin could fix the economy. "The idea is just to do something to preoccupy the people and be seen to be doing something. That is the problem when you have small heads sitting in big offices," he said Zhou.

Economist Gift Mugano dismissed the idea of introducing a gold coin today, when more and more currencies were virtual. The Central African Republic, one of the poorest countries in the world, this month unveiled plans to launch its own digital currency, the Sango.

"We seem to be going back to the 19th century when people traded with gold," said Mugano. "We need to focus more on digital finance, digital currency." The largest opposition party, the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), said there was no "trust or confidence" in the coin.

"The public will once again be at the mercy of arbitrary and capricious rules imposed by the monetary authorities," said CCC's spokeswoman, Fadzayi Mahere. — AFP



Give us greenbacks: For many Zimbabweans, the US dollar is the currency of choice

## Business

# Markaz report forecasts positive outlook for Kuwait property sector

## Real estate sector recovery continues on back of high oil prices

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz) revealed in its 'Kuwait Real Estate H2 2022 Outlook' report that the country's real estate sector has continued to recover from a major hit it took during the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years and is currently accelerating, albeit modest. The uptrend is driven mainly by increased transactions in the residential apartment and commercial real estate segments on the back of optimism over improvement in economic activity. Strong macroeconomic fundamentals, supported by rising oil prices and demand and a sustained rebound in the non-oil sector, paint a positive outlook for the domestic property market.

Developed and published with the aim of helping investors gain a deep understanding of the current state of the Kuwaiti real estate market, the report was prepared by Marmore MENA Intelligence, a fully owned subsidiary of Markaz. The assessments and predictions in the report are based on the 'Markaz Real Estate Macro Index,' which takes into consideration various economic indicators such as oil and non-oil GDP growth, inflation, new job creation, interest rate, and population growth, among others. It analyses the performance of subsectors such as residential, office, retail and industrial during the first six months and delves into the impact of various new socioeconomic policies and real estate reforms and initiatives on the sector. The findings and observations in the report are substantiated with data from the past seven years along with estimates for the remainder of the current year and

forecasts for the next year.

The property market has benefited from the easing of pandemic mitigation measures by the government and the opening of new business and expansion of current business, which lead to an increase in the occupancy rates across the real estate sector and an improvement in investors' confidence increase in the real estate sector during Q1 and Q2 2022. Overall real estate transaction values have continued to rise in Q1 2022 with Istithmari (residential apartment) and commercial real estate subsectors being on the upward trajectory, however, private residential housing sales, which drove the recovery last year, declined during the same period.

During the first quarter of the year, the Istithmari transaction value rose 9 percent above that of Q1 2019. Sales of commercial real estate appear to be recovering, posting a 128 percent year-on-year growth in Q1 2022. However, the transaction value has yet to reach pre-pandemic levels and is 38 percent below that of Q1 2019. On the other hand, private residential housing sales dropped by about 20 percent to KD 517.6 million, compared to KD 644.2 million logged in Q1 2021. However, it remains above pre-pandemic levels, 37 percent higher than KD 376.5 million registered for the first three months of 2019.

The Markaz report holds a positive outlook for the Kuwaiti real estate sector for the remainder of the year in view of the projected expansion in the national economy aided by strong oil and non-oil



**KUWAIT:** 'Kuwait Real Estate H2 2022 Outlook,' a report released by Markaz, said that the country's real estate sector has continued to recover from a major hit it took during the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years.

economic growth, as well as improvement in fiscal balance, which indicates healthy levels of government revenue and spending. While a rise in interest rates could be a headwind for the economy and the sector, the Central Bank of Kuwait's slower pace of

rate hike compared to US Fed might lessen the impact. It is also worth noting that even though Kuwait has been experiencing a rise in inflation given its reliance on imports, inflation levels in the country are lower than in some major economies.

## India's Reliance reports highest-ever refining revenues

**MUMBAI:** Indian oil-to-telecoms giant Reliance Industries reported earnings that missed analyst estimates Friday, despite a strong performance by its core oil-refining business.

The conglomerate, which is owned by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, reported a net profit of 179.55 billion rupees (\$2.25 billion) between April and June, 46.3 percent higher than the same period last year. Revenues from operations increased 54.54 percent year-on-year to 2.23 trillion rupees, aided by both its legacy energy business and newer ventures like telecoms. Revenues from Reliance's oil to chemicals (O2C) business—which accounts for 60 percent of total income—jumped 56.68 percent year-on-year to 1.62 trillion rupees, its highest ever. A 65 percent year-on-year increase in Brent crude oil prices in the quarter primarily contributed to the strong performance, the company said. Imports of Russian crude at discounted rates have likely helped Reliance's refining margins as energy demand surged.

Revenues from the energy giant's smaller oil and gas exploration and production business jumped 183 percent year-on-year to 36.25 billion rupees, helped by higher gas prices. "Geopolitical conflict has caused significant dislocation in energy markets and disrupted traditional trade flows," chairman and managing director Ambani said in a statement. "Despite significant challenges posed by the tight crude markets and higher energy and freight costs, O2C business has delivered its best performance ever," the billionaire added.

Strong supply chain infrastructure helped insulate customers on Reliance's retail, grocery and digital platforms from inflation in the quarter, Ambani said. Telecoms arm Reliance Jio saw revenues rise 23.6 percent to 275.27 billion rupees and added 9.7 million subscribers, reversing three consecutive quarters of its subscriber base shrinking. Revenues from Reliance's retail business hit a fresh all-time high of 585.54 billion rupees, helped by the opening of 792 new stores in the quarter. Reliance's multi-billion-dollar fortune has been powered by oil and petrochemicals businesses, but the company has diversified into new areas including telecoms and retail in recent years. The company's shares closed 0.62 percent higher in Mumbai ahead of the earnings announcement on Friday. —AFP

## Hungary eyes 'better cooperation' with EU in funds row

**VESZPREM, Hungary:** Hungary is hoping "better cooperation" with the European Commission will unlock billions of euros (dollars) of held-up funds, according to the minister in charge of the negotiations, as its economy struggles. Brussels has so far refused to approve post-COVID recovery funds for Budapest, citing concerns over rule of law and alleged corruption, making Hungary the only EU member not yet to have received the green light.

"There are obviously areas of disagreement between Budapest and the European Union at a high political level, but I think much better cooperation is possible in day-to-day exchanges," Tibor Navracsi, a minister in Prime Minister Viktor Orban's cabinet, told AFP in an interview this week.

Orban, who has ruled Hungary since 2010 and was re-elected in April by a landslide, has frequently clashed with Brussels over issues including migration and LGBTQ rights. In the latest row, the nationalist premier last week said Europe had "shot itself in the lungs" with sanctions targeting Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, while his foreign minister travelled to Moscow on Thursday to discuss buying more gas despite EU-Russia tensions. —AFP

## 'Work to be done': Aviation still overwhelmingly male

**FARNBOROUGH:** Rebecca Lutte regularly takes to the skies behind the controls of her RV-10 kit plane. Lutte, who is often joined in the air by her husband in the passenger seat, says that on several occasions air traffic controllers asked if her spouse was there in case of problems.

"It's not often. But it just shows that there's still more work to be done," says Lutte with a smile.

While some women have overcome such prejudice and made inroads into the sector in recent years, aeronautical careers remain largely the preserve of men — especially at the top. According to a 2021 study by Lutte, an associate professor at the Aviation Institute, University of Nebraska at Omaha, fewer than six percent of pilots at the world's leading airlines are women.

Just eight of the largest 100 carriers in the world in terms of passengers carried have female bosses.

Those that do include Air France, under the baton of Anne Rigail, Aer Lingus' Lynne Embleton and since July 1 KLM's Marjan Rintel. "Aviation is a system that was originally designed by men and for men," says Lutte. "Over the years, women have gained in numbers, but they've really had to fit into a system that wasn't designed for them."

## Adani overtakes Gates to become world's fourth-richest person

**WASHINGTON:** India's billionaire Gautam Adani has been ranked as the fourth richest person in the world by Forbes' Real Time Billionaires List. According to the list, Adani has a net worth of \$116.3 billion, while Bill Gates' net worth stands at \$104.7 billion. Reliance Industries (RIL) chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani has been ranked on the 10th spot with a net worth of \$90 billion.

Gates is believed to have slipped in the rankings after he announced that he would donate \$20 billion from his wealth to his non-profit organization. The richest woman

### Reducing inequality

Barriers faced by aspiring female aviators include uniforms designed for men and scant representation of women in training manuals. As in other sectors, sexism and aggressive sexual behavior are pervasive. In a 2018 study by Women in Aviation International, 71 percent of women surveyed said they had suffered some form of workplace harassment.

Several women have nonetheless made their mark on aviation. They include US flyer Amelia Earhart, the first woman to cross the Atlantic by plane under her own steam.

France's Raymonde de Laroche became the first woman in the world to obtain a pilot's license when she received hers in 1910. During the 20th Century several female aviators fought for their countries—notably the paramilitary Women Airforce Service Pilots programme which supported the US air force during World War II. More recently, some airlines have made reducing inequality in the industry a priority. US carrier United committed to ensuring that by 2030 at least half of the 5,000 pilots the carrier intends to train by then will be women and minorities.

### Female role models

Some airlines, such as Air India, are further down the path to equality with women making up some 13 percent of its pilots, according to the International Society of Women Airline Pilots.

Canada's CAE simulation technologies and training group offers women training grants and signed a partnership agreement with no-frills European airline easyJet at the Farnborough air show this week.

on the list is L'Oreal's Francoise Bettencourt Meyers and family with a net worth of \$71 billion. She is placed on the 15th spot. The Indian tycoon has added \$36 billion to his fortune this year, more than anyone else, while Gates's has shrunk as he sped up philanthropic giving and tech shares sold off.

Adani, who built his empire on agri-trading, coal and ports, has been moving up a wealth ranking traditionally dominated by US tech entrepreneurs. He's been rapidly diversifying into green energy, airports, data centers, digital services and media, aligning his strategy with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'nation-building agenda'.

The first-generation entrepreneur and college dropout, Adani started off with an agri-trading firm in the late 1980s and has amassed almost all of his wealth in the past two years as his push to diversify intensified. He became a centibillionaire in April, joining the elite club that includes people Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos.

## Volkswagen to change CEO and style with departure of Diess

**FRANKFURT:** Volkswagen unexpectedly announced Friday that its CEO Herbert Diess will step down in a few weeks after four years at the head of the German auto giant as it attempts an ambitious shift towards electric vehicles.

Diess's will leave the helm from the top of the world's second-largest automaker "by mutual consent" on September 1, Volkswagen said in a statement. The outgoing CEO had been in the hot seat at Volkswagen for months amid clashes with workers' representatives and a nagging troubles at the group's software division.

The change at the top comes as Volkswagen is aiming to leave behind combustion engines to become the world's biggest electric car manufacturer by 2025 — a target boosted by Diess himself. Diess had "played a key role" in the transformation of the group, steered the company through "extremely turbulent waters" and "implemented a fundamentally new strategy", said Volkswagen supervisory board chairman, Hans Dieter Poetsch.

The reins will be taken by Oliver Blume, the current boss of the Porsche sports cars, part of the Volkswagen family of 12 brands, which also includes the likes of Skoda and Audi. The switch was decided at a meeting of the group supervisory board on Friday.

"Team spirit, fairness and passion are essential for success," he said in a statement on Friday.

Blume will stay on as the CEO of Porsche, which is in the midst of planning an entry onto the stock market, potentially as soon as this year.

### Software malfunction

Diess took over Volkswagen in 2018, tasked with turning the page once and for good on the 2015 "dieselgate" scandal, where Volkswagen tampered with millions of diesel vehicles to dupe emissions tests. Under Diess, Volkswagen has backed its electric shift with a total of 46 billion euros (\$46.8 billion) in planned investments over the next five years.

Latterly, Diess took over responsi-



Herbert Diess aimed to make Volkswagen the world's biggest manufacturer of electric cars by 2025, but the effort has been slowed by software problems and production delays

bility for VW's tech division Cariad on the board of management. But the development of a platform to be used in the group's vehicles has however been mired by "production delays" that have "cost money", according to German automotive expert Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer.

The software branch had likely "created too many problems and challenges for the VW Group", he said. Revitalizing the software division would be top of Blume's in-tray, Dudenhoeffer said, along with the

future of Volkswagen's battery strategy. In one of his last acts as CEO, Diess laid the ceremonial cornerstone at the site of the group's first in-house battery factory alongside German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

The outgoing CEO often ruffled feathers with his divisive style that led to clashes. An open admirer of Elon Musk, the CEO of American electric vehicles pioneer Tesla, Diess said last year the storied German carmaker would need a "revolution" to take on its US rival. —AFP



A May 20, 1937 image show US aviator Amelia Earhart on the wing of her Lockheed 10 Electra in Burbank, California. —AFP

The British carrier expects to take on one of the European women participating in the program. Equality will take time, but there are reasons for optimism says Sandra Bour Schaeffer, CEO of Airbus UpNext, part of the European plane-maker which develops and tests disruptive future aviation technologies.

The Franco-German engineer, who has some 20 years' experience in the industry, says the key is to bring young talent onboard and emphasize training. "First of all one must not limit the girls in their choice but open perspectives to them, showing them there are many things which can equally be done by women as men," she says. Bour Schaeffer says it is important to have female role models who have already succeeded—though it remains a turbulent journey. —AFP



Bill Gates (left) and Gautam Adani

### Wrestling boss Vince McMahon retires from WWE amid hush money probe

Vince McMahon, the promoter who built a pro wrestling show into a global entertainment empire, Friday announced he was retiring as head of World Wrestling Entertainment under a cloud of serious sexual misconduct allegations. McMahon, whose long-time friends include Donald Trump, became a character in his own wrestling promotions at one stage and even launched a rival to the NFL-his over-the-top XFL.

"As I approach 77 years old, I feel it's time for me to retire as chairman and CEO of WWE," McMahon said in a statement. "Throughout the years, it has been a privilege to help WWE bring you joy, inspire you, thrill you, surprise you, and always entertain you." McMahon stepped down from his roles with WWE last month pending the results of an internal investigation after allegations he had an affair with an employee and paid her \$3 million to keep the matter secret.



In this file photo WWE Chairman Vince McMahon attends a ceremony honoring him with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at Hollywood and Highland in Hollywood, California. — AFP

His daughter Stephanie was named interim CEO and chairman while the ongoing investigation continues amid widening allegations of misconduct. The Wall Street Journal reported two weeks ago that McMahon has paid more than \$12 million to four women formerly associated with WWE over the past 16 years to keep quiet about affairs and alleged misconduct, including a former female wrestler who claims he coerced her into oral sex.

#### Global phenomenon

After taking over from his father, also named Vince, and grandfather Jess, McMahon transformed the WWE from its regional beginnings, into a publicly traded international enterprise with hundreds of employees in offices worldwide. As he took the sport global, the younger McMahon delivered a unique and colorful brand of wrestling, recruiting the likes of Hulk Hogan—who went on to become a megastar far beyond his ring performances.

WWE wrestlers became cultural icons as McMahon used music and storytelling to introduce his stars into mainstream culture, delivering major events such as the first Wrestlemania in 1985 at New York's Madison Square Garden. "The Rock" went from WWE icon to Hollywood superstar while "Captain" Lou Albano was in a Cyndi Lauper music video, and Hogan had star turns alongside Mr. T and Sylvester Stallone in a prime example of the crossover star mix that McMahon delivered.

McMahon also has longstanding ties to the celebrity-turned-president Donald Trump, who is a WWE Hall of Fame inductee and who gave McMahon's wife Linda a government role as head of the small business administration. At the culmination of a staged feud, Trump once famously body-slammed the WWE boss, and shaved his head in the middle of a wrestling ring on live television.

Through telecasts and live shows, the WWE became a star-making machine melding the entertainment and sport realms, producing such colorful characters as "Stone Cold" Steve Austin, "Macho Man" Randy Savage, "The Undertaker," and Ted DiBiase, also known as "The Million-Dollar Man." McMahon had kept in the background as a commentator until the late 1990s when he developed an evil "Mr. McMahon" character and a notable dispute with Austin, his own soap opera storylines becoming a big draw. —AFP

## First wild jaguars in 70 years born in Argentina national park

A captive-born jaguar released into Argentina's Ibera National Park last year has given birth to two cubs—the first to be born wild in the protected wetland in 70 years, the Rewilding Argentina conservation body said Thursday. A hidden camera confirmed keepers' suspicions of the happy event, showing the mother jaguar caring for her offspring, said Magali Longo, coordinator of the foundation's Jaguar Reintroduction Center (CRY).

"The mating of free jaguars and the birth of a new generation in freedom is excellent news for the project that seeks to halt the extinction of this species," Rewilding Argentina said in a statement. It also raised hopes of "regenerating a healthy population of jaguars" in the region that was once their natural home.

The cubs are the offspring of Arami, born at the CRY in 2018 and released into the protected park last September, and

Jatobazinho, a male rescued in Brazil, donated to the Argentine project in 2019 and released into the park in December. They were among eight jaguars released into the Ibera park last year, where the live like their wild ancestors: hunting capybaras, wild pigs and deer.

"If both cubs survive—something we should know in the coming weeks—the jaguar population of Ibera will rise to 10," said Sebastian Di Martino, the foundation's conservation director.

This was significant, he added, considering that only about 15 jaguars are known to exist in the Chaco ecoregion that includes the park. The CRY breeding and rehabilitation center has operated for ten years in Argentina's Corrientes province, where the jaguar went locally extinct 70 years ago. It is estimated that between 200 and 300 jaguars remain in Argentina. —AFP



This handout camera-trap picture released by Rewilding Argentina Foundation shows a jaguar (Panthera onca) named Arami carrying one of the two cubs she gave birth to outside of captivity, at the Ibera National Park in Corrientes, Argentina. — AFP

### Rhino orphans get new South African home

Moving home is stressful for anyone—and rhinoceroses are no exception. Vets in South Africa have just transferred more than 30 orphaned young rhinos to a sanctuary designed to keep the animals safe from poachers who killed their mothers. The move took six weeks and required extraordinary planning, including the help of animal friends who accompanied the orphans.

"We can't just move them all at the same time and go 'boom, there's a new home,'" said Yolande van der Merwe, who

oversees their new home. "You have to take it on very carefully because they're sensitive animals," she said. Van der Merwe, 40, manages the Rhino Orphanage, which cares for calves orphaned by poachers, rehabilitates them and then releases them back into the wild. This month, after its old lease expired, the non-profit moved to bigger premises, in a secret location between game farms in the northern province of Limpopo. Benji, a white calf who is only a few months old was the last rhino to relocate.

At birth, rhinos are small, not higher than an adult human knee, and tip the scales at around 20 kilograms (44 pounds). But they eat a lot and quickly pick up weight, ballooning up to half a ton in their first year of life. Given Benji's recent loss, staff were worried he would freak out during the process that saw him anaesthetized and loaded in the back of a 4x4.

But thankfully Benji's friend, Button the

sheep, was by his side throughout the move—and his presence helped ensure that everything went smoothly. "Mostly, their mothers have been poached," said Pierre Bester, a 55-year-old veterinarian who has been involved with the orphanage since its founding 10 years ago. "(They) all come here, and you handle them differently... you put them in crèches, give them a friend and then they cope."

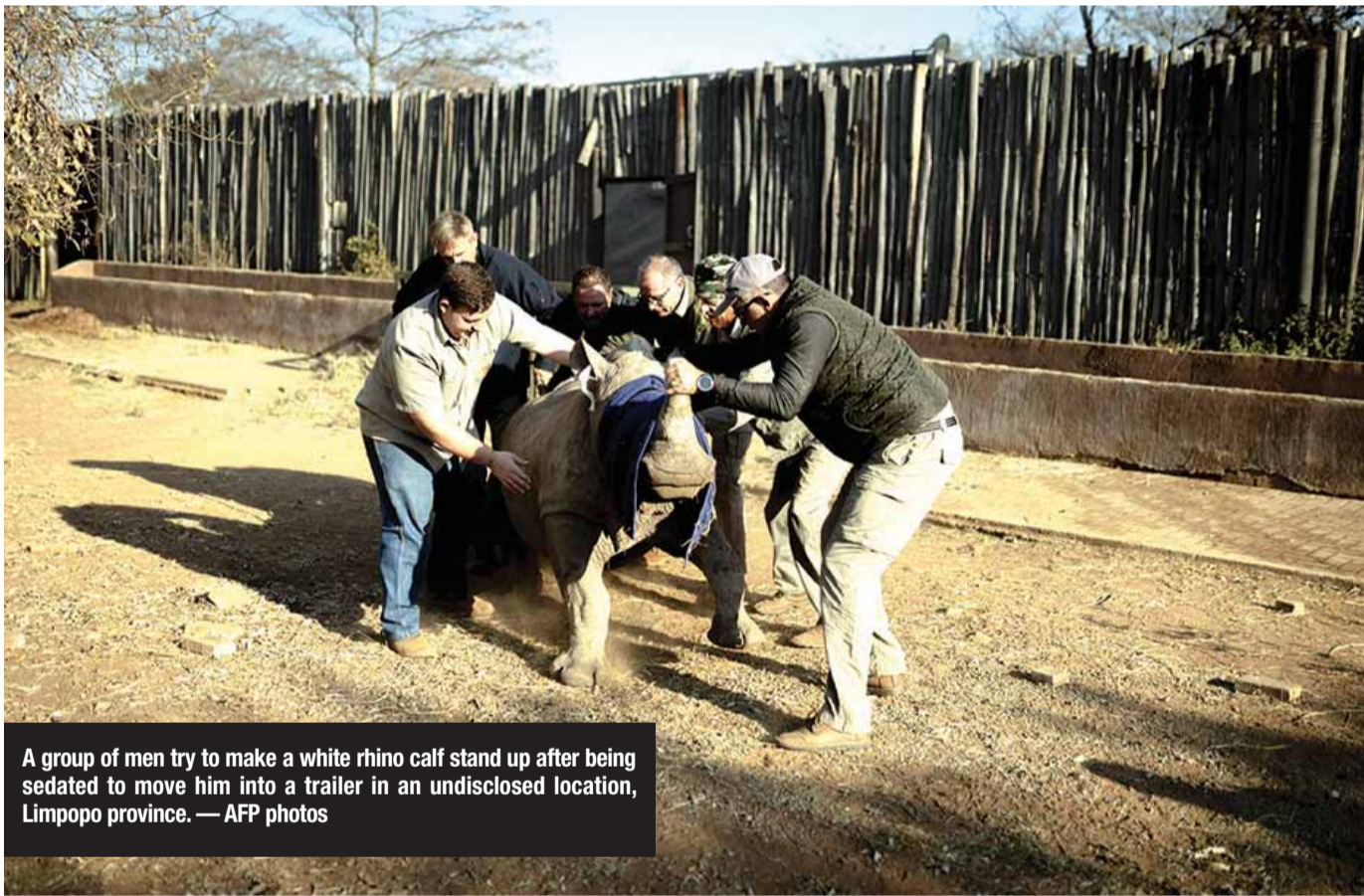
#### 'Love and care'

South Africa is home to nearly 80 percent of the world's rhinos. But it is also a hotspot for rhino poaching, driven by demand from Asia, where horns are used in traditional medicine for their supposed therapeutic effect. On the black market rhino horns fetch tens of thousands of dollars. More than 450 rhinos were poached across South Africa in 2021, according to government figures.

At the sanctuary, orphaned calves are nursed back to health by a team of care-

givers who sometimes pull 24-hour shifts, sleeping in the same enclosure as the animals to help them adjust. "Rhinos have their calves at foot the whole day, 24/7, and that's the kind of care they require," said van der Merwe.

"So we need to give that intense love and care to get them through the trauma," she said, adding some younglings showed signs of post-traumatic-stress-disorder. When they are fit enough, the animals are released back into the wild. Up to 90 percent normally make it. At the new sanctuary, Benji and his friends enjoy bigger enclosures with more space to roam. They are fitted special transmitters to monitor their movement as part of an array of security measures to keep poachers at bay. The orphanage asked AFP's reporters not to disclose its new location. "It is a war out there," Bester explained. — AFP



A group of men try to make a white rhino calf stand up after being sedated to move him into a trailer in an undisclosed location, Limpopo province. — AFP photos



Veterinarian at The Rhino Orphanage, Pierre Bester, pets a black rhino calf in an undisclosed location.



A rhino calf called Benjamin is seen at the Rhino Orphanage in an undisclosed location, Limpopo province.

### Leonor Espinosa: Celebrated Colombian chef with a taste for social change

From its jungles to its deserts: the world's newly-minted best female chef, Leonor Espinosa, draws her inspiration from Colombia's vast biodiversity, painful history and oft-neglected traditional communities. She is not only a cook but also an activist, having travelled to all corners of her motherland to study indigenous cuisine and give a voice to people who feel abandoned in areas blighted by poverty and decades of violence.

"My cuisine tastes of relegated cultures, of forgotten regions, it tastes of ancestral techniques, of smoke... of pain," the 59-year-old told AFP in Bogota after she was voted World's Best Female Chef 2022 by the panel that elects The World's 50 Best Restaurants. "It also tastes of joy, of plantain, of cassava, of the soil after it rains, of a desert ecosystem. There is a lot of poetry in my kitchen."

In naming Espinosa its winner, the 50 Best panel described her as a "multi-talented Colombian chef marrying art, politics and gastronomy." At her restaurant Leo in central Bogota, it added, "she has forged a unique, cerebral and profound cooking style that sets her apart from her contemporaries, at the same time as she seeks to use gastronomy as a tool of

socio-economic development."

#### Self-taught

Born in Cartagena in the country's southwest, Espinosa grew up in Cartagena on the Caribbean coast and taught herself to cook. She studied economics and arts and worked in advertising before making the leap to the kitchen at the age of 35. In 2017, she was anointed Latin America's best female chef. To give her restaurant its trademark native- and peasant-infused menu, she has criss-crossed Colombia to document its culinary history. She has incorporated many traditional ingredients into her repertoire—everything from exotic fruits and Andean tubers to ants and lar-

vae, traditions taken from the bush and served to five-star palates in the city.

Espinosa's exploration and upliftment agenda has often taken her to parts of the country deeply marred by Colombia's nearly 60-year civil conflict. Much of this work is done with her Funleo foundation, created in 2008 and awarded the Basque Culinary World Prize nine years later for promoting the gastronomic traditions of indigenous and afro-Colombian communities. "The award shines a light on those communities that for years have struggled to be recognized for their ancestral value and contribution to national cultural identity," Espinosa said at the time.

"It is a way of mitigating the silence

generated by the armed conflict, injustice and exclusion." With her nose rings and shy smile, Espinosa told AFP that any cook worth their salt is also an anthropologist, political scientist and artist. If the chef is a woman, they must also be thick-skinned and tenacious. While women have traditionally been in charge of food in Colombia, the world of haute cuisine has always been a male dominion, said Espinosa of the hurdles she experienced. But she was not easily put off. "I was quite clear from childhood that I will not be what other people want me to be," she told AFP. "I am who I am... I am rebellious, irreverent, curious." — AFP



In this file photo taken Colombian chef Leonor Espinosa poses during an interview with AFP at her restaurant in Bogota. — AFP photos



In this file photo Colombian chef Leonor Espinosa prepares a dish during an interview with AFP at her restaurant in Bogota.



Haitham Al-Madini opens the door of his recently renovated villa in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. — AFP photos



A picture shows the entrance to the recently renovated villa of Haitham Al-Madini in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. — AFP photos



Haitham Al-Madini stands next to the pool in his recently renovated villa in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. — AFP photos

## A new 'architectural openness' is remaking Saudi streets

For years, Haitham Al-Madini's house was like all the others on his block: a beige, nearly windowless facade sealed off from the outside world-as Saudi Arabia itself largely was. But two years ago, confined during a pandemic lockdown, Madini decided to open things up, adding a street-facing patio, redoing the exterior walls in limestone and installing soft lighting in the entryway.

Local architects and engineers say such features have become a hallmark of renovation and newly-built projects across the capital Riyadh as Saudis, spurred in part by revised building codes, embrace homes and businesses that are inviting rather than imposing. The result is a kind of visual marker of the more welcoming narrative Saudi officials are pushing for the traditionally ultra-conservative kingdom.

In recent years "there have been manifestations of an architectural openness", said Abdullah al-Jasser, owner of the AF Group design firm that worked on Madini's house. "People have become more accepting of change, and of different patterns of decoration and design."

In addition to his home's exterior walls and entryway, Madini spruced up the garden with tropical almond trees imported from Thailand and added a swimming pool, creating a new favorite lounge spot for his wife and seven children. "Now there is an optimum use of the space," the 52-year-old human resources officer told AFP, giving a tour in his traditional white robe and red-and-white headdress. "We have taken a step towards improving our way of life."

### Breaking with the past

Traditional designs-like what Madini's



Haitham Al-Madini (right) sits with Abdullah al-Jasser, owner of the AF Group design firm that worked on Madini's house, at his recently renovated villa in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. — AFP photos

home used to look like-still prevail on residential streets in Riyadh. On many homes, the only visible flourish comes in the form of tiny triangular windows typical of architecture in the central Najd region, where Riyadh is located.

The size of the windows reflects a desire not to let in the sun, especially when temperatures stay for much of the day above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). They also provide "greater privacy for the family", said Saudi architect Ali Alluhidan, owner of Alluhidan Engineering in Riyadh.

But he and other champions of new, more modern architecture find fault with the old approach, and not just because it can result in living spaces that are poorly lit and ventilated. It also carries "great social impact... It contributes to a culture of closing in on oneself", Alluhidan said. Closed

off is exactly what the kingdom was, socially and geographically, with for example no cinemas or tourist visas until the last few years.

In 2018, the Saudi national building code committee updated guidelines for new buildings-mandating bigger windows, for example, in part to promote public health. Other trends, while not explicitly required, reflect changing social and gender norms, a main focus of reforms promoted by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler who became first in line to the throne five years ago.

Whereas in the past most houses featured separate reception areas with different entrances for men and women, newer floor plans envision everyone commingling in a single area, allowing for a more efficient use of space, Alluhidan said. And



A picture shows the modern approach to buildings in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. — AFP photos

whereas before exterior balconies were nearly fully enclosed, surrounded by latticed walls that let in air but not much light, more open balconies and terraces are becoming the standard.

Not everything has changed, however. Even though women gained the right to drive in 2018, new floor plans for affluent Saudis still often include a room for a live-in driver, detached from the rest of the house. Nevertheless, Alluhidan is convinced the budding mania for modern design "will change the culture of architecture in Saudi Arabia within a few years".

### Open for business

These new preferences are not limited to residential properties. They are also reshaping commercial complexes and other public spaces. Saudi restaurants used to have separate entrances and seating areas for families and single men, but

authorities did away with that rule in late 2019. The reform has helped drive a rethinking of how shopping centers should be organized, said Mohammed Abdel Moneim, supervisor of commercial design for a real estate development firm.

"The old designs used to serve the idea of a culture of separation and segregation between families and singles," he said, describing what he termed a "radical change".

Riyadh Front, an upscale shopping and dining complex with fountains and a tree-lined promenade, is one of the more prominent examples of this, bringing male and female shoppers of all ages together. "There is demand now for these open spaces," Abdel Moneim said, "where there is communication without restrictions between everyone." —AFP



This combination of pictures shows (from left) US film icon George Clooney, Cuban-American composer Tania Leon, US soul legend Gladys Knight, Irish rockers Bono and The Edge of U2 and Christian pop artist Amy Grant. — AFP

## George Clooney, Gladys Knight, U2 among Kennedy Center honorees

Film icon George Clooney and soul legend Gladys Knight are among this year's crop of Kennedy Center honorees, one of America's most prestigious arts awards. Irish rockers U2, Cuban-born American composer Tania Leon and the contemporary Christian and pop artist Amy Grant round out the 45th class, which will be feted at the center's annual gala on December 4.

The Kennedy Center-Washington's performing arts complex that serves as a

living monument to slain president John F. Kennedy-has like all arts institutions suffered during the pandemic and been forced to cancel, postpone or rein in previous celebrations. But barring the unexpected this year's appeared to be on track to bring the glitz to Washington, where such red carpet events are rare.

Last winter President Joe Biden attended, marking the first time a sitting president had attended the event in five years. Donald Trump bucked tradition and did not

attend during his presidency, after several of the honored artists threatened to boycott the gala in his first year in office if he were present.

This year's event promised a slate of star-studded tributes to those being inducted. "Growing up in a small town in Kentucky I could never have imagined that someday I'd be the one sitting in the balcony at the Kennedy Center Honors. To be mentioned in the same breath with the rest of these incredible artists is an honor,"

Clooney, star of "Michael Clayton" and "Gravity," said in a statement.

"Midnight Train to Georgia" singer Knight echoed the sentiment, saying she's "humbled beyond words to be included amongst this prestigious group of individuals, both past and present." "The Kennedy Center's commitment to the arts is unparalleled and I am so very grateful for this moment." — AFP

made errors that prevented a just and fair verdict consistent with the First Amendment," a spokesperson for Heard said in a reference to the constitutional amendment protecting free speech.

"We are therefore appealing the verdict," they said in a statement. "While we realize today's filing will ignite the Twitter bonfires, there are steps we need to take to ensure both fairness and justice." A Virginia jury in June awarded \$10 million in damages to Depp after finding that a 2018 newspaper column penned by Heard was defamatory. The 59-year-old Depp sued Heard over a Washington Post op-ed in which she did not name him, but described herself as a "public figure representing domestic abuse."

Heard, who counter-sued, was awarded \$2 million. The jury reached the verdict after an intense six-week trial riding on bitterly contested allegations of domestic abuse. The case, livestreamed to millions, featured lurid and intimate details about the Hollywood celebrities' private lives. Earlier this month, a judge rejected Heard's demand for a new trial-sought on grounds that one of the seven jurors was not the man summoned for jury service but his son, in a case of mistaken identity. Heard's lawyers had asked Penney Azcarate, the judge who presided over the trial, to set aside the jury verdict and declare a mistrial, but she denied the request. —AFP



This combination of file pictures shows, US actor Johnny Depp arriving at the Fairfax County Circuit Court in Fairfax, Virginia, and actress Amber Heard leaving the Fairfax County Circuit Court. — AFP

## Amber appealing verdict in Depp defamation trial

Actress Amber Heard is appealing the jury verdict in the multi-million dollar defamation case she lost to her former husband, "Pirates of the Caribbean" star Johnny Depp. Lawyers for the 36-year-old Heard, who starred in the movie "Aquaman," filed a notice of appeal on Thursday with the Virginia Court of Appeals. "We believe the court

## Storied Minneapolis venue scraps Dave Chappelle set

Minnesota's famed First Avenue venue canceled comedian Dave Chappelle's show mere hours before he was set to go on, responding to protests from staff and the community over jokes many people have deemed transphobic. Chappelle's Wednesday show was switched instead to Minneapolis' Varsity Theater, where he will also perform on Thursday and Friday.

"To staff, artists, and our community, we hear you and we are sorry," First Avenue said in a statement. "We know we must hold ourselves to the highest standards, and we know we let you down. We are not just a black box with people in it, and we understand that First Ave is not just a room, but meaningful beyond our walls."

Chappelle, winner of the 2019 Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, has been accused of taking particular aim at the transgender community in his comedy specials, notably in October's "The Closer," which drew protests by activists who said it encouraged discrimination. The performer has doubled down on his jokes and the powers that be at Netflix have cited his "creative freedom" as reason to keep the much-watched show, released in 2021, available.

First Avenue-well-known as a backdrop in Prince's beloved 1984 film "Purple Rain"-said "we believe in diverse voices and the freedom of artistic expression" but that "we lost sight of the impact this would have." "We know there are some who will not agree with this decision; you are welcome to send feedback," the independently owned venue added. —AFP



Dave Chappelle



Fans attend "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power" panel in Hall H of the Convention Center during Comic-Con International in San Diego, California.—AFP photos



(From left) Moderator Stephen Colbert and actors Robert Aramayo, Benjamin Walker, Charles Edwards, Owain Arthur and Sophia Nomvete speak onstage at "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power" panel in Hall H of the Convention Center during Comic-Con International.

## AMAZON FORGES 'LORD OF THE RINGS' PREQUEL HYPE AT COMIC-CON

Nomadic hobbits, bearded female dwarves and enslaved elves—Amazon finally lifted the lid on its highly anticipated "Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power" TV series at Comic-Con on Friday. The enormously ambitious small-screen saga set in the world of J.R.R. Tolkien's books has been in the works since Amazon Prime bought the rights for \$250 million almost five years ago.

Fans, many of whom camped in line overnight at the world's most famous pop culture gathering, were treated to a first look at footage, plus interviews with the creators and a 21-strong cast of hobbits, dwarves and elves in a packed presentation hosted by comedian and Tolkien-enthusiast Stephen Colbert. "As fans and as viewers and lovers of Middle Earth and Tolkien, we didn't want to do a side thing, or a spin off, or the origin story of something else," said co-creator Patrick McKay. "We wanted to find a huge Tolkienian mega epic. And Amazon were, wonderfully, crazy enough to say 'yes, let's do that.'" Amazon is reportedly spending more than \$1 billion to make five seasons—each running for 10 hours—the first of which launches on its streaming platform September 2, and which "reintroduces" Tolkien's world of Middle Earth, said McKay.

Younger versions of elves Galadriel and Elrond—familiar characters to fans of Peter Jackson's Oscar-winning "Lord of

the Rings" trilogy—will be played by Morfydd Clark and Robert Aramayo. But with the new TV show set 4,000 years before Jackson's trilogy, in a fictional "Second Age"—a historical period sketched out in less detail by Tolkien's writings—the creators had license to create many new characters.

"The field was wide open," said co-creator J.D. Payne. "Amazon bought the rights to basically 10,000 years of Middle Earth history and said, 'Alright guys, let's take all comers and see what you have to say.'" "We felt that the Second Age is freaking awesome. It's Tolkien's amazing, untold story, that is so iconic with the forging of the Rings of Power."

### 'Gorgeous, regal' beard

The series is said to be a personal obsession of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, and represents the company's biggest play yet in the so-called "streaming wars" with rivals including Netflix and Disney+. Much of that cost went into lavish production values, evident to fans packed into the San Diego convention center's 6,000-capacity Hall H, where they were treated to five clips from the show, plus a new trailer. Though plot details remain under wraps, sprawling and intricately detailed settings from the books, including the island kingdom of Numenor—projected onto a giant screen wrapping around three quarters of the arena—drew audible



(From left to right) Moderator Stephen Colbert and actors Ismael Cruz Cordova, Nazanin Boniadi, Tyroe Muhafidin, Megan Richards, Dylan Smith, Sara Zangobani and Markella Kavenagh speak on stage at "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power" panel in Hall H at Comic-Con International in San Diego, California.

gasps.

"We built an entire city with several blocks and an entire wharf—it's crazy and enormous," said McKay. "We built as much as any group of humans could," added executive producer Lindsey Weber.

One clip during the 90-minute presentation introduced a group of Harfoots,

nomadic ancestors to the hobbits of "Lord of the Rings," who live in travelling carts rather than holes. Another showed a wealthy dwarf kingdom—complete with the saga's first bearded female dwarves—and a third clip found a group of elves in chains, forced to work for a gang of evil orcs. "We're establishing the female dwarf

for the first time," Sophia Nomvete, who plays dwarf princess Disa, told AFP after the presentation. "We have gone with a version, a gorgeous, regal, one-hair-at-a-time application, divine, detailed version of a beard for the female dwarf, and I know you're gonna love it!"

### 'Thrones' and zombies

Comic-Con is taking place in-person and at full 130,000-strong capacity again for the first time in three years, after going online due to the pandemic. "The Rings of Power" is going head-to-head at the event with HBO's "Game of Thrones" spin-off "House of the Dragon," a rival fantasy series out next month, which gets its own Comic-Con presentation Saturday. Elsewhere, post-apocalyptic zombie series "The Walking Dead" had its final Comic-Con presentation Friday, where it was confirmed that the record-breaking cable show's final eight episodes will debut October 2.

But the undead franchise lives on, with fan favorite Andrew Lincoln telling ecstatic fans he will reprise his role as Rick Grimes for a limited series next year. And Disney will wrap up the event's major presentations Saturday evening with a presentation expected to feature its Marvel superheroes, including the eagerly awaited sequel "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever."—AFP



Cosplayers attend Comic-Con International in San Diego, California.



A cosplayer wearing a Top Gun jacket and a lego head walks outside the convention center during Comic-Con International 2022.



A cosplayer dressed as Spiderman from Captain America: Civil War, walks outside the convention center during Comic-Con International 2022.



A cosplayer portrays Himiko Toga from "League of Villains" outside the convention center during Comic-Con International 2022.



Cosplayers Kristin Ringard (left) poses with her mother Lynn Ringard (right) and father Jon Ringard (center) while dressed as Greek water gods from Percy Jackson outside the convention center during Comic-Con International 2022.



A cosplayer portrays the character Lo Pan from "Big Trouble In Little China" outside the convention center during Comic-Con International 2022.



Cosplayer during Comic-Con International 2022.



A cosplayer portrays Darth Vader from "Star Wars" outside the convention center during Comic-Con International 2022.



An attendee gets a photo with cosplayers dressed as Batman and Red Hood outside the convention center during Comic-Con International 2022.

## Sports

# India beat West Indies by 3 runs in first ODI

## Dhawan grabs the 'Man of the Match' award

**PORT OF SPAIN:** India just managed to hold off the challenge of an inspired West Indies team with the under-strength visitors coming away with a three-run victory in the first One-Day International of a three-match series at Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad on Friday. Stand-in captain Shikhar Dhawan's 97 was the foundation of his side's total of 308 for seven which appeared to be more than enough at the halfway stage given that the hosts were just coming off a 3-0 drubbing at the hands of Bangladesh in Guyana a week earlier.

However, opener Kyle Mayers set the tone for the Caribbean side's chase with a top-score of 75 and with the rest of the batting order making important contributions the West Indies reached the final over needing 15 runs for victory. Romario Shepherd, playing only because former captain Jason Holder was ruled out with Covid 19 in the morning, and Akeal Hosein managed to scramble 11 against the bowling of seamer Mohammed Siraj as they finished agonisingly short at 305 for six.

Dhawan's innings off 99 balls with three sixes and ten fours earned him the "Man of the Match" award although the left-handed opener was not too pleased with his team's effort in the field. "We had a few nerves obviously towards the end

of the match and maybe we didn't stick to our plans as well as we should have because if we had done so, especially with a few runs given away on the leg-side, the game would have been over as a contest earlier," Dhawan said after the match.

Put in on a sweltering morning, he saw opening partner Shubman Gill (64) play most of the shots early on in a stand of 119 off 18 overs. Shreyas Iyer stroked his way to 54 before becoming the second wicket for Gudakesh Motie. Motie had earlier dismissed Dhawan via an excellent diving catch by Shamarh Brooks at backward-point as India lost momentum when ominously poised at 213 for one in the 34th over.

Motie and fellow left-arm spinner Hosein were the most economical of the West Indies bowlers although pacer Alzarri Joseph bolstered the home side's rearguard in the field with two important wickets. "It's a bittersweet feeling," was West Indies captain Nicholas Pooran's summary of the match. "We've been talking about batting 50 overs and we did it this time but came up short. "Still, we really competed well against one of the best teams in the world and we need to keep on improving against this type of opposition if we want to get our ODI cricket back on track." —AFP



**PORT OF SPAIN:** Brandon King (right) of West Indies hits 4 and Sanju Samson of India watches during the 1st ODI match between West Indies and India at Queens Park Oval, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, on July 22, 2022. —AFP

## News in brief

### Barber retains javelin title

**EUGENE:** Australian Kelsey-Lee Barber retained her javelin title at the World Athletics Championships in Eugene on Friday. Barber, a bronze medalist at the Tokyo Olympics, threw a best of 66.91 meters. There was drama in the battle for silver and bronze, however, as China's Liu Shiying and another Australian, Mackenzie Little, saw their medal hopes go up in flames in the sixth round. Instead it was Haruka Kitaguchi who thought she had claimed silver with 63.27m on her sixth and final throw. But she was usurped by American Kara Winger, who went out to 64.05 to claim silver, her Japanese rival bronze.

### Berrettini books Gstaad final

**PARIS:** Matteo Berrettini put the brakes on Dominic Thiem's impressive return to the courts on Saturday crushing him 6-1, 6-4 in the semi-finals in Gstaad. The Italian world number 15, playing his first tournament since having to withdraw from Wimbledon with Covid, made short work of the 2020 US Open champion, putting him away in just 77 minutes. It has still been a good week for the Austrian who has slipped to 274 in the ATP rankings after a year of setbacks, including a wrist injury, depression and Covid. This was his first semi-final in 14 months. Berrettini goes forward to his eleventh career final and is bidding for a third straight title after wins on grass at Queen's and in Stuttgart. In Sunday's final he will meet either the French Open finalist and defending champion on the Gstaad clay, Casper Ruud, or the world number 40 Albert Ramos-Vinolas who met in the second semi later on Saturday.

### Lyon, Tagliafico ink deal

**LYON:** Argentinean international left-back Nicolas Tagliafico has left Ajax to join Lyon on a three-year contract for a transfer fee of 4.2 million euros (\$4.3m), the French Ligue 1 side announced on Saturday. The 29-year-old, who has 40 caps for Argentina, had been at Ajax since January 2018 and was part of the exciting side that reached the semi-finals of the Champions League in 2019. Tagliafico began his career at CA Banfield in Argentina but found his feet with Ajax, making 169 appearances and winning the Dutch championship three times (2019, 2021, 2022) and the national cup twice (2019, 2021). He lost his spot last year, however, prompting the move. Tagliafico was also a part of the Argentina side that won the Copa America in 2021.

### Feherty signs for LIV Golf

**MIAMI:** David Feherty, a golf broadcaster for 25 years after a 20-year golf career, has become the latest name signing for the Saudi-backed LIV Golf Series. LIV Golf announced Friday that analyst Feherty would join the broadcast team for the series as commentator and co-executive producer. The 63-year-old from Northern Ireland will start his duties with the 54-hole LIV Golf Invitational Bedminster starting next Friday at the Donald Trump-owned property in New Jersey. The controversial LIV Golf Series debuted last month in England and has signed a number of top names from the US PGA Tour and DP World Tour despite criticism over human rights issues with Saudi financiers. Former Europe Ryder Cup captain Henrik Stenson and Americans Jason Kokrak and Charles Howell were named LIV Golf's latest entrants on Wednesday.

### Trott named Afghanistan coach

**DUBAI:** Former England middle-order batsman Jonathan Trott was on Friday named as the new coach of Afghanistan, replacing Graham Thorpe who had to withdraw from the position on health grounds. Trott will take over for the tour of Ireland in August where the team will play five Twenty20 Internationals ahead of the World Cup in Australia later this year. "I'm honored and excited to have the opportunity to take one of international cricket's most exciting teams through what is a huge year for their development as a team," Trott said. The 41-year-old Trott, who played over 200 international matches for England, worked as a batting coach for the England team on their tour of India in 2021. Former England batsman and assistant coach Thorpe fell seriously ill in May. He had accepted the job of Afghanistan head coach following his departure from the England set-up after a 4-0 defeat in the Ashes. —From AFP

## Blue Jays score club-record 28 runs to thrash Red Sox

**WASHINGTON:** The Toronto Blue Jays pummeled the Red Sox 28-5 in Boston on Friday, setting a franchise record for runs and coming up just shy of the Major League Baseball modern record for runs in a game. Toronto needed just five innings to break their previous record of 24 runs, set on June 26, 1978 against the Baltimore Orioles. When they added two more to make it 27 in the sixth it looked like they could break MLB's modern record of 30 runs in a game, but they were held scoreless in the seventh and eighth innings before adding one more run in the ninth.

The writing was on the wall for Boston in the third inning, when Toronto's Raimel Tapia lofted a fly

ball with the bases loaded that looked like a certain out to end the inning. But Red Sox center fielder Jarren Duran lost the ball in the lights and it fell behind him on the warning track as a shocked Tapia roared around the bases for an inside-the-park grand slam that made it 10-0. The Blue Jays exploded for 11 runs in the fifth inning, sending 15 batters to the plate.

Lourdes Gurriel Jr drove in the record-tying and record-breaking runs in the fifth, belting a low fast-ball into the outfield to plate two. Gurriel finished the night with six hits-matching another Blue Jays record. Danny Jansen homered twice for Toronto and drove in six



**BOSTON:** Kevin Plawecki #25 of the Boston Red Sox catches a foul ball during the seventh inning of a game against the Toronto Blue Jays at Fenway Park on July 22, 2022. —AFP

runs. Matt Chapman and Teoscar Hernandez also homered as Boston surrendered the most runs in a

game in its history. Their previous record was a 27-3 loss to Cleveland in 1923. —AFP

## Topley strikes as England thrash S Africa in ODI

**MANCHESTER:** The returning Reece Topley sparked a dramatic collapse as England hammered South Africa by 118 runs in the second one-day international at Old Trafford on Friday to level the three-match series at 1-1. South Africa, chasing 202 for victory in a match reduced by rain to 29 overs per side, were bowled out for just 83.

Topley, whose career has been stalled by several stress fractures, sparked a top-order slump to 27-5 during a spell of 2-17 in four overs. Spinners Adil Rashid and Moeen Ali shared five wickets between them as South Africa were dismissed with nearly nine overs remaining for their equal second-lowest completed ODI total, behind a 69 all out against Australia at Sydney in 1993 and level with an 83 against England at Nottingham in 2008. "It feels great, it's great for us to get the win," said England captain Jos Buttler.

"The guys are bowling brilliantly. Topley coming back in and getting early wickets, Dave (Willey) doing the same." The in-form Topley, rested from England's 62-run defeat in the first ODI at Durham on Tuesday, removed Janneman Malan and Rassie van der Dussen for ducks just three days after they had scored a fifty and a hundred respectively. Malan chipped to mid-on attempting to flick one off his pads and Van der Dussen feathered a thin edge

through to wicketkeeper and England captain Jos Buttler.

Willey, like Topley a left-arm quick, had the dangerous Quinton de Kock chipping to cover. And South Africa were 6-4 when Aiden Markram was run out without facing a ball by Buttler. Sam Curran, another left-arm seamer, then bowled David Miller for 12 to leave the Proteas 27-5 inside nine overs. And there was no way back from there for the Proteas against 50-over world champions England, for all that Heinrich Klaassen made 33 - one of just three double-figure scores in the innings - against a disciplined England attack.

### Pretorius strikes

Earlier, Dwaine Pretorius marked his return to South Africa duty by taking four wickets as England were dismissed for 201. Pretorius finished with career-best figures of 4-36, including removing star batsmen Joe Root and Jonny Bairstow in the space of three balls. Left-arm wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi (2-39) and fast bowler Anrich Nortje (2-53) took two wickets apiece.

Only all-rounders Liam Livingstone (38) and Sam Curran (35) managed more than 30 for England, with Willey adding a useful run-a-ball 21 late on before he became Pretorius's fourth wicket. But, as it turned out, England had more than enough runs to play with as they levelled the series ahead of Sunday's decider in Leeds. "I thought that it was a score that could be chased on that wicket," said South Africa captain Keshav Maharaj. "We just didn't adapt well enough with the bat, there were a lot of soft wickets and when you lose four wickets in the powerplay it's hard to adapt."



England's Reece Topley

England, sent into bat by Maharaj, slumped to 62-4 inside nine overs. Pretorius, in for the concussed Andile Phehlukwayo in the only change to the side that won on Tuesday, then struck twice in his second over to remove Root and Bairstow. Star batsman Root, who had made just one, charged down the pitch only to top-edge the ball high into the air, with wicketkeeper De Kock making holding the catch before Pretorius fooled Bairstow (28) with a slower ball. —AFP

## Sainz leads Ferrari one-two; Hamilton laments

**LE CASTELLET:** Carlos Sainz led Charles Leclerc at the top of the times on Friday as Ferrari dominated second practice for the French Grand Prix ahead of world championship leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull. The Ferrari pair swapped fastest laps in a closely-contested session in bright sunshine, Sainz making light of the prospect of a 10-place grid penalty for Sunday's race after taking new power-train components.

The Spaniard, who scored his maiden victory at the British Grand Prix earlier this month, clocked a best lap in one minute and 32.527 seconds to beat his Monegasque team-mate by 0.101 seconds. World champion Verstappen was a competitive third ahead of George Russell and Lewis Hamilton in the two freshly-updated Mercedes and Lando Norris who was sixth for McLaren. "We have some work to do,"

said Verstappen. "It is very hard on the tyres here and we needed a few more laps today. "It is difficult to judge, but the tyres were hot."

Mercedes were not the only top team to bring an updates package to the south of France as both Ferrari and Red Bull were also running revisions, notably to aerodynamics and floors. But Hamilton, preparing for his landmark 300th Formula One race, was not impressed with the impact of the Silver Arrows' efforts. "Today, we're in fourth and fifth so that's kind of the region that we'll be fighting for," he said. "I don't mean that we can't be on the podium, I think we can still be up there."

### Lacking pace 'everywhere'

"But we're still not as quick as those front guys - and we're a little bit further back than we were in the last race." Mercedes had hoped to fight at the front on the smooth circuit that suits their car, but instead, said Hamilton, they "have a lot of work to do - a lot of ground to cover." "The car's not spectacular here, we don't know why, but hopefully overnight we can make a bit of a step," he said, adding that the car



**LE CASTELLET:** Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr steers his car during the third free practice session ahead of the French Formula One Grand Prix at the Circuit Paul Ricard in Le Castellet, southern France, on July 23, 2022. —AFP

lacked pace "everywhere".

Kevin Magnussen was seventh for Haas ahead of Pierre Gasly of AlphaTauri, Daniel Ricciardo in the second McLaren and Sergio Perez, in the second Red Bull. Perez, who has been unable to maintain his form consistently since winning the Monaco Grand Prix at the end of May, admitted he needs to make progress with his car set-up overnight. "It's not how I want it to be," he said.

The session was uninterrupted and largely uneventful as the teams adapted to the heat - the track temperature was 50 degrees and the air 34 degrees - in front of a big holiday crowd. The circuit is sold out for both Saturday and Sunday, according to the organizers at the Paul Ricard circuit, where the two Alpine drivers set the initial early pace with Fernando Alonso topping Esteban Ocon before Magnussen and then Russell took over until Leclerc arrived. —AFP

Sports

# Ronaldo in limbo as Europe's elite turn their backs on Man Utd star

## Superstar shocks United with bombshell exit request

LONDON: Cristiano Ronaldo faces an uncertain future after the Manchester United striker's attempt to force his way out of Old Trafford failed to spark the expected rush for his signature. The Portugal superstar shocked United earlier this month with his bombshell exit request after the team's failure to qualify for the Champions League.

Ronaldo would have anticipated a host of top clubs jostling to sign him. But for the first time in his glittering career he is no longer a must-have item for Europe's wealthy elite as Chelsea, Bayern Munich, Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain all appear to have turned their backs on the forward. Concerns over Ronaldo's declining work-rate and his notoriously demanding personality have left the 37-year-old in limbo.

Chelsea co-owner Todd Boehly was reported to have spoken to Ronaldo's agent Jorge Mendes about a deal to mark the new era at Stamford Bridge. But Blues boss Thomas Tuchel is believed to have concerns about trying to integrate Ronaldo into his plans for a fluid front three after signing Raheem Sterling from Manchester City. "We focused on our top target Raheem Sterling who we signed and everything else stays behind closed doors," Tuchel said when asked about Ronaldo.

Selling Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona could have created space for Ronaldo at Bayern, but the German champions' CEO Oliver Kahn poured cold water on that idea. "As highly as I rate Cristiano Ronaldo as one of the greatest, a transfer wouldn't be a fit with our philosophy," he said. "I love Cristiano Ronaldo and everyone knows how fantastic he is. But every club has a certain philosophy and I'm not sure if it would be the right thing for Bayern and the Bundesliga if we signed him now."

United manager Erik ten Hag has repeatedly stated the club's public position that Ronaldo is "not for sale". Yet, although Ronaldo finished as United's top scorer last season,

there is a growing sense in Manchester that his departure could benefit Ten Hag's chances of building a side more suited to the style he created at Ajax. United have flourished without Ronaldo on a pre-season tour of Asia and Australia, scoring 11 goals in victories over Liverpool, Melbourne Victory and Crystal Palace.

### Dwindling options

A dynamic front three of Marcus Rashford, Anthony Martial and Jadon Sancho has shown what they are capable of. All three of those players struggled last season after Ronaldo's arrival changed the style of a United side that had finished second in the Premier League the season before. Ronaldo's time at Juventus also coincided with a decline in European results for the Italian giants, despite his goalscoring record of 101 goals in 134 games. After witnessing two European giants struggle to accommodate the ageing five-time Ballon d'Or winner, there are few takers for the veteran goal-scorer. Ronaldo's iconic status at United, established in his trophy-laden first spell with the club, has also lost some of its lustre.

Andy Mitten, journalist and editor of the United We Stand fanzine, said: "His arrival was sprung on United at the last minute and the team which had finished third and second had to rip up their tactics and start again." "They don't see Ronaldo as United's future and there are plenty of fans who'd go along with that." United's rivals Manchester City, who won the race for Borussia Dortmund's Erling Haaland, and Liverpool, who spent a fee that could rise to 100 million euros (\$102 million) on Benfica's Darwin Nunez, both opted to sign younger forwards just entering their prime.

A return to Real Madrid, where Ronaldo starred from 2009 to 2018, seems unlikely given Karim Benzema's brilliant displays in their Champions League and La Liga-winning campaign last season. Even PSG, habitual collectors of foot-



Cristiano Ronaldo

ball's marquee names, seem to be out of the running. A switch to Real's rivals Atletico Madrid remains a possibility, but with his options dwindling, Ronaldo may have to swallow his pride

and stay at Old Trafford. If that is too much for his ego to take, one last payday in the United States or Saudi Arabia could loom as definitive evidence of Ronaldo's decline. —AFP

## Basic course for special Olympics swimming coaches



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The basic course for preparing special Olympics swimming coaches was concluded at Abdullah Al-Salem leadership center. The course was organized by Kuwait Olympics in cooperation with special Olympics MENA in preparation for participation in the 16th special Olympics World Games which



will be held in Germany in 2023. 30 participants attended the course which lasted for 5 days.

International special Olympics swimming lecturer Amro Al-Tahawi (from Egypt) along with Mustafa Hassouna and Riyadh Al-Otaibi lectured during the program. National Director of Kuwait special Olympics, Chairwoman of Tomooh Club Rehab Buresli lauded the commitment of the coaches and hoped that

the course will create a new addition to the development of swimming sport in Kuwait.

She said, such studies are highly important as it injects new blood in the training, refereeing and administrative system of the special Olympics. Buresli thanked the special Olympics MENA, Egypt special Olympics, Public Authority for Sport and Abdallah Al-Salem leadership.

## Sweden set up England a Euro 2022 semi-final

LEIGH: Linda Sembrant's stoppage time winner broke Belgian hearts as Sweden won 1-0 in Leigh on Friday to set up a Euro 2022 semi-final with hosts England. The Olympic silver medalists were strong favorites to progress against a Belgian side playing in their first ever knockout game at a major women's tournament.

However, the number two ranked side in the world were frustrated by Belgium goalkeeper Nicky Evrard, poor finishing and a controversial VAR review for 92 minutes until Sembrant made the breakthrough. "I think it's a game where we were in control," said Sembrant. "They made it really hard because they made it very tight in front of the

goal, but in the end we got that goal that we needed." Sweden's preparations had been hit by a trio of positive coronavirus cases for Jonna Andersson, Hanna Glas and Emma Kulberg.

But they still dominated from start to finish with 34 attempts to Belgium's three. The Belgians had surpassed expectations just by making it through the group stages for the first time in only their second major tournament in the women's game. "We were the underdogs from the beginning but we did really well as a team," said the Red Flames' captain Tessa Wullaert. "That's what I want to remember from this tournament." Filipa Angedal forced Evrard into the first of a series of saves inside the first 10 minutes.

The Manchester City midfielder, who scored twice in Sweden's 5-0 win over Portugal in their final group game, then fired over with a clearer opening from the edge of the box. Sweden thought they had made the breakthrough on 26 minutes when Stina Blackstenius coolly slotted past Evrard from Kosovare Asllani's through ball. However, for the third time in the tournament, the Arsenal striker was denied by a VAR review for offside which harshly ruled the

goal out.

The fluency of Sweden's attack disappeared after the break as they struggled to break through the mass ranks of Belgian defense. Set-pieces then became the biggest threat from Peter Gerhardsson's side. Blackstenius should have scored when she headed too close to the excellent Evrard. The Gent goalkeeper was even equal to Nathalie Bjorn's effort in the final minute of stoppage time, but the rebound fell kindly for Sembrant to smash the rebound home and spark wild scenes of celebration among the Swedish squad.

"I felt the tears coming because I was so happy," said Sweden defender Magdalena Eriksson. "It was a frustrating evening. To finally get that relief, oh my God. I'm so proud of all the girls for how hard we fought." Sweden have not lost in open play since March 2020. But they face a huge step up in quality against England in front of a 30,000 capacity crowd in Sheffield on Tuesday. "I know all the players, extremely talented players," added Chelsea defender Eriksson. "England have been amazing in the tournament so far. We have to be really on it. It's about recovering and getting fresh again." —AFP

## Tonga qualify for Rugby World Cup

SUNSHINE COAST: Scrumhalf Sonatane Takulua scored a hat-trick of tries as Tonga booked their place in the 2023 Rugby World Cup with a comfortable 44-22 win over Hong Kong on Saturday. The Tongans scored six tries to three against a game, but outclassed Hong Kong outfit on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. Tonga will

now line up in Pool B of next year's tournament in France, alongside South Africa, Ireland, Scotland and Romania. Takulua, who gave opposing number Jack Combs a torrid time, said he benefitted from the work of his whole team. "I'm lucky enough to have got three tries but it wasn't just me - it was the effort from all the boys," Takulua said. "To get the win tonight is a big relief."

Hong Kong still have one chance left to qualify, joining the USA, Portugal and Kenya in a repechage tournament to be held in November. Tonga never looked in trouble against the largely amateur Hong Kong, who struggled to contain the islanders in almost every facet. The Tongan

forward pack dominated throughout, winning a string of penalties, particularly in the scrum, while their backs were able to make easy ground whenever they moved the ball wide.

The writing was on the wall for Hong Kong almost from the kick off, with Tonga having two disallowed tries inside the first four minutes. Hong Kong had no ball in the first 20 minutes but somehow they desperately held on, only going behind to a William Havili penalty in the 11th minute. It looked ominous for them when Takulua, who plays for Toulon in the French Top 14, crossed under the posts on the 15 minute mark following some huge carries

by his tight forwards.

Hong Kong hit back off the kick-off with a well-taken try to hooker Alexander Post but it was all Tonga after that. They went into the break leading 20-8 then scored four second half tries to open a 44-8 lead with 15 minutes to go. Hong Kong had the last say with two late tries to impressive winger Matthew Worley, but the result was never in doubt. Nevertheless, Hong Kong captain Josh Hrstich said: "I'm hugely proud of our effort." "We've had three weeks together - bankers, brokers, PIs, sparkies - just part-time rugby battlers with the chance of a lifetime," he said. —AFP

## Juventus open US tour with 2-0 win over Chivas

LAS VEGAS: Italian Serie A giants Juventus welcomed Paul Pogba back to the fold on Friday with a 2-0 friendly victory over Mexico's Chivas Guadalajara in Las Vegas to launch their US tour. French World Cup winning midfielder Pogba joined Juventus this month on a free transfer after winding down his contract with Manchester United, who he joined in 2016 for a then-record fee of 105 million euros.

The 29-year-old made his presence felt in coach Massimiliano Allegri's starting 11 at Allegiant Stadium, home of the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders. But it was Marco Da Graça that fired Juventus ahead from close range in the 10th minute after Federico Gatti's header from a corner was parried by the Chivas goalkeeper. Mattia Compagnon added a second goal in the 80th minute after Tommaso Barbieri's solo run into the area ended with his blocked shot veering straight to his teammate.

Pogba and Gatti were just two of the recent acquisitions that Allegri thrust into action, with former Real Madrid winger Angel Di Maria also in the lineup and Brazilian defender Gleison Bremer coming on amid a raft of changes for the second half. Allegri is counting on them to fill the gaps left by the departures of veteran Giorgio Chiellini, recently signed with Major League Soccer's LAFC, leading scorer Paulo Dybala in a transfer to Roma and Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt's move to Bayern Munich. He knows fans are expecting Juventus to return to the pinnacle of Italian football, having failed to lift the trophy since winning nine titles in a row from 2011 until 2020. Last season they finished fourth, and fell to Inter Milan in the Coppa Italia Final. "Our duty is to win this year," Allegri said in Vegas. "After winning trophies 10 years in a row, last year was our first without, so we (are) obliged to win and we all know that it's an important year for us."

Juventus dominated the first half, with Di Maria, Pogba and Nicolo Fagioli all threatening. Juventus keeper Wojciech Szczesny was forced into a save on the stroke of halftime by a shot from Carlos Cisneros. After wholesale substitutions Juventus looked less cohesive in the second half, but they still managed not only to keep the Liga MX outfit in check but also to expand their lead in a promising start to a tour that includes a clash with Barcelona at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas and a meeting with Real Madrid at the Rose Bowl near Los Angeles. —AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300

Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9
<b>Clinics</b>	
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075

Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, am Narajan Pal holder of Indian Passport No. M9149587 having permanent resident of VPO Pachranga Teshil and Jalandhar District, India, Pin No: 144201 residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that

henceforth my name will be read as under:  
Given name: Naranjan  
Surname: Pal (C 2021)  
22-07-2022

I, Sahil Royal S/o Parminder Singh holder of Indian Passport No. V-9366205 issued from Kuwait on date 22/09/2021 permanent

resident of B-5/109, Dada Colony Industrial Area Jalandhar and presently residing at Salmiya, Block 10, Issa Al-Qatami Street, Building No. 51, Kuwait do hereby change my name from Sahil to Sahil Royal with immediate effect. Kindly note. (C 2022) 22-07-2022



**EUGENE:** Sydney McLaughlin of Team United States celebrates after winning gold and setting a new world record in the Women's 400m Hurdles Final on day eight of the World Athletics Championships Oregon22 at Hayward Field on July 22, 2022. —AFP

## McLaughlin sets worlds alight

### Miller-Uibo, Norman claim 400m crowns

**EUGENE:** American Sydney McLaughlin set the world championships alight Friday when she obliterated her own world record en route to gold in the 400m hurdles. In a consummate display of front-foot running, McLaughlin left a loaded field for dead from the gun, haring through the tape in an astonishing 50.68 seconds. It sliced more than half a second off her previous world mark of 51.41sec set last month.

"We took the 400m hurdles and made it something you want to watch," said McLaughlin, adding that she was proud to have once again delivered at a "big-stage race". "I knew the pressure was going to be there tonight. The time is absolutely amazing and the sport is getting faster and faster. "Just figuring out what barriers can be broken. I only get faster from here."

Femke Bol of the Netherlands took silver in 52.27sec while defending champion Dalilah Muhammad of the United States took bronze in 53.13. To put McLaughlin's staggering performance in perspective, her time after negotiating 10 hurdles over 400m would have seen her beat two runners in the women's flat 400m final, raced just minutes beforehand.

That race was won by two-time Olympic champion Shaunae Miller-Uibo of the Bahamas. Miller-Uibo, who was deprived of gold in Doha in 2019 by Salwa Eid Nasr of Bahrain—since banned from the Tokyo Games and these championships after three missed doping tests—timed a world lead of 49.11sec at Hayward Field. Marileidy Paulino of the Dominican Republic claimed silver in 49.60sec, with Sada Williams of Barbados taking bronze in a national record of 48.75.

The men's one-lap final was claimed by American Michael Norman, whose victory made up for a disappointing fifth-placed finish at the Tokyo Olympics. Norman, who failed to advance from semi-finals in the Doha worlds in 2019 with a thigh injury, clocked a winning time of 44.29sec. Three-time Olympic medalist and 2011 world champion Kirani James of Grenada claimed silver with 44.68sec, while Briton Matthew Hudson-Smith took bronze (44.66). World record holder Wayde van Niekerk of South Africa, who set the record of 43.04sec when winning gold at the Rio Olympics, finished fifth in 44.97sec. Australian Kelsey-Lee Barber retained her javelin title, the current Olympic bronze medalist throwing

a best of 66.91 meters. There was drama in the battle for silver and bronze, however, as American Kara Winger (64.05m) and Japan's Haruka Kitaguchi (63.27) snatched the respective medals with their sixth and final throws.

#### Easy does it for Duplantis

Sweden's Mondo Duplantis made first appearance at Hayward Field, easily qualifying for Sunday's pole vault final. The US-born world record holder and Olympic champion, seeking to improve on his world silver from Doha, was faultless up to his 5.75m qualifying mark. "I didn't want to take too many jumps," said Duplantis, who set a world outdoor record of 6.16m in Stockholm last month. "I just wanted to make it safe to the final."

"First of all, I want to win. That is the most important thing. If I am able to jump high, then I would jump high. That would be nice but the gold is the most important for me now." Olympic champion and home favorite Athing Mu led US teammates Ajee Wilson and Raevyn Rogers into the final of the women's 800m. Also making the final are Kenya's Mary Moraa, Briton Keely Hodgkinson, Jamaica's Natoya Goule, Ethiopian Diribe Welteji and

Slovenia's Anita Horvat. The United States safely negotiated the heats of the 4x100m relays.

Christian Coleman, newly-crowned 200m champion Noah Lyles, Elijah Hall and Marvin Bracy breezed around in a world leading 37.87sec. The world champions in Doha, featuring Coleman and Lyles in that line-up, could only finish sixth in last year's Tokyo Olympics. But the US team held a pre-worlds relay camp for the athletes to better hone their baton-exchanging skills. The final will also comprise France, Canada, South Africa, Jamaica, Brazil, Britain and Ghana.

There was no place for Olympic champions Italy, missing Tokyo's individual 100m champion Marcell Jacobs through injury. Melissa Jefferson, Aleia Hobbs, Jenna Prandini and Twanisha Terry got the baton around in 41.56sec for the US women. Also qualifying for Saturday's final are Britain, reigning world champions Jamaica, Germany, Spain, Nigeria, Italy and Switzerland. Jamaica did not call on five-time world 100m champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, 200m champion Shericka Jackson and four-time Olympic individual medalist Elaine Thompson-Herah. —AFP

## Kuwait 1st International Boxing Championship



**KUWAIT:** President of International Boxing Association (IBA) Umar Kremlyov cuts the ribbon (alongside with other top officials) as competitions at the Kuwait 1st International Boxing Championship begin. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Competitions at the Kuwait 1st International Boxing Championship began on Thursday at Kuwait Boxing Federation (KBF) Hall located in Sabah Al-Salem with nine bouts following the opening ceremony that was attended by President of International Boxing Association (IBA) Umar Kremlyov, Chairman of Kuwait Boxing Federation (KBF) Mohammad Mansi along with other senior officials, several ambassadors and heads of the delegations.

In his opening speech, Mohammad Mansi welcomed participants and guests to Kuwait. He recalled that Kuwait hosted the Asian Juniors Boxing Championship in August 2019, the Arab Boxing Championship on January 2020 and now hosting the first International Boxing Championship which is one of the most important men's events.

He said the success of Kuwait youth in sports is the result of joint work and sincere efforts in addition to administrative and technical knowledge. Meanwhile, IBA president Kremlyov said Kuwait's hosting of this championship is a first step and good for Kuwait as it is becoming an

International Boxing Center. Kremlyov lauded the efforts of KBF.

#### Results of Thursday Bouts were as follows:

In the 51 KG: Ergyunal (Bulgaria) defeated Thanarat Saengphet (Thai).

In the 57 KG: Sarawut Sukthet (Thai) beat Hassan Ali Nasser (Iraq) while Shehab Masoud (Saudi) defeated Turki Eid (Kuwait).

In the 63 KG: Khunatipidnuch (Thai) defeated DanyloLozan (UKR); Yahya Sami (Iraq) defeated Amer Al-Swaider; Bagher Faraji (Iran) defeated Hassan Al-Fathli (KUW). In the 71 KG: Hussain Al-Ahmar (UAE) overpowered Muayadriaiqat (PALESTINE).

In the 80 KG: Seyedhossein Mirahmadibahaheidari (IRAN) defeated Rakan Al-Thaqafi (SAUDI) while Talal Al-Mutawaa (KWT) defeated Oliver Ginkel (GERMANY).

Meanwhile Friday's results were as follow: In the 57 KG: Sukthet Sarawut (THAI) defeated Dmytro Kolisnichenko (UKR); Sajad Mohammad (IRAN) defeated Beiajokhadar (SYRIA); Abdumalik Khalokov (UZBEK) defeated Seidekmaton (KGZ); Tso Singyu (HOK) defeated Shehab Masoud (SAUDI)

In the 71 KG: Sitthisak Choomkumarn



(THAI) defeated Hussain Al-Shamar (UAE); Zhakshylyk Talaibekon (KGZ) defeated Abdalla El-Hadi (QATAR); Hamza Elbarbari (MAR) overwhelmed Sultan Sameer (KSA) as Javlonbek Yuldoshev (UZB) defeated Ali Saad (KWT). In the 92 KG: Toufan Sharifi (IRAN) defeated Rasheed Mehrinfar (BHN).

Kuwait Boxing Team Coach Fathi Al-Misawee said the championship has advanced at technical levels - adding that it is very difficult to predict the winning team due to the closeness. He said Kuwait's team displayed good performance in various weights, adding that boxing is a sport of surprises and



results cannot be predicted. Head of UAE delegation Sultan Al-Haramy said "Kuwait has the experience in organizing such events due to the presence of able individuals who can make a difference in addition to the support of sports leaders."

Asia Boxing Association Board Member, Vice President of Jordan Boxing Federation Khitam Aii said he is pleased with what she has seen so far - adding that the opening ceremony was great. China's ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei said it is obvious the organizing committee prepared well for such major event that brought 20 countries together.

## Ryder Cup risks becoming 'nonsense' amid defections

**LONDON:** Europe and the United States will lock horns at the Ryder Cup next year but the tournament could be a pale shadow of its former self after multiple defections to the rebel LIV series. The event in Italy starting on September 29, 2023, will be billed as Europe's chance to exact revenge for a humbling defeat last year at Whistling Straits but who will be in the field is anybody's guess.

Henrik Stenson was this week stripped of his role as Europe's team captain while fellow European stars Lee Westwood, Ian Poulter, Sergio Garcia and Graeme McDowell all risk being omitted from future Ryder Cups. As things stand Americans Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson, Bryson DeChambeau, Patrick Reed and Brooks Koepka will not be in the frame for selection for the US team at the event at the Marco Simone Golf and Country Club in Rome.

The US PGA Tour swiftly suspended its defectors last month, effectively ruling them out of competing in the biennial team competition because they will not be able to earn the points to qualify. The DP World Tour, formerly the European Tour, imposed heavy fines on its members who played in the inaugural LIV event in London and banned them from three events.

But the punishments have not stemmed the tide of players signing up to the Saudi-funded LIV series and it is difficult to predict how things will unfold as golf's civil war deepens. Wednesday's announcement that Stenson was jumping ship, and would play in the third event of the LIV series in Bedminster, New Jersey, next week was a bitter blow for golf's establishment. The 46-year-old Swede, appointed captain in March, said he accepted the decision even though he disagreed with it.

"I sincerely hope a resolution between the tours and its members can be reached soon and that the Ryder Cup can act as a mechanism for repair amongst various golfing bodies and their members," he said. Westwood and Garcia have said they see no reason why competing in LIV tournaments should rule them out of future trans-Atlantic matches and with 14 months to go there is time for a compromise to be reached. But US Ryder Cup captain Zach Johnson has given a clear steer that players must qualify for the team through the PGA Tour. —AFP