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# Oil officials deny responsibility for quake that shook Kuwait

## Oil price in new budget set to rise from \$65 to \$80 a barrel

### Jordan Crown Prince meets Bader Al-Kharafi



KUWAIT: Jordan's Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah II receives Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi during his visit to Kuwait. Investment opportunities in Jordan were discussed as well as the support of the private sector and Kuwait companies.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait Petroleum Corp officially denied allegations on Wednesday that its excavation and production operations were responsible for a strong earthquake that hit the country on Saturday, head of the budgets committee said. MP Adnan Abdulsamad said KPC officials told the committee during a meeting to discuss its budget that Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), the affiliate responsible for excavation and production, will issue an official statement to explain the situation.

A powerful earthquake measuring five degrees on the Richter scale hit Kuwait at dawn on Saturday, causing buildings in many areas to shake but causing no casualties or damage. Some local experts attributed the earthquake to hydraulic fracturing drilling or fracking, which involves pumping huge quantities of water in oil reservoirs.

But Abdulsamad said that KPC officials stressed that the deepest drilling in Kuwait is only for two kilometers, and no earthquakes take place at this depth. KPC also denied using the hydraulic fracturing technology in Kuwait, saying such technology is used in the US to extract shale oil and gas and even there does not lead to earthquakes, the lawmaker cited the officials as saying.

Meanwhile, Abdulsamad said the budgets committee discussed on Wednesday the budgets of KPC and its affiliates for the 2022/2023 fiscal year which already started on April 1 and will end on March 31, 2023. He said KPC has decided to raise the price of oil in the budget from \$65 a barrel in the last fiscal year to \$80 a barrel in the current budget after sharp increases in international oil prices, which had skyrocketed to over \$120 a barrel.

The lawmaker said KPC estimates to post revenues of KD 24 billion, a 50 percent increase from last year. Spending is also estimated to rise sharply by 50 percent to KD 23.18 billion because of the rise in the price of oil KPC purchases from the state. This will leave KPC with net profits estimated at KD 823 million. The committee called on KPC to exert more efforts to contain the increase in the cost of production of oil, which is estimated at KD 2.849 a barrel in the new budget.

### News in brief



TABAS, Iran: Rescuers are seen at the scene of a train derailment on the line between Mashhad and Yazd on June 8, 2022. — AFP

### 21 killed as Iran train derails

TEHRAN: At least 21 people were killed and dozens injured Wednesday when a train derailed near the central Iranian city of Tabas after hitting an excavator beside the track, state media reported. The train was on its way from the northeastern city of Mashhad to the central city of Yazd and was carrying 348 passengers, according to the national rail authority, when it careened off the track in the desert at 5:30 am. — AFP



QILA SAIFULLAH, Pakistan: Onlookers gather around the wreckage of a passenger van that plunged into a deep ravine on June 8, 2022. — AFP

### Van crash kills 22 in Pakistan

QUETTA: At least 22 people were killed when a passenger van plunged into a deep ravine in southwestern Pakistan on Wednesday, officials said. The only survivor of the crash - a 13-year-old boy - was taken to hospital in a critical condition, said Muhammad Qasim, a senior government official in the Qila Saifullah district of Balochistan province where the accident happened. — AFP

## Municipal Council elects chairman

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Municipal Council on Wednesday elected Abdullah Al-Mehri as its chairman and Khaled Al-Mutairi as his deputy by acclamation. HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent congratulatory cables to the Municipal Council's new chairman and his deputy, wishing them best of luck and success in serving the country. HH

the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent them similar cables.

The Council's opening session also witnessed the election of members of the main committees. The technical committee comprises of members Hassan Kamal, Abdullatif Al-Daei, Alia Al-Fares, Nasser Al-Kafif, Abdullah Al-Enezi, Munira Al-Amir and Nasser Al-Jadaan. The Council selected Fahad Al-Abduljader, Sharifa Al-Shalfan, Ismail Behbehani, Mutairi and Kafif for its legal and financial committee.

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Newly-elected Municipal Council chairman Abdullah Al-Mehri gestures after he was elected by acclamation on June 8, 2022. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Iran disconnects nuclear site cams

TEHRAN: Iran on Wednesday disconnected some of the UN atomic watchdog's cameras monitoring its nuclear sites, its atomic energy agency said, after

Western nations accused the Islamic republic of failing to cooperate. The move was announced after Britain, France, Germany and the United States submitted a resolution to the International Atomic Energy Agency to censure Iran.

The motion, the first such step since June 2020, was seen as a sign of growing Western impatience with Iran after talks on reviving its 2015 nuclear

deal stalled in March. Iran said the disconnected cameras had been operating as a "goodwill gesture", outside its safeguard agreement with the IAEA. "As of today, the relevant authorities have been instructed to cut off the On-Line Enrichment Monitor and the flow meter cameras of the agency," said the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran.

Continued on Page 6

## Lebanon forest blaze begins wildfire season

BEIRUT: Emergency teams brought under control a massive blaze in Lebanon's largest pine forest on Wednesday that authorities said could be deliberate, as the country braced for another summer of fires. The fire in the northern Dinniyeh region broke out on Tuesday night, prompting the army and volunteer firefighters to scramble to save one of the Middle East's lushest pine forests.

The army on Wednesday said it dispatched helicopters, dropping water by giant buckets onto the blaze. "Unfortunately, the forest fire season starts," Environment Minister Nasser Yassin said. After several hours of work in difficult conditions, the fire was "brought under control", Yassin

told AFP. "The affected region is under surveillance to avoid a new fire." Yassin, who visited the area on Wednesday, said it was "possible that the fire was sparked deliberately".

Hamad Hamdane, a member of the civil defense, said teams were ensuring the smoldering embers had been extinguished. "We are going to walk into the forest... to make sure the fire is completely under control," Hamdane said. Lebanon is grappling with its worst-ever financial crisis and lacks the tools and capabilities to combat catastrophic wildfires that have increased in recent years, partly because of rising temperatures due to climate change.

The corruption-ridden Mediterranean state has repeatedly needed foreign assistance for disaster response. The government's shortcomings have angered environmental activists, who warn of the damage being done to the country's ever-shrinking natural treasures.

Continued on Page 6

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## Local

# Kuwait Crown Prince welcomes Yemen president council's chief

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in the presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received the visiting head of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council Rashad Al-Alimi at Bayan Palace on Wednesday.

During the reception, His Highness the Crown Prince said he was pleased to convey the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Yemeni guests, congratulating Al-Alimi on his new post and wishing him success in his task of developing his country. He underlined the depth of fraternal and historical relations between Kuwait and Yemen, which date back more than four decades, hoping that Yemen could overcome its current crises and challenges, eventually leading to lasting security and stability. He added that Kuwait's leadership and people back the efforts of the Arab coalition for supporting Yemen's

legitimacy, along with the great efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to achieve stability in Yemen. Sheikh Mishal also reiterated Kuwait's support for UN efforts to resolve the Yemeni crisis by political and peaceful means, and to put an end to the humanitarian and economic agony of the Yemeni people. He vowed that Kuwait would continue standing side by side with Yemen and backing peace efforts for all brotherly and friendly people.

The accompanying delegation of the head of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council Rashad Al-Alimi comprises a number of ministers and senior officials. The meeting was also attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, chief of the accompanying mission of honor Advisor at His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Dr Basel Humoud Al-Sabah and senior officials of His Highness the



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets head of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council Rashad Al-Alimi. — KUNA

## Qatar Amir grants Al-Wajbah Decoration to Kuwaiti Ambassador

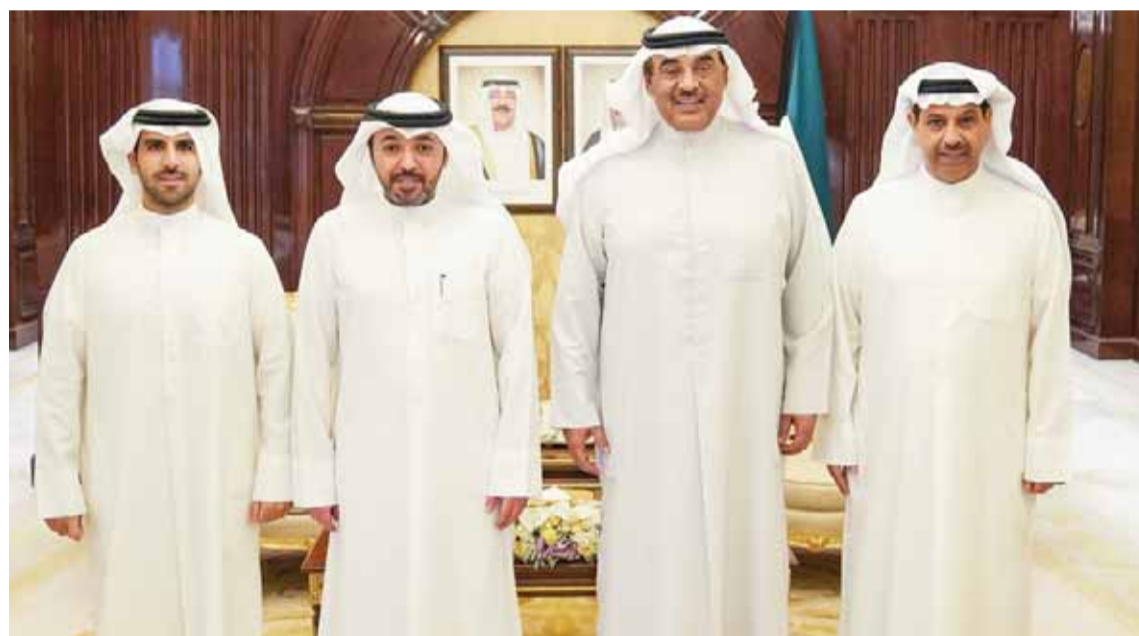


**DOHA:** Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani grants Al-Wajbah Decoration to the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Qatar Hafeez Mohammad Al-Ajmi. — KUNA

**DOHA:** Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on Wednesday granted Al-Wajbah Decoration to the Kuwaiti ambassador to Qatar Hafeez Mohammad Al-Ajmi for his efforts on enhancing bilateral relations. Qatar's Amir received the Kuwaiti ambassador on the occasion of the end

of his tenure in the country, wishing him success in future missions and the relations further progress and prosperity. The Kuwaiti ambassador expressed appreciation to the Qatari Amir and to state officials for the cooperation during their work in the country. — KUNA

## Prime Minister receives senior sports officials



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Al-Shimmary, President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah and Youth Affairs Minister Mohammed Al-Rajhi. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received on Tuesday Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Flaiteh Al-Shimmary, and the President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Sabah. The meeting took place at Bayan Palace, with the attendance of Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs and

Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammed Obaid Al-Rajhi. During the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister praised the big success of the Kuwaiti achievement in the 3rd GCC Games, organizationally and technically. He also expressed his pride and happiness of the Kuwaiti record in medal achievements, which reflects the abilities of the youth in representing their country. — KUNA

## Kuwait-based fund approves \$38.3m loan deal for Jordan



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil Dr Muhammad Al-Faris received Indian Ambassador Sibi George in his office on June 8, 2022. They discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation in various fields including hydrocarbons, renewable energy etc in addition to diaspora matters.

**AMMAN:** Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has completed a loan worth \$38.3 million to help Jordan in its efforts to reform its education sector, the Kuwait-based institution said on Wednesday. The loan deal is part of a \$500 million aid package Kuwait has pledged to deliver to the Hashemite Kingdom, the bulk of which is earmarked for Amman's health and education sectors. KFAED chief Marwan Al-Ghanim said in a statement. The agreement is the fourth such deal signed between the



**AMMAN:** Officials pose for a group photo after signing the \$38.3 million loan agreement. — KUNA

two sides, at a cumulative cost of \$250 million, he added, describing the aid as an emblem of Kuwait's amicable relations with Jordan. Jordan's Planning Minister Nasser Shraideh valued the aid as a testament to long-standing bilateral ties, saying it would be instrumental in further developing his country's educa-

tion sector given the expanding enrollment at schools nationwide. He went on to reiterate Amman's appreciation of Kuwait's support over the years, as the deal comes a day after Jordanian Crown Prince Hussein bin Abdullah II concluded a state visit to Kuwait in a bid to bolster bilateral cooperation. — KUNA

## Authority encourages youth to start projects, develop economic sectors

**KUWAIT:** Director General of Public Authority for Youth Mishal Al-Rabie Tuesday stressed keenness on backing and helping initiatives of youth to start their projects and develop the promising economic sectors in a way that contributes to creating jobs at the private sector and supporting the State's development plan. This came in a statement issued by the authority after Rabie's meeting with World Bank Regional Director for the Gulf Cooperation Council Esam Abu Sulaiman and Resident Representative of the Bank's office in Kuwait Ghassan Al-Khouja. The meeting discussed means

of creating job opportunities to youth in the private sector and improving their skills in a way that serves labor market. The officials also touched upon the outcomes of the previous meeting of the World Bank's technical team to Kuwait last April. Boeing company carrying out Kuwait Technical Entrepreneurship Complex project said that Kuwaiti youth have strategic minds that enable them to develop the technological sector, Rabie pointed out. He indicated that dozens of young Kuwaitis benefited from some projects in the promising economic sectors. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Director General of Public Authority for Youth Mishal Al-Rabie, World Bank Regional Director for the Gulf Cooperation Council Esam Abu Sulaiman, Resident Representative of the Bank's office in Kuwait Ghassan Al-Khouja and other officials. — KUNA

## Rome Islamic Center praises Kuwait moderation

**ROME:** Secretary-General of the Islamic Center of Rome Abdullah Redouane on Wednesday appreciated Kuwait's vital and pioneering role in global humanitarian and charitable activities and disseminating moderation and tolerance. Redouane made the remark while welcoming Kuwaiti Ambassador in Rome Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah to the Grand Mosque of Rome, voicing appreciation to Kuwait for its unwavering support for the center, the Kuwaiti Embassy said in a statement to the press. He emphasized that Kuwait has obviously contributed to spreading the moderate and tolerant Islamic discourse, and deepening the values of dialogue and coexistence, according to the statement. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti ambassador underlined the significant role of the Islamic Center of Rome in manifesting the civilized image of Islam and Muslims, reminiscing the



**ROME:** Secretary-General of the Islamic Center of Rome Abdullah Redouane welcomes Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah. — KUNA

late Kuwaiti preacher Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Sumait's unique role in the dissemination of Islamic tolerance and moderation. — KUNA

## Russian Muslim cleric bestows honorary order upon Kuwait envoy

**MOSCOW:** Russia's senior Islamic cleric on Wednesday decorated Kuwait's ambassador to Moscow Abduaziz Al-Adwani with a prestigious order, in an effort to acknowledge his

contributions towards improving bilateral ties among the clerical elite. The Kuwaiti diplomat has contributed immensely towards bringing religious and Islamic bodies in Kuwait and Moscow closer together, Russian Council of Muftis chief Rawil Ayinuddin said in a statement. The Kuwaiti envoy promised to remain committed in his efforts to bolster bilateral relations, saying Moscow and his country have long enjoyed an illustrious relationship across various fields. — KUNA

Local

# Kuwait rights group invites workers to report violations

KSHR launches 'Together' project in cooperation with US State Department, EU delegation

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Migrant workers, who make up around two-thirds of the population of Kuwait, continue to face difficulties and legal constraints, and remain vulnerable to abuse despite labor laws that guarantee their rights. Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KSHR) provides several services to migrant workers who do not have adequate legal protections and remain vulnerable to abuse, forced

mental health like counseling, assistance and educating workers about their rights in multiple languages (Arabic, English, Urdu, Hindi and Tagalog) through our hotline (22215150)," she said.

Bakit called on workers to submit complaints about violations of their rights. Lawyers and legal advisors will respond to their inquiries and complaints. The project aims to contribute to tackling wrong practices against migrant workers in Kuwait, as well as monitoring and documenting abuses they encounter.

"From December 2021 until March 2022, I received 340 complaints - 242 from females and 98 from males. Most cases are from domestic workers who suffer from rape, abuse and sponsors preventing them from going back to their country. Due to continuous deprivation of their rights, domestic workers get stressed and depressed, so we offer mental health services personally or via the phone when they cannot come to our location in order to not lose their jobs," Bakit said.

Migrant workers are not the only ones who complain about mistreatment, but also abused housewives. "I call them the silent community. I also handle all cases of women married to expat men who are abused. I handled five cases from 2021, and till now I am monitoring them. Many of them were beaten by their husbands, but they refuse to speak up. Thirty percent of the cases we receive are of abuse," she said.

Regarding health and mental issues, Bakit noted: "We cooperate with USMEPI to transfer com-



Aisha Al-Bakit

plaints with health or mental issues for treatment in hospitals, and sometimes we get help from professors from the psychology department at Kuwait University for mental counseling. We also organize events and activities for depressed workers to release their stress to provide a positive model for the active participation of the civil society in supporting workers' rights."

After working hours, Bakit still feels the need to reach more people, so she goes on "field consulting" and roams the streets of Kuwait City to approach workers. "I go to Kuwait City looking for migrant workers who need help and someone to listen to them. I ask them to speak out and know their rights. I give them my number, and whenever

they are ready, they know I will be there to listen," she said.

Around 1,000 migrant workers benefited from the services of the association during the first third of 2022 (776 legal consultations, 31 psychological support, 53 dispute complaints resolved between workers and employers, 80 women receiving free examination in medical centers, over 20 workers whose legal status was adjusted and chose either to leave Kuwait or transfer their residence.)

The most prominent complaints that were received by the society during the first quarter of 2022 are of final cancellations, retrieval of passports, cancellation and transfer, financial dues, late salaries, adjusting their status and health issues. Psychological and social support provided to migrant workers during the first third of 2022 reached 31 cases (14 females and 17 males).

The complaint procedure comprises of a number of stages. KSHR asks workers to submit a complaint to discuss their situation, and sometimes the sponsor will be asked to join if they are cooperative. Then the worker will be asked to fill out a form that discusses the issue they face (medical, passport confiscation, rest hours, pending or unpaid salary, physical abuse, sexual harassment or abuse, verbal abuse, illegal detention or completed contracts). The complainant will then be handed a body map to determine if the person has been abused. If there are any bruises, the worker will be transferred to the hospital to get a medical report.



## Final cancellations, late salaries among common problems

labor and deportation for minor infractions.

Aisha Al-Bakit, Psychological Specialist and Registered Behavior Technician at KSHR, told Kuwait Times that KSHR started the "Together" project in cooperation with the US State Dept's Middle East Partnership Initiative (USMEPI) and the EU delegation to support workers and victims of domestic violence. "The project that started in December 2021 provides services for legal and

## Ministry reassures about Kuwait's food security

**KUWAIT:** Director of the Cooperative Societies Development Department in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs Hayam Al-Khudair on Wednesday reassured about food security in the country, saying that the stores are full of foodstuffs. She said in a press statement during a tour of the food security system team at Al-Zahra Cooperative Society that this tour aimed at following up the food situation and taking all possible measures to enhance, protect and sustain it. This tour came after the issuance of the decision of the Minister of Social Affairs and Community Development and Minister of State for Housing and Urban Development Mubarak Al-Arou and under the directives of the Cabinet to form a working team in the ministry to support the food security system, she added. The team's tours are continuing in associations to monitor prices and the general situation to protect food security and meet consumer needs, she explained. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Director of the Cooperative Societies Development Department in the Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs Hayam Al-Khudair tours Al-Zahra Cooperative Society. — KUNA photos



## Health Ministry, WHO maintain cooperation

**KUWAIT:** The World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Kuwait, Dr Assad Hafeez on Wednesday praised relations between Kuwait Health Ministry and WHO, since establishment of WHO office in Kuwait. He pointed out that since the WHO office opened last year in Kuwait a number of activities have been implemented such as current workshop entitled "Leadership development skills for Kuwaiti medical profession" and last year's hefty prestigious workshop on public health development, with leadership with ministry of health. The cooperation between the two was shared for years with the aim to strengthen the collaboration and structure in health sector, Dr Hafeez added. Dr Hafeez praised the efforts made by the ministry in implementing the disease classification system in outpatient clinics, as first country to pilot ICD program with WHO. WHO is also in cooperation with Yarmouk Health City, jointly with Kuwait ministry are working together to



KUWAIT: The World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Kuwait Dr Assad Hafeez. — KUNA photos



Director of International Health Relations Department Dr Rehab Al-Watian

represent Kuwait to many international forums. Meanwhile, Director of International Health Relations Department Dr Rehab Al-Watian said in a similar statement that the workshop aims to enhance leadership medical field, adding the recent COVID-19 epidemic stressed the importance of adapting the leadership to the

needs of the health system. She pointed out that everyone should be pioneers, whether they are in hospital wards, clinics or the ministry, while doctors with leadership skills have provided a lot to their communities in the form of pioneering public health campaigns and leadership of working teams. — KUNA

## Non-communicable diseases behind 65% deaths in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Non-communicable diseases which cause around 65 percent of deaths in Kuwait, a health ministry official said, stressing the importance of fighting such medical conditions. Director of the Department of Prevention and Fighting Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases at the Health Ministry Dr Humoud Al-Zuobi made this statement during a workshop the department held within the framework of the national strategy to prevent and fight non-communicable chronic disease.

Associate professor at Kuwait University Public Health College Dr Danah Al-Tarrah spoke during the workshop about the importance of understanding society behaviors when preparing programs and designing interventions to change the individual's behavior towards healthy acts.

## Kuwait oil price down to \$119.93 pb

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by two cents to \$119.93 per barrel on Tuesday from \$119.95 pb the day earlier, said the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Wednesday. Globally, the price of the Brent crude went up by \$1.06 pb to reach \$120.57 per barrel, while the West Texas Intermediate went up by 91 cents to \$119.41 pb. The price of the OPEC crudes

went up by 31 cents to settle at \$120.16 per barrel on Tuesday, as opposed to \$119.85 pb Monday, said the international oil cartel on Wednesday. According to the OPEC bulletin, the average annual oil price of the cartel basket in 2021 was \$69.89 per barrel. The OPEC+ alliance countries agreed on June 2 to increase their production by 648,000 barrels for July and August.

The current additional quantities are exceeding the previously agreed monthly increases of 432,000 barrel per day, a statement issued by OPEC+ alliance countries said. The OPEC is expected to hold its next ministerial meeting on June 30. — KUNA

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## ICSK enthalls with Paradigm 2022 arts festival

KUWAIT: The Indian Community School (Senior) Salmiya was abuzz with the much-awaited Mega Art Fest, Paradigm 2022. Following a nearly two-year hiatus, due to the coronavirus pandemic, Paradigm 2022 was held on ICSK Salmiya campus on 5th and 6th of June, 2022. It provided a unique platform for students to exhibit their artistic talents. It was a momentous celebration of wide range of art, including - music, dance, singing, drama, poetry and a plethora of colorful activities. Paradigm 2022 got off to a vibrant start with 66 items comprising 15 off-stage and 52 onstage items with some offstage events being held well in advance. Students from classes VI to XII took part in this Mega Art Fest and participated in a wide range of competitions. These Competitions were held in 3 stages and in three different categories - Category III (Classes 6, 7 and 8) Category IV (Classes 9 and 10) and Category V (Classes 11 and 12). Over 500 students participated in this two-day festival leaving the judges mesmerized by their incredible performance. A huge crowd of spectators and guests witnessed the invigorating performance of students that brought together the classical and popular elements from both the Indian and the Western cultures. Drama, dance and music added to the fun-filled atmosphere creating an environment of joy and festivity.

The inauguration of Paradigm 2022 was done by lighting of the ceremonial lamp by the Chief Guest, Chrispen Toga Mavodza, Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe to Kuwait and the Guest of Honor Sanjeev Suri, Air India - The Country Manager Kuwait-Cyprus. The session was graced with the august presence of Angelo Fernandes, Joint Secretary to The Indian Community School Kuwait Board of trustees, officer Deepak Seth, Dr V Binumon Principal and Senior Administrator of ICSK, Vice Principal Susan Rajesh, Deputy Vice Principal Mini Shaji, HOD's, teachers, parents and students. In his inaugural speech Chrispen Toga Mavodza highlighted the important fact that "the school is a family, and the students are like young, budding flowers who require careful nurturing and grooming." The declaration of the theme of Paradigm 2022, "Freedom" was done by the Guest of Honor Sanjeev Suri. As a token of appreciation mementoes were presented to the chief guest Chrispen Toga Mavodza, Ambassador of the Republic of Zimbabwe to Kuwait and Guest of Honor Sanjeev Suri by Angelo Fernandes, Joint Secretary - ICSK board of trustees. The kaleidoscopic presentation of the program invigorated and entertained the audience with its wide variety of modern, classical dance and singing and other events which captivated the attention of the audience, and no doubt left many a guest with happy memories.

The mega event culminated with the Valedictory Ceremony which was held at the ICSK Senior school auditorium on June 6, 2022 in the presence of a large audience including the eminent dignitaries, parents and students. Certificates, trophies and medals were conferred upon the winners in both the individual and group items. The Chief Guest Konstantin Zhgenti Ambassador of Georgia to Kuwait presented and congratulated the award winners. He expressed his happiness to be a part of the Mega Art Fest as he was impressed by history of The Indian Community School, Kuwait as it is not only one of the oldest but also one of the outstanding schools in Kuwait. The Indian Community School Board of Trustees, Honorary Chairman Shaikh Abdul Rahman, Amer Mohammed Honorary Secretary, Rajesh Nair, Principal ICSK Amman, Shirly Dennis, Director and Principal of Indian School of Excellence Salmiya, Dr V Binumon Principal and senior Administrator ICSK Salmiya, Susan Rajesh Vice principal and Mini Shaji Deputy Vice Principal were also present on the occasion to congratulate the winners and bless the participants. Alum Allure was an exclusive segment introduced in the Art Fest Paradigm 2022 to celebrate the achievements of our ICSK alumni who went on to forge successful careers worldwide. One such student is Rajesh Suri former CEO of Nokia, and another is Vivek Unnikrishnan who is now a well-established entrepreneur. Kavya Vaidyanathan another alumni who is currently pursuing Business Management in Mumbai stunned the audience by her classical dance performance. The cultural extravaganza by Fusion Promenade and the winning team's spectacular performance enthralled the audience. The colorful costumes and decor added another star on the occasion.

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive on Fourth Ring Road in this file photo. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

# Recent crises drive up local demand on gold in Kuwait

### Demand up by 15% among expats, according to one gold shop employee

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Investing in gold is the best way for people to be financially safe, as it helps them face any crisis in the future. Kuwait Times visited gold shops and asked about the demand for gold among local customers for saving purposes. "People always buy gold despite the price changes, as it is the best way to secure themselves. Even if the prices are high, they buy and sell it later when prices get higher," Romany Ayyad, an employee at a gold shop, told Kuwait Times.

"Due to global financial concerns, people are spending less on gold jewelry, while earlier they were spending big amounts for gifts and personal use. Today customers are spending more on gold coins and bars," he said. "After recent political and economic crises, demand for gold increased almost 15 percent among expats, especially after the value of currencies dropped in some Arab countries," Ayyad said.

Mohammad Sameer, a gold shop owner, said people feel safer when they buy gold. The number of buyers has increased by more than 25 to 30 percent, especially among citizens. "Demand is more for 21 karat gold, coins and gold bars," he said. "Around 70 to 80 percent of customers are focusing on buying and selling gold or spending more on coins and gold bars," said Zakariya Ali, an employee at a gold shop, affirming that most demand is for 21 karat gold, especially among expats.

While gold shops confirmed the increase in demand, some customers have been affected by the rise in gold prices. Amal Al-Otaibi, a customer, told Kuwait Times that she regrets not buying gold for saving purposes after prices rose in the last few years and today are higher than before. "Most



Salah Al-Jemaz

of my friends sold gold for high profits. The price of gold today is KD 17 per gram, while before it was only KD 3!" she rued. Otaibi said the current gold price does not encourage her to buy for saving purposes.

Another customer, Noura Al-Najjar, said: "I started to buy gold in the last couple of years. I don't mind buying

now for saving, especially with the current financial worries. Instead of spending money on other things, it's better to save money in gold. Prices are rising, which encourages me to buy. Buying and



stressing that it is a cultural matter for some people, and a rising trend among some nationalities. "Due to current high prices, I will not buy gold for saving," she added.

Despite the changes in gold prices, Financial Expert and Advisor Salah Al-Jemaz told Kuwait Times about the reasons why people should invest their money in pure gold. "Pure gold fights inflation. When currencies fall, precious metals rise. Money needs a store, and gold is the best store for money. Its value never decreases. Pure gold is always on a continuous rise. As long as gold is a rare item, its price will always keep rising. Gold is like an insurance policy for all situations," he said.

"What distinguishes gold from other metals is its rarity, which increases its value, especially since it has no expiry date and can't be copied or faked, like pearls or cash. This is the reason why banks all over the world stock pure gold, and people should do the same," Jemaz added.



## High demand on 21 karat gold

selling gold is the safest investment and achieves good profits."

"The current gold price does not match the quality of the pieces of jewelry," said Safaa Al-Suhaili, another customer. "Prices for workmanship have increased too much, which affected demand for people who want to buy and save." Suhaili said that she doesn't see a necessity to buy gold,

## IWG hosts Nepal Cultural Day Event

KUWAIT: The International Women's Group in Kuwait held a Nepal Cultural Day Event on Sunday, June 5, 2022, at hotel Crowne Plaza amidst the presence of a number of distinguished guests. The program was organized in cooperation with the Embassy of Nepal and inaugurated jointly by Durga Prasad Bhandari, Ambassador of Nepal to the State of Kuwait, Bindhya Bhandari, Spouse of the Ambassador and Cristiana Baldocci, IWG President by lighting the lamp. As President of IWG, Cristiana Baldocci welcomed the guests thanking Sheikh Hanouf Bader Al-Muhamad Al-Sabah, Honorary President of the International Women's Group and spouse to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for her continuous support and guidance to the activities of the IWG.

Baldocci's opening was followed by welcome remarks by Durga Prasad Bhandari, Ambassador of Nepal to Kuwait. The Ambassador expressed his happiness for participating and contributing in the event particularly at a time, as he said, when Nepal and Kuwait have been celebrating 50th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between them. He extended sincere thanks to the IWG for providing this unique opportunity in this important milestone year. He highlighted the richness of natural and cultural heritage of Nepal and expressed that Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual country in which all the people have been living together in peace, tolerance and harmony. He said that "unity in diversity is the specialty of Nepal". He expressed his happiness to present dances on popular Nepali National and folk songs, play Nepali musical instruments including maadal, Baansuri (flute), harmonium, damfu by the artists in both national as well as in their traditional community costumes. He added



that there will be a short video presentation showing Nepal's unique geographical features with high Himalayas, hills and plain / terai regions, cultural heritages, traditions, customs and local life of Nepali people and said that it would illustrate Nepal's international image as an attractive destination for international tourism. He concluded his speech by thanking the participants and urging them to visit Nepal. He congratulated the International Women Group for their work in the arena of culture, tradition and knowledge sharing among its members through a variety of events.

The video presentation included the materials depicting life style, Nepali customs and rituals, food, natural and cultural heritage sites, historical monu-

ments, magnificent mountains, lakes, wildlife, adventure tourism activities in Nepal like white water rafting, boating, trekking, mountaineering, bungee jumping, jungle safari to be discovered by International tourism and much more. The pictures and photos of popular Nepali sites of cultural importance and tourist attractions were also portrayed at the event.

Before the conclusion of the program, the IWG meeting bade farewell to the outgoing President of IWG Cristiana Baldocci, spouse to Italian Ambassador, upon completion of her term as President and announced Ghada Shawky, spouse of the Ambassador of Egypt, as the new IWG President for 2022/2023. Baldocci delivering farewell speech thanked all IWG members, distinguished guests and others for their wholehearted support and cooperation in her work as President of the Group.

At the end of the ceremony, raffle prizes including special handicraft items like Nepali pashmina product, wooden products carved by Nepali craftsman, Nepali products like tea, coffee, honey, Nepali food products were distributed. Similarly, round-trip air tickets between Kuwait and Nepal, sponsored by Jazeera Airways, were also offered on that occasion. Finally, gifts of traditional Nepali handicraft items were also distributed to all participants. The buffet offered at the end of the event included Nepali Momo, sel roti, mutton pakku, chicken chhoyala, chatamari, aalooko aachaar (potato pickle) etc.



French ex-president Hollande weds actress Julie Gayet

## China's drone carrier hints at 'swarm' ambitions for Pacific



LOS ANGELES: US Vice President Kamala Harris (L) speaks during a roundtable with business executives at the IV CEO Summit of the Americas on the sidelines of the IX Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

# Biden woos Latin American leaders

## US lays out more pledges including a plan to train health workers

LOS ANGELES: US President Joe Biden headed Wednesday to a Latin America summit on a mission to woo back the region as his administration pushed out pledges, including a plan to train half a million health workers.

The long-awaited Summit of the Americas was marred by a boycott from Mexico's president, who was upset that Biden did not invite the leftist leaders of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela on the grounds that they did not meet democratic standards.

The Biden administration insisted there were no hard feelings and moved forward on initiatives aimed at cementing ties across Latin America, where a rising China has increasingly made inroads despite the historic US influence.

Hours before Biden was to arrive, his administration announced a new Americas Health Corps that will aim to improve the skills of 500,000 health workers across the region, building on the lessons from Covid-19, which hit the Western Hemisphere especially hard.

The health training will cost \$100 million, although the United States will not contribute all of it and will

seek to raise funds, including through the Pan American Health Organization. The pandemic "showed us the many cracks in our global health systems and underscored the importance of strong and resilient health systems for the entire population," a White House statement said.

China has stepped up its role in Latin America since the pandemic started, moving early to supply vaccines. Cuba has also long exported its state-employed doctors, a practice that so infuriated the previous administration of Donald Trump that he suspended funding for the Pan American Health Organization over alleged ties.

The health announcement comes a day after Vice President Kamala Harris detailed another \$1.9 billion in commitments by businesses to invest in impoverished and violence-ravaged El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

The troubles in the so-called Northern Triangle, as well as Haiti, have generated a soaring number of migrants to the United States, setting off a domestic furor as Trump's Republican Party demands efforts to stop them.

"We know the American people will benefit from stable and prosperous neighbors. And when we provide economic opportunity for people in Central America, we address an important driver of migration," Harris said.

### 'Nearshoring'

Mauricio Claver-Carone, the president of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), said that Latin America can increasingly be seen as a "sea of peace" for investors amid the global turbulence from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and rising risks associated with manufacturing juggernaut China.

The head of the IADB, which provides development funding in Latin America, said he saw a rise of "nearshoring," with businesses moving closer to markets rather than in China. Since the first Summit of the Americas in 1994, "each dollar that went to China was one dollar, one investment, one job less for Latin America and the Caribbean," he told AFP in an interview in Los Angeles.

In Latin America, "whether they are governments of

the left or the right, they all want foreign investment, they all want nearshoring, they all want economic growth," he said. The first summit, held in Miami by Bill Clinton, aimed to create a vast free-trade zone that would span the hemisphere other than communist Cuba.

Biden is holding only the second Summit of the Americas on US soil at a time that the political appetite for free trade has waned in Washington, with Trump rising to power in part by attacking trade liberalization as hurting workers.

But Biden has stood firm on another core principle of the Summit of the Americas—democracy—even as he considers going next month to Saudi Arabia, a critical oil supplier. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador insisted that all nations of the hemisphere should be included, a stance backed by several other regional leaders who nonetheless agreed to come.

Biden is separately expected to meet President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, Latin America's most populous nation, despite rising fears that the Trump ally will not accept the legitimacy of upcoming elections. —AFP

## Johnson faces UK parliament since no-confidence vote

LONDON, United Kingdom: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson makes his first appearance in parliament on Wednesday since surviving a no-confidence vote of his own Conservative MPs that has undermined his leadership. The beleaguered leader's backers are likely to stage a noisy show of support when he steps up for his weekly Prime Minister's Questions at 1100 GMT.

But all eyes will also be eagerly trained on the demeanour of the scores of Tory rebels seated behind him who voted to end his turbulent three-year tenure in power in Monday's dramatic vote. Critics have warned the political storm is far from over for Johnson, after 148 Tory MPs failed to back him.

"Johnson achieved a remarkable election victory in 2019. But he has let things slide since then," one of them, former cabinet member David Davis, wrote in The Times. "His victory in (Monday's) vote provides his last chance to get his act together."

Johnson, who has called the 211-148 vote a "convincing result", has vowed to plough on, insisting it was time to "draw a line" under questions about his leadership and the "Partygate" scandal over lockdown-breaking events at Downing Street.

His team has tried to regain the offensive by pointing to a setpiece speech expected in the coming days on new economic support measures, as Britons struggle with a cost-of-living crisis. There are also growing calls for Johnson to cut taxes to ease the burden on people and reunify his traditionally low-tax party. "I would like to see cuts where they're possible," Health Secretary Sajid Javid told BBC News. "And I know that this is something the government is taking very seriously."

### 'War of attrition'

But many doubt Johnson can recover voters' trust, as the party braces for two parliamentary by-elections this month and an upcoming investigation by MPs into whether he lied to parliament over "Partygate". Under current Tory rules he cannot be challenged again for a year, which leaves little time for any new leader to emerge before the next general election due by 2024.

The party's "1922 committee" of MPs—tasked with overseeing leadership challenges—says it could easily change the rules if a majority backs it. But there appears little appetite for that among both loyalists and rebels.

Davis said "doing so threatens to destabilise every future Conservative leader" while Javid argued a rule change would be seen as "grossly unfair". However,



LONDON: A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows, from right, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster Stephen Barclay, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak, Health Secretary Sajid Javid, Home Secretary Priti Patel and Foreign Secretary Liz Truss listening to Prime Minister Boris Johnson during the weekly session at the House of Commons, in London. —AFP

Johnson's enemies on his own side still appear to be manoeuvring, with reports he faces a "war of attrition" and "vote strikes" to paralyse the government's legislative agenda. Such "vote strikes" happened at the end of former Prime Minister Theresa May's three-year stint in office in 2019. Although most of Johnson's cabinet publicly backed him in the secret ballot, more than 40 per cent of the parliamentary party did not-potentially wiping out his working majority.

### 'Honourable exit'

The scale of the revolt "constitutes a crisis for Downing Street", King's College London politics professor Anand Menon said. "I think there's very little doubt that the vulnerability of the prime minister is going to be the single greatest factor shaping what this government does for the foreseeable future," Menon told AFP.

Senior backbencher Tobias Ellwood, who voted against Johnson, said he was living on borrowed time. "I think we're talking a matter of months, up to party conference (in October)," he told Sky News on Tuesday.

Even without any obvious candidate to succeed him, former Tory party leader William Hague has argued Johnson should now "look for an honourable exit". Comparing Monday's margin to votes that ultimately toppled Johnson predecessors Margaret Thatcher and May, Hague said it showed "a greater level of rejection than any Tory leader has ever endured and survived".

"Deep inside, he should recognise that, and turn his mind to getting out in a way that spares party and country such agonies and uncertainties," he wrote in The Times. —AFP

## Ukrainian troops may have to retreat from flashpoint city

KYIV: Kyiv's forces may have to retreat from the eastern city of Severodonetsk, a senior Ukrainian official conceded on Wednesday, as diplomatic efforts intensified to unblock grain stuck in Ukraine's ports.

The strategic city has become the focus of Russia's offensive as it seeks to seize an eastern swathe of Ukraine, after being repelled from other parts of the country. Moscow claimed on Tuesday they had full control of residential areas while Kyiv was still holding the industrial zone and surrounding settlements, but Ukrainian officials insisted the Russians were not in control of the city. On Wednesday, Sergiy Gaiday—governor of the Lugansk region, which includes the city—said Ukraine's forces might have to pull back as Severodonetsk is being shelled by Russian troops "24 hours a day".

"It is possible that we will have to retreat" to better fortified positions, he said in an interview on the TV channel 1+1. In his daily address late Tuesday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had struck a defiant tone: "The absolutely heroic defence of Donbas continues."

Russia's offensive is now targeting the Donbas region, which includes Lugansk and Donetsk, after its forces were pushed back from Kyiv and other areas following the February invasion. The cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk, which are separated by a river, are the last areas still under Ukrainian control in Lugansk. As concerns mounted over grain trapped at Ukrainian ports, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was ready to ensure the safe passage of ships from Ukraine. "We are ready to do this in cooperation with our Turkish colleagues," Lavrov told reporters in Ankara amid stark warnings of shortages worldwide partly blamed on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

His Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu called Russian demands for an end to sanctions to help grain onto the world market "legitimate". "If we need to open up the international market to Ukrainian grain, we see the removal of obstacles standing in the way of Russia's exports as a legitimate demand," he said.

### 'Millions' could die

But Ukraine said on Wednesday it would not demine waters around the Black Sea port of Odessa to allow grain exports, citing the threat of Russian attacks on the city. At the request of the United Nations, Turkey has offered its services to escort maritime convoys from Ukrainian ports, despite the presence of mines—some of



KHARKIV, Ukraine: Communal workers clean up the rubble of a supermarket, partially destroyed by a missile attack on the southeastern outskirts of the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. —AFP

which have been detected near the Turkish coast.

Both sides accuse one another of destroying agricultural areas, which could worsen global food shortages. As he hosted Mediterranean ministers on the global food crisis, Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio warned "millions" could die unless Russia unblocked Ukraine's ports. The war's economic impact continued to reverberate, with the World Bank cutting its global growth estimate to 2.9 percent — 1.2 percentage points below the January forecast—due largely to the invasion. The toxic combination of weak growth and rising prices could trigger widespread suffering in dozens of poorer countries still struggling to recover from the upheaval of the Covid-19 pandemic, the bank said. "The risk from stagflation is considerable with potentially destabilising consequences for low- and middle-income economies," World Bank President David Malpass told reporters.

"For many countries recession will be hard to avoid," Malpass said. The bank additionally announced \$1.5 billion more in aid for Ukraine, bringing the total planned support package to more than \$4 billion. The OECD also warned the world economy would pay a "hefty price" for the Russian invasion as it slashed its 2022 growth forecast and projected higher inflation.

Severodonetsk appeared close to being captured just days ago but Ukrainian forces launched counterattacks and managed to hold out, despite warnings they are outnumbered by superior forces. Lanny Davis, a US lawyer for Ukraine tycoon Dmytro Firtash, said 800 civilians had taken refuge in the bunkers inside Firtash's huge Azot chemical plant in the city.

The situation was also increasingly desperate in Lysychansk. "Every day there are bombings and every day something burns. A house, a flat... And there is nobody to help me," 70-year-old Yuriy Krasnikov told AFP. "I tried to go to the city authorities, but nobody's there, everyone has run away." —AFP

## International

# One dead, dozen hurt as car ploughs into Berlin crowd

## Eight taken to hospital, five in a life-threatening condition

**BERLIN:** One person was killed and at least a dozen others injured when a man drove a car into a crowd, including teenagers, at a busy shopping district in central Berlin on Wednesday, police said.

The driver was briefly detained by passers-by before being handed over to police after the car smashed through a shop front, according to police spokesman Thilo Cablitz. It was not clear whether the crash was intentional. The driver, a 29-year-old German-Armenian man, is being questioned, police told AFP.

"There are seriously injured people among the more than a dozen injured," said Cablitz. Eight people had been taken to hospital and five were in a life-threatening condition, said Adrian Wenzel, a spokesman for the fire service.

The German government is "very concerned and shocked" by the "terrible incident in Berlin", said a spokeswoman, adding that their thoughts are with the victims and their loved ones. The incident happened at around 10:30 am (0830 GMT) just across from Breitscheidplatz, where an Islamic State group sympathiser ploughed a truck through a Christmas market in 2016, killing 12.

The silver Renault Clio with a Berlin licence plate first mounted the sidewalk on the corner of Tauentzienstrasse and Rankestrasse, hitting a group of mostly teenagers, before returning to the road. It then rammed into the shop front on Marburger Strasse about 150 to 200 metres (165 to 220 yards) away.

### 'Happened so fast'

Frank Vittchen, a witness at the scene, told AFP he was sitting at a fountain nearby when he "heard a big crash and then also saw a person fly through the air". The vehicle drove "at high speed onto the pavement and didn't brake", he said, with its windows shattering from the impact. "It all happened so fast," he said. Another witness who declined to be named told AFP the people hit by the car included a group of 15-16-year-olds, and that two teachers were among those injured.

British-American actor John Barrowman posted a series of videos on Twitter from the scene. "I heard the bang and the crash when we were in a store and then we came out and we just saw the carnage," he said. Germany has been on high alert for car ramming attacks since the deadly 2016 Christmas market assault, with most carried out by people who were found to have psychological issues. In December 2020, a German man ploughed his car through a pedestrian shopping street in the southwestern city of Trier, killing four adults and a baby.

Earlier the same year, a German man rammed his car through a carnival procession in the central town of Volkmarren, injuring dozens of bystanders, including children. He was sentenced to life in jail last year. In January 2019, another German man injured eight people when he drove into crowds on New Year's Eve in the western cities of Bottrop and Essen. He was later taken into psychiatric care. In April 2018, a German crashed his van into people seated outside a restaurant in the city of Muenster, killing five before shooting himself dead.



**BERLIN, Germany:** Rescue workers tend to an injured person on a stretcher at the site where a car ploughed into a crowd near Tauentzienstrasse in central Berlin. —AFP

Investigators later said he had mental health problems. During the football World Cup in Germany in 2006, a German man rammed his car into crowds gathered to

watch a match at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, injuring some 20 people. The driver was later committed to a psychiatric hospital. —AFP

## French far-right clash in Riviera ahead of polls

**LE LAVANDOU, France:** France's Mediterranean region, home to the Cannes Film Festival and palm-lined beaches that entice tourists from around the world, is seeing a ferocious battle between far-right factions for parliamentary polls this month with immigration the most contentious issue.

National Rally (RN) leader Marine Le Pen and TV polemicist Eric Zemmour achieved some of their highest scores in the April presidential elections in the sun-kissed Provence-Alpes-Cote-d'Azur (PACA) region.

But behind the Mediterranean glitz, high immigration and unemployment rates along with an electorate that believes France's traditional right has lost its backbone make the region fertile ground for the far-right, experts say. Paris-born Zemmour is standing in the constituency around Saint-Tropez, a famous resort town where Le Pen scored 24.1 percent and Zemmour 22.42 percent in the first round of the presidential vote. Around 150 mostly retired locals and holidaymakers gathered around Zemmour as he held a meeting between the seafront and a petanque area in the coastal town of Le Lavandou on Friday.

The pundit-turned-politician drew cheers as he blamed local youths of North African origin for the chaotic scenes that marred the Champions League final between Real Madrid and Liverpool in Paris on May 28.



**MARSEILLE, France:** Sabrina Agresti-Roubache, candidate in the Bouches-du-Rhone 1st constituency for the centre-right 'Ensemble' (Together) coalition, speaks with inhabitants as part of the campaign for the parliamentary elections, in Marseille. —AFP

"What happened at the Stade de France is of course the consequence of the great replacement," Zemmour told supporters, referencing a conspiracy theory according to which white Europeans are being replaced by immigrants from Africa and the Middle East. "We were humiliated in front of the whole world. We need change," 84-year-old Jacques, who did not want to give his surname, told AFP.

Zemmour ended up with just seven percent in the first round of the presidential election, far below his ambitions, while Le Pen finished runner up, losing to President Emmanuel Macron in the second round with 41.45 percent. Their electorate is different, said Virginie Martin, a political scientist from Kedge Business School. "Eric Zemmour's electorate is clearly more bourgeois and Marine Le Pen's is more working class," Martin said, adding they also had voters in common. —AFP

## French ex-president Hollande weds actress Julie Gayet

**TULLE, France:** After a romance that made headlines around the world when it was revealed in 2014, ex-president Francois Hollande has married actress Julie Gayet at a low-key ceremony in his political fiefdom in central France.

The news was announced to La Montagne newspaper by the mayor of Tulle, Bernard Combes, with a picture of the couple showing the groom in a suit and his bride in a white dress climbing the stairs of the local town hall.

They married Saturday "in a private ceremony," the mayor's office in the central Correze region told the paper. Little was revealed about the guest list beyond the presence of French singer Benjamin Biolay who worked with Gayet on a film in 2021.

Hollande, who has never married before, had an affair with Gayet while president and in a relationship with journalist Valerie Trierweiler, who was France's de facto first lady at the time. In January 2014, French glossy magazine Closer published bombshell photographs of Hollande arriving for a tryst with Gayet on a scooter at an apartment near his official residence in the heart of Paris.

The images, accompanied by a story replete with salacious details about bodyguards being dispatched to buy croissants for the pair in the morning, dealt a severe blow to Hollande's credibility. Trierweiler went on to write a best-selling tell-all memoir that recounted how she tried to commit suicide in the presidential bedroom after the media revelations.

Hollande has four children from his relationship with long-term former partner Segolene Royal, a one-time



**NEW YORK:** File photo shows former French President Francois Hollande speaking next to his partner and actress Julie Gayet as they visit the community organisation 'Dream' in Harlem New York. —AFP

rival in the Socialist party. Gayet has two sons with former husband Santiago Amigorena, an Argentinean screenwriter and producer she divorced in 2006.

The 50-year-old who celebrated her landmark birthday the day before Saturday's wedding-remained a low-key presence throughout the latter part of Hollande's difficult time in office. The couple agreed to their first joint photo session only in 2018 once Hollande had left office, having ended his five-year term in power with record low approval ratings.

In a rare interview the same year, she described Hollande's time as leader as a period of "crazy violence" which included a series of jihadist attacks that cost hundreds of lives. "I tried to give energy to the president, to take care of him, to be there to listen," she told the Journal du Dimanche newspaper.

"Since I met him, it's given me wings," added the star of Netflix drama "The Perfect Mother" who is an increasingly influential film producer. "I love his way of thinking, of being, his humour." —AFP

## Iran disconnects nuclear site...

Continued from Page 1

The AEOI added that Iran's agreement to allow the cameras to run was not "appreciated" by the UN agency but considered an "obligation".

Its statement did not specify how many cameras had been turned off, but said "more than 80 percent of the agency's existing cameras are operating according to the safeguard agreement and will continue to operate just as before".

Behrouz Kamalvandi, spokesman for the Iranian agency, had "monitored the shutdown of two IAEA cameras at a nuclear facility," the statement added. "Other measures are being considered and we hope that they will come to their senses and respond to Iran's cooperation with cooperation," he told state TV. Iran reached a deal with world powers in 2015 to limit its nuclear program in return for sanctions relief - but the agreement has been on life support since then president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from it in 2018.

Tehran, which denies seeking to build a nuclear bomb, has backed away from some of its own commitments since 2019. European capitals have expressed mounting concern over how far Iran has gone in resuming nuclear activities since the US

began reimposing sanctions. Iran has built up large stockpiles of enriched uranium, some of it enriched to levels far higher than those needed for nuclear power generation.

"Its nuclear program is now more advanced than at any point in the past," the governments said in their joint statement, adding Iran's accumulation of enriched uranium has no "credible civilian justification". In a joint statement to the IAEA, Britain, France and Germany had said they "strongly urge Iran to stop escalating its nuclear program and to urgently conclude (the) deal that is on the table".

Iran's nuclear organization chief Mohammad Eslami had said earlier Wednesday that "Iran has no hidden or undocumented nuclear activities or undisclosed sites," state news agency IRNA reported. "These fake documents seek to maintain maximum pressure" on Iran, he added, referring to the crippling economic sanctions reimposed by Washington under Trump. "This recent move by three European countries and the US by presenting a draft resolution against Iran is a political one," Eslami said, adding Iran had maintained "maximum cooperation" with the IAEA.

The trigger for the latest Western condemnation was a report issued by the IAEA late last month, in which it said it still has questions about traces of enriched uranium previously found at three sites, which Iran had not declared as having hosted nuclear activities. The UN watchdog said those questions were "not clarified" in its meetings with Iranian authorities. —AFP

ment and support of civil defense," environmental activist Paul Abi Rached wrote on social media. Last July, it took Lebanon days to extinguish wildfires that ravaged pine forests in the north, left a 15-year-old volunteer firefighter dead and forced many people from their homes.

In 2019, the government's failure to contain devastating wildfires was one of the triggers of an unprecedented, nationwide protest movement against perceived official incompetence and corruption. Scientists have warned that extreme weather and fierce fires will become increasingly common due to man-made global warming. —AFP

## Monkeypox outbreak tops 1,000 cases, WHO warns of 'real' risk

**GENEVA:** The risk of monkeypox becoming established in non-endemic nations is real, the WHO warned Wednesday, with more than a thousand cases now confirmed in such countries. World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the UN health agency was not recommending mass vaccination against the virus, and added that no deaths had been reported so far from the outbreaks.

"The risk of monkeypox becoming established in non-endemic countries is real," Tedros told a press conference. The zoonotic disease is endemic in humans in nine African countries but outbreaks have been reported in the past month in several other states - mostly in Europe, and notably in Britain, Spain and Portugal.

"More than 1,000 confirmed cases of monkeypox have now been reported to WHO from 29 countries that are not endemic for the disease," Tedros said. "So far, no deaths have been reported in these countries. Cases have been reported mainly, but not only, among men... Some countries are now beginning to report cases of apparent community transmission, including some cases in women."

The initial symptoms include a high fever, swollen

lymph nodes and a blistery chickenpox-like rash. Tedros said he was particularly concerned about the risk the virus poses to vulnerable groups, including pregnant women and children. He said the sudden and unexpected appearance of monkeypox outside endemic countries suggested that there might have been undetected transmission for some time, but it was not known for how long.

One case of monkeypox in a non-endemic country is considered an outbreak. Tedros said that while this was "clearly concerning", the virus had been circulating and killing in Africa for decades, with more than 1,400 suspected cases and 66 deaths so far this year. "The communities that live with the threat of this virus every day deserve the same concern, the same care and the same access to tools to protect themselves," he said.

### Vaccines

In the few places where vaccines are available, they are being used to protect those who may be exposed, such as healthcare workers. He added that post-exposure vaccination, ideally within four days, could be considered for higher-risk close contacts, such as sexual partners or household members. Tedros said the WHO would issue guidance in the coming days on clinical care, infection prevention and control, vaccination and community protection.

He said people with symptoms should isolate at home and consult a health worker, while people in the same household should avoid close contact. Few hospitalizations have been reported, apart from patients being isolated, the WHO said at the weekend. —AFP

## Lebanon forest blaze begins...

Continued from Page 1

A local official said there had been an increase in illegal logging operations in the forest in recent years. "May God forgive those who did not appoint forest guards, who left forest areas without fire-fighting equipment, and who neglected the develop-

## Municipal Council elects chairman...

Continued from Page 1

As for the engineering committee, the Council chose Behbehani, Kamal, Daei, Farah Al-Roumi and Amir, while the reform and development committee is made up of Roumi, Shalfan, Behbehani, Daei and Abduljader.

The Council also elected Alia Al-Farsi, Kamal, Mutairi to the expropriation committee and Kamal, Amir, Behbehani, Abduljader and Jadaan to the Capital governorate committee. Roumi, Shalfan, Jadaan, Kamal and Saud Al-Kandari were picked for the Hawally governorate committee, and Behbehani, Enezi, Fahad Al-Muwaizri, Mutairi and Farsi for the Farwaniya governorate committee. Daei, Mutairi, Amir, Muwaziri, Enezi are on the Jahra governorate committee. The council also named Nassar Al-Azmi, Abduljader, Kalif, Farsi and Roumi to the Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate committee. —KUNA

## International

# With Tiananmen gatherings banned, Hong Kongers remember in private

## Large-scale public remembrance in the city has been wiped out

**HONG KONG, China:** As Saturday night fell in Hong Kong, democracy activist Chiu Yan-loy turned off the lights, lit a number of candles and observed a moment of silence to commemorate those killed in China's Tiananmen crackdown 33 years ago. For the first time since 2000, when he started attending an annual vigil to mark the anniversary alongside tens of thousands of fellow Hong Kongers in the city's Victoria Park, Chiu was performing this ritual alone.



**“We should not belittle ourselves”**

Hong Kong used to be the notable exception to an effective blanket ban in China on discussing the events of June 4, 1989, when the government set tanks and troops on peaceful protesters. But in 2020, Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law to snuff out dissent after widespread and sometimes violent pro-democracy protests the year before. Since then, large-scale public remembrance in the city has been wiped out.

This is the third consecutive year that the vigil at Victoria Park has been banned, with the park closed late on Friday. Police warned the public that gathering to commemorate Tiananmen anywhere risked breaking the law. But “the emotional connection with June 4 that Hong Kong people have is far beyond attending any collective ritual”, Chiu told AFP, his face illuminated by the flickering flames. “It has become part of our life and it's now about how to practise what we believe in our everyday life.”

### “Truth will come to light”

The 36-year-old was a former standing committee member of the Hong Kong Alliance, a now-disbanded group that was one of the organisers of the Victoria Park vigil that had taken place for more than three decades. The Alliance and its leaders were charged with “incitement to subversion” under the security law last year.

Chiu said people should not be disheartened by the situation in Hong Kong, saying it was not yet as bad as in eastern European countries under the Soviet Union's control, or Taiwan during its martial law era.

“We should not belittle ourselves,” he said. “As long as we are willing to remember and pass it on, the truth will eventually come to light someday.”

Chiu believes many Hong Kongers, like him, will find their own ways to commemorate June 4 despite warnings and threats from the authorities. For him, the vigil itself was not the most important thing.

“The main body is after all the people who participated in it — as long as our hearts and minds remain unchanged, we won't easily give up,” he said.

Former district councillor Derek Chu, who had been handing out electronic candles from his office since Friday, also believes that remembrance does not have to be confined to a specific place. “In the contest between a people and the government, it boils down to belief and memory, and the location is less important,” Chu said.

Only 39 candles were handed out on Friday, he said, but he was not disappointed. “Even at a low point of the (pro-democracy) movement, I don't think people will forget June 4,” he said.

### “Passing memory on”

Decades of commemoration are being erased as Hong Kong is remoulded in the mainland's image. Chu's alma mater, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), removed a “Goddess of Democracy” statue



**HONG KONG:** Police use cordon tape to control crowds in the Causeway Bay district of Hong Kong on June 4, 2022, near the venue where Hong Kong people have traditionally gathered to mourn victims of China's 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. — AFP

from campus in December last year, saying the move was based on an assessment of legal risk.

Earlier this week, four CUHK students placed 3D-printed miniatures of the “Goddess” in different locations on campus, creating a treasure hunt for students and alumni. “It feels like (the statue) was stolen,” Rebecca, one of the students behind the project, told AFP, using a pseudonym to protect her identity.

“But the memories and meanings of the sculpture will not simply disappear after it was removed — instead they rely on actions of passing them on.”

The team had to axe the event halfway through its

planned six-day run, as they noticed an increase in building staff at locations they had announced online.

Of the 32 miniatures they prepared, 23 were found by students, seven were lost, one was damaged with its head broken off, and one's whereabouts are unknown.

Rebecca said she had first learned about Tiananmen in secondary school, when her teacher insisted that students learn about it even though it was not an exam requirement. “I was told that when I became an adult and could be responsible for myself, I should attend the candlelight vigil, but I haven't had a chance,” she said. “I still hope someday I can be part of it.” — AFP



**BANGKOK:** Jakkrit Klandi, father of Jirapong Thanapat, arrives at the Central Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct before the ruling against former Nakhon Sawan province district police station chief Thitsan Utthanaphon, nicknamed “Joe Ferrari”, in Bangkok. — AFP

## Thailand's ‘Joe Ferrari’ cop jailed for life

**BANGKOK:** A flashy Thai cop nicknamed “Joe Ferrari” for his taste in fast cars was on Wednesday jailed for life for torturing a drugs suspect to death during a brutal interrogation. A Bangkok court found Thitsan Utthanaphon guilty of murder by torture in a case that caused public outrage and shone a rare light on police brutality and corruption in the kingdom.

Leaked viral footage showed Thitsan and six other officers wrapping seven plastic bags around 24-year-old Jirapong Thanapat's head while questioning him and trying to extort \$60,000, leading to his death.

The judge at Bangkok's Central Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct Cases sentenced the 41-year-old to death, but immediately commuted it to life imprisonment. “I felt helpless during the ruling, and my wife was crying,” Jakkrit Klandi, the victim's father, said outside the court.

“All seven officers should learn their lesson and pay for their crime,” he said. The court reduced Thitsan's sentence to life imprisonment because he had attempted to revive the suspect, and had paid for the funeral expenses for the family.

Five of the other six officers involved in the case were found guilty of murder and also received life sentences. A seventh got five years and four months, following his testimony. Thitsan and the other officers have a month to appeal the verdict, according to their lawyers.

After the footage leaked in August last year, the officer—a former district chief in the northern province of Nakhon Sawan—surrendered himself to police, who raided his Bangkok mansion and found several luxury cars. In a press conference after his surrender he said Jirapong's death was an accident. At the time human rights observers said the scandal further eroded trust in Thailand's law enforcement agencies, which have long been accused of opaque dealings and illegal activities to line their pockets. — AFP

## Taiwan's Apple Daily finds buyer

**TAIPEI:** The Taiwan edition of Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper has found a buyer which would retain most of its staff, the firm said Wednesday, pledging to continue to “speak out against any injustice”. Popular news outlet Apply Daily shut down in Hong Kong last year after its newsroom was raided and assets frozen under a sweeping national security law Beijing imposed on the Chinese city to clamp down on dissent.

Its Taiwanese edition has continued to operate as a

## Belgian king decorates last Congo WWII vet

**KINSHASA, DR Congo:** Belgium's King Philippe on Wednesday decorated the last surviving Congolese World War II veteran, on the second day of his historic visit to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Belgian sovereign landed in DRC's capital Kinshasa on Tuesday for a six-day visit billed as an opportunity for reconciliation between the vast central African country and its former colonial master. On Wednesday morning, Philippe visited a memorial for combat veterans in Kinshasa and laid a wreath. He also decorated 100-year-old Corporal Albert Kunyuku, who enlisted in Belgium's colonial Force Publique in 1940 and saw service in Burma — the former name of Myanmar. Kunyuku, the last surviving Congolese veteran of World War II, shook hands with the king for a long time.

Belgium's colonisation of the Congo was one of the harshest imposed by the European powers that ruled most of Africa in the late 19th and 20th centuries. King Leopold II, the brother of Philippe's great great grandfather, oversaw the conquest of what is now DRC, governing the territory as his personal property between 1885 and 1908 before it became a Belgian colony.

### Brutal rule

Historians say that millions of people were killed, mutilated or died of disease as they were forced to collect rubber under his rule. The land was also pillaged for its mineral wealth, timber and ivory. In 2020, Philippe wrote a letter to Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi to express his “deepest regrets” for the “wounds of the past.”

Near the combat veterans' memorial on Wednesday, some bystanders suggested that decorating Kunyuku was a cosmetic gesture. “We should also compensate

the families of these veterans who lost their lives in a war that did not concern them,” said Madeleine Yowa, a 43-year-old nurse.

Marie-Therese Bakuku, a street vendor, also urged financial reparations and called the ceremony hypocritical. “There were thousands of them,” the 73-year-old said, referring to Congolese WWII veterans. “Now there's one left and they're trying to save the day.”

### Looted art

King Philippe afterwards visited DRC's national museum in Kinshasa, established in 2019, where he handed over a mask the ethnic Suku group use in initiation rites. The ceremonial mask is on “unlimited” loan from Belgium's Royal Museum for Central Africa, he announced.

The Belgian government last year set out a roadmap for returning art works looted during the colonial era, a sensitive topic in DRC. “The coloniser hauled away our artworks, it's right that they should be returned to us,” said Louis Karheba, a 63-year-old businessman.

Prince Pungi, a young civil servant, agreed. “Congo is changing, moving forward,” he said. “It's time to take back what belongs to us”. Philippe is due to hold a ceremony with President Tshisekedi at the Congolese parliament later Wednesday, and then on Friday, deliver a speech to university students in the southern city of Lubumbashi. On Sunday, the Belgian sovereign will visit the clinic of gynaecologist Denis Mukwege, co-winner of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize for his fight against sexual violence, in the eastern city of Bukavu. The visit is King Philippe's first to DRC since ascending the throne in 2013. His father, King Albert II, visited the country in 2010.

His trip comes as Belgium is preparing to return to Kinshasa a tooth — the last remains of Patrice Lumumba, a hero of the anti-colonial struggle and short-lived first prime minister of the independent Congo. Lumumba was murdered by Congolese separatists and Belgian mercenaries in 1961 and his body dissolved in acid, but the tooth was kept as a trophy by one of his killers, a Belgian police officer. — AFP



**KINSHASA:** Belgium's King Philippe (L) and President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Felix Tshisekedi (R) attend a ceremony at the National Museum of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Kinshasa. — AFP

financially independent subsidiary but ceased print publications last May, 18 years after it was founded by now-jailed Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai. Taiwan's Apple Daily said in a statement on its website Wednesday that it has “completed a handover” and will announce the buyer later.

“Most of our colleagues will be transferred to the new employer and be safely retained,” said Ip Yut-kin, the legal representative for the Taiwan subsidiary, in the statement, adding that he would serve as the “honorary chairman.”

“Looking back on the past year, our Hong Kong headquarters was faced with an unprecedented storm in the history of global news,” the statement said. It added that after the assets for Hong Kong's Apple

Daily were frozen, the Taiwan edition had its funds cut off. “The original intention of Apple Daily cannot be forgotten. It will always speak out against any injustice for its readers,” it said. Last year, the Hong Kong government made the rare move of applying to dissolve the paper's parent company Next Digital, saying it would be “expedient in the public interest”.

The High Court granted the government's request in December after a brief hearing that was not contested by the company. Authorities have moved to rein in press freedoms in Hong Kong as Beijing remoulds the city in its own image, following huge and sometimes violent democracy protests in 2019. National security charges have been brought against Lai and six former senior executives of Apple Daily. — AFP

## China's drone carrier hints at ‘swarm’ ambitions for Pacific

**PARIS:** Officially it is just a research vessel, but China's newly unveiled drone carrier is a clear sign Beijing is rushing to deploy an autonomous swarm of unmanned devices in its push for military supremacy in the Pacific Ocean. State media last month showed the launching of the Zhu Hai Yun-“Zhu Hai Cloud”—capable of transporting an unspecified number of flying drones as well as surface and submarine craft, and operating autonomously thanks to artificial intelligence. The 89-metre (292-foot) ship would be operational by year-end with a top speed of 18 knots, vastly increasing China's surveillance potential of the vast Pacific area it considers its zone of influence.

“The vessel is not only an unprecedented precision tool at the frontier of marine science, but also a platform for marine disaster prevention and mitigation, seabed precision mapping, marine environment monitoring, and maritime search and rescue,” Chen Dake, lab director at the firm that built the carrier, told China Daily. Armies worldwide see drone squadrons as key players in combat, able to overwhelm defence systems by sheer numbers and without putting soldiers' lives at risk, such as with more expensive jets or tanks. “It's probably a first-of-its-kind development but other navies across the world, including the US Navy, are experimenting with remote warfare capabilities in the maritime domain,” said US Army Lieutenant Colonel Paul Lushenko, who is also an international relations specialist at Cornell University in New York. Even if the vessel's actual capabilities remain to be seen, Beijing is broadcasting its intent to cement territorial claims in the region, as seen with the security partnership agreed last month with the Solomon Islands northeast of Australia. “It's definitely imposing, provocative, escalatory and aggressive,” Lushenko told AFP.

### Collective intelligence

Building fleets of autonomous and relatively inexpensive drones would greatly augment China's ability to enforce so-called anti-access and area denial (A2-AD) in the Pacific, with the aim of weakening decades of US influence. Unlike traditional aircraft carriers or destroyers carrying hundreds of troops, the drone carrier could itself navigate for longer periods while sending out devices that create a surveillance “net,” potentially able to fire missiles as well.

The Zhu Hai Yun could also improve China's mapping of the seafloor, providing a covert advantage for its submarines. “These are capabilities that are likely to be critical in any future conflicts that China wages, including over the island of Taiwan,” strategists Joseph Trevithick and Oliver Parken wrote on the influential War Zone site. Beijing has made no secret of its desire to wrest control of Taiwan, and military experts say it is closely watching the West's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine to gauge how and when it might make its move. And last month, Chinese researchers published a drone swarm experiment allegedly showing 10 devices autonomously navigating a dense patch of bamboo forest, without crashing into the trees or each other.

“The ultimate goal is something that has a collective intelligence,” said Jean-Marc Rickli, head of risks at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. “The analogy is a bit like a school of fish. They create forms in the water that are not the decision of any single fish, but the result of their collective intelligence,” he told AFP.

It would be a big technological advance from current weapons, which can be programmed and semi-autonomous but must have human operators to react to unexpected challenges. A fleet of self-navigating drones could in theory incapacitate defence systems or advancing forces by sheer numbers, saturating combat zones on land or at sea until an opponent's arsenal is depleted. — AFP

# Business

THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 2022

## Boursa Kuwait provides training to brokers in collaboration with ICMA



**KUWAIT:** Boursa Kuwait Group organized a training program in collaboration with the International Capital Market Association (ICMA), targeting financial brokerage companies in an effort to further its commitment to contributing to the development and education of brokers and asset management firms through sharing the latest updates of financial instruments and products implemented across the world.

Boursa Kuwait has been a member of ICMA since 2017. The not-for-profit association has been working together with its members over the course of 50 years to promote the development of the international capital and securities markets, pioneering the rules, principles and recommendations which have laid the foundations for their successful operation. Currently, ICMA has around 600 members active in all segments of international debt capital markets in 64 jurisdictions globally. Among their members are private and public sector issuers, banks and securities dealers, asset and fund man-

agers, insurance companies, law firms, capital market infrastructure providers and central banks.

The initiative forms part of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to create a lasting meaningful impact on the communities where it operates as part of its Corporate Sustainability strategy and ongoing efforts under its 'Education' pillar to equip all market participants with an in-depth understanding of the functioning of capital markets and various tools and techniques required to make informed investment decisions and effectively meet investors' needs. It is also in line with Goal 4 - Quality Education - and Goal 17 - Partnership for the Goals - of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the National Development Plan for the State of Kuwait, "New Kuwait 2035".

ICMA's mission is to support resilient well-functioning international and globally coherent cross-border debt securities markets. Through its training and education programs, designed and delivered by industry professionals, ICMA promotes high pro-

fessional standards in the industry.

This course, delivered over the course of five days from May 29 to June 2, covered equity markets, bond markets as well as an analysis of economics and economic indicators and was taught by David Oakes, who trained as an economist at the London School of Economics and was lecturer in finance at the University of Exeter and Warwick Business School before joining the ICMA Centre at the University of Reading as Director of Academic and Executive Education in 1998, and coordinated ICMA's Executive Education programs from 1994-2004.

Commenting on the occasion, Oakes said: "Through this course, we hope that we can broaden the perspectives of these experienced market participants and deepen their understanding in order to contribute to the continuing professionalization of the Kuwaiti capital market. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for giving us this opportunity and look forward to building on this long-term strategic partnership in the future."

Boursa Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in line with the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR), industry best practice standards and investor expectations, creating strong and sustainable partnerships that ultimately achieve success and allow Boursa Kuwait to leverage the capabilities and strengths of other companies or organizations that have experience in different fields, and integrating sustainability efforts with the company culture, in order to achieve longevity and an ongoing impact that is carried on and instilled in the day-to-day operations of the stock exchange.

As part of the strategy, Boursa Kuwait has launched many initiatives in partnership with local and international organizations, focusing on support for nongovernmental organizations and charity programs, financial literacy and capital market awareness, the empowerment of women, environmental protection as well as safety and preventive measures against COVID-19.

## OECD sees lower world growth due to Ukraine war's 'hefty price'

**PARIS:** The OECD warned Wednesday that the world economy will pay a "hefty price" for Russia's invasion of Ukraine as it slashed its 2022 growth forecast and projected higher inflation. The Paris-based organization, which represents 38 mostly developed countries, is the latest institution to predict lower GDP growth due to the conflict, which has sent food and energy prices soaring.

In its latest economic outlook, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said global gross domestic product would grow by three percent in 2022 — down sharply from the 4.5 percent estimated in December. The OECD also doubled its forecast for inflation among its members, which range from the United States to Australia, Japan, and Latin American and European nations—to 8.5 percent, its highest level since 1988.

"The world is set to pay a hefty price for Russia's war against Ukraine," wrote the OECD's chief economist and deputy secretary-general, Laurence

Boone, adding that a "humanitarian crisis is unfolding before our eyes." "The extent to which growth will be lower and inflation higher will depend on how the war evolves, but it is clear the poorest will be hit hardest," Boone said. "The price of this war is high and will need to be shared."

Before the war broke out, the outlook had appeared "broadly favorable" for 2022-23, with growth and inflation expected to return to normal after the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, said the OECD.

However, "the invasion of Ukraine, along with shutdowns in major cities and ports in China due to the zero-COVID policy, has generated a new set of adverse shocks," it said.

### Food shortage risk

The OECD was supposed to publish its outlook in March, but it delayed its detailed assessment until now due to uncertainty over the war. At the time, it said the conflict could cut global GDP growth by "over one percentage point". The World Bank revised its own figures on Tuesday, lowering its global growth forecast from 4.1 percent to 2.9 percent. The IMF cut its forecast by nearly one point to 3.6 percent in April. The OECD cut its growth forecast for the United States from 3.7 percent to 2.5 percent and that of China, the world's second biggest economy, from 5.1 percent to 4.4 percent. The eurozone's GDP is now seen growing by 2.6 percent instead of 4.3 percent while Britain's out-

look was lowered to 3.6 percent from 4.7 percent.

The OECD noted that commodity prices had risen, hitting real income and spending, "particularly for the most vulnerable households". "In many emerging-market economies the risks of food shortages are high given the reliance on agricultural exports from Russia and Ukraine," it said.

The report warned that the "effects of the war in Ukraine may be even greater than assumed", raising as an example a scenario of Russia cutting gas supplies to Europe.

As central banks tighten their monetary policies to counter inflation, the report said sharp increases of interest rates could also hit growth more than anticipated.

### COVID risk

The COVID pandemic, meanwhile, could take another turn for the worse. "New more aggressive or contagious variants may emerge, while the application of zero-COVID policies in large economies like China has the potential to sap global demand and disrupt supply for some time to come," the OECD said. Faced with these challenges, governments needed to protect the most vulnerable from the economic shockwaves, it added.

In the short term, "temporary, timely and well-targeted" fiscal measures would help the poorest households, the OECD said.

Over the medium- and long-term, governments

## EU sets better gender balance in European corporate boards

**BRUSSELS:** EU lawmakers on Tuesday agreed on a continental target to establish better gender balance on the boards of companies in Europe. Negotiators from the EU member states and European Parliament said they found common ground on a proposal that was first made by the European Commission, the EU's executive, in 2012.

"After 10 years, since the European Commission proposed this directive, it is high time we break the glass ceiling," said Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in a statement.

"There are plenty of women qualified for top jobs: they should be able to get them," she added. Under the new rules, EU countries must ensure that listed companies fill at least 40 percent of

non-executive board seats "with the underrepresented gender" by the end of June 2026, the statement said.

For member states that introduce quotas in both executive and non-executive boards, the requirement will be 33 percent. Companies that fall short of the target will be bound to "apply transparent and gender neutral criteria" to fix the problem.

Those companies must also "prioritize the underrepresented sex" if two candidates of different sexes are equally qualified, the statement said. In order to give the rules teeth, member states will also have to set up a penalty system for companies failing to comply with the rules.

"Despite years of roadblocks, I'm proud to have pushed member states to finally agree to this 'women on boards' milestone," said MEP Lara Wolters, who negotiated the law for the parliament.

It "will push for progress in 27 member states at once," she said. Today, according to the commission, only nine out of 27 member states have national legislation regarding gender equality on boards.

According to the European Institute for Gender



"After 10 years, since the European Commission proposed this directive, it is high time we break the glass ceiling," said Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (left) in a statement.

Equality, the share of women on the boards of the largest publicly listed companies in the EU had increased to 31.3 percent, from 11.9 percent in 2010.

But this still meant that seven out of 10 people sitting on company boards were men. —AFP



PARIS: OECD Chief Economist Laurence Boone speaks during a press conference to present the OECD Economic outlook at the OECD headquarters in Paris on June 8, 2022. — ADF

would have to invest more in clean energy and defense spending. "The world is already paying the price for Russia's aggression," wrote Boone. "The choices made by policymakers and citizens will be crucial to determining how that price will be distributed across people and countries." — AFP

## China approves 60 new games

**BEIJING:** China has approved the release of dozens of new video games, sending the shares of some of its biggest tech firms soaring Wednesday on hopes that a long-running and painful crackdown on the sector is easing. The announcement follows a report in The Wall Street Journal on Monday that said regulators were wrapping up their investigation into ride-hailing giant Didi and will allow it to register new users.

Officials in China—the world's biggest gaming market—rolled out a series of restrictions last year as part of a sweeping government campaign to rein in huge tech firms. They capped the amount of gaming time for children with the stated aim of fighting addiction and froze approvals for new games for nine months, hammering the bottom lines of many companies including sector titan Tencent. —AFP



## Business

# India hikes interest rates 50 basis points to fight inflation

## Emerging economies facing 'bigger challenges': RBI chief

**MUMBAI:** India's central bank on Wednesday hiked rates for a second time in as many months, as Asia's third-largest economy reels from galloping inflation in the wake of the Ukraine war. The Reserve Bank of India raised its key repo rate by 50 basis points to 4.90 percent, a month after kicking off an aggressive monetary tightening cycle with a surprise 0.4 percentage point lift in May.

"The war in Europe is lingering and we are facing newer challenges each passing day," Bank governor Shaktikanta Das said in a televised address, pointing to higher food and fuel prices. He added that inflation was a global problem but emerging economies were facing "bigger challenges", with market turbulence following monetary policy shifts in advanced economies.

India bounced back strongly from the coronavirus pandemic with one of the world's fastest growth rates, but is now grappling with rising costs as commodity prices skyrocket worldwide. Consumer inflation has consistently overshoot the central bank's two-to-six percent target range in the first four months of the year, hitting an eight-year high of 7.79 percent in April.

India's economy has seen sharp price increases across the board, including food and fuel.

Last month the government banned wheat exports to rein in prices after a heatwave hit local crop yields. Officials also capped sugar exports to safeguard supplies, and slashed duties on fuel and edible oils to buffer consumer spending.

India imports more than 80 percent of its

crude oil needs, with its dependence growing as domestic production falls, and the country's 1.4 billion people have been hit with rising petrol costs. Prices have risen sharply since Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier this year, and economists estimate that a \$10 per barrel increase in Brent crude increases consumer inflation in India by about 25 basis points.

### 'No brainer'

The governor had extensively signaled Wednesday's move in advance, calling a June rate hike a "no brainer" in a recent television interview. India's 0.4 percent rate rise in May had caught markets by surprise, though economists supported the move as a necessary counterweight to inflation pressures.

Kotak Institutional Equities economist Suvodeep Rakshit said Wednesday's hike and inflation forecasts were "in line with market expectations". Wednesday's monetary policy resolution also signaled further tightening, with a greater emphasis on dialing back the accommodative stance taken during the pandemic. The RBI retained its growth forecast at 7.2 percent for the 2022-23 financial year but sharply raised its inflation forecast to 6.7 percent, from 5.7 percent estimated last month. The World Bank on Tuesday slashed its growth forecast for India in the current financial year to 7.5 percent, from 8.7 percent projected earlier. A strong consumption recovery from the pandemic will be offset by "headwinds from rising inflation, supply chain



**MUMBAI:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das (right) addresses a press conference in Mumbai on June 8, 2022. —AFP

disruptions, and geopolitical tensions", the World Bank said in its report. Indian stocks turned volatile after the announcement, with the bench-

mark Sensex index falling one percent before recovering to trade 0.32 percent higher at mid-day. —AFP

## WTO seeks fresh momentum at big ministerial meet

**GENEVA:** The World Trade Organization holds its biggest gathering in four years from Sunday, looking to prove that it still has a role in turbocharging international commerce.

Ministers from WTO member states are gathering in the global trade body's home city of Geneva hoping to breathe new life into the crippled organization, which has been stuck for years trying to make progress on resolving issues like fishery subsidies. Russia's war in Ukraine has not curbed the zeal of WTO director-general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala to press on with the four-day gathering, even if some countries refuse flat out to negotiate directly with Moscow.

"This ministerial conference will have to deal with this climate of acute confrontation and various tensions," Sebastien Jean, professor of industrial economics at the French National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts university, told AFP. It must also "limit the damage as far as possible, to show that the WTO still can play a useful role," he said, pointing out that the organization could, for instance, ensure that a lack of coordination does not "exacerbate the ongoing food crisis".

The meeting marks the first ministerial conference for Okonjo-Iweala, the former foreign and finance minister of Nigeria, who took the helm in March 2021. "Many gaps remain but we are making

progress. Let us keep on the pressure, let us keep up the work at this critical juncture," she told diplomats on Tuesday. "The next hours will be critical... believe it or not, I really think we will do it."

### Promises

Her drive to restore the WTO's profile has been widely praised, amid the context of multiple crises including the COVID-19 pandemic and growing rivalry between the world's two leading economic powers, the United States and China. "She has created a set of promises as she wants to see deals concluded," said Manfred Elsig, an international relations professor at the World Trade Institute of Bern University.

"However, she can support and guide the members but cannot take decisions on their behalf," he told AFP. This 12th WTO ministerial conference will put the global trade body's influence to the test for the first time in years. The 11th gathering in Buenos Aires in December 2017 ended without a significant agreement.

Since then, the problems have piled up in the WTO's in-tray. The organization is especially under pressure to secure a long-elusive agreement to end subsidies that reward overfishing. "For the WTO, there is a real issue of credibility," a Geneva-based diplomatic source said. After more than 20 years of negotiations, ministers will try to conclude an agreement even if differences of opinion persist notably between India and wealthy nations-on the conditions for developing countries.

Failing to secure a fisheries agreement "would be a fatal blow to WTO", said one Geneva-based ambassador. "Failure will be a clear signal that we are no longer able to negotiate with the whole

membership, meaning multilateral negotiations will receive the final nail in the coffin."

### 'Cautious optimism'

The WTO is also trying to make itself relevant in combating the pandemic. Four major players in pharmaceutical manufacturing—India, South Africa, the United States and the European Union—have informally been negotiating a proposal for a temporary patents waiver on COVID vaccines. The notion has been slammed by the big pharma lobby, with the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations saying that weakening intellectual property rights would be counter-productive.

The waiver "is not only the wrong solution, but it is also an outdated proposal that has been overtaken by events, since vaccine supplies are vastly outstripping demand", the IFPMA added. Meanwhile, non-governmental organizations have slammed a compromise text produced last month as aiming for the lowest common denominator, insisting that any waiver should be permanent and should apply to COVID tests and treatments, in addition to vaccines. Besides fisheries subsidies and the pandemic, agriculture, services, development, food security and least-developed country issues are also on the table. WTO reform is also looming in the background. —AFP



**Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**

## World Bank slashes China growth forecast over COVID damage

**WASHINGTON:** The World Bank has sharply slashed its annual growth forecast for China, warning in a report Wednesday that COVID disruptions could further slow recovery in the world's second-largest economy. China is the last major economy wedded to a zero-COVID policy, using rapid lockdowns, mass testing and strict movement restrictions to eliminate outbreaks-but it has tangled supply chains and dragged economic indicators to their lowest levels in around two years.

Growth in China is projected to slow to 4.3 percent in 2022, the World Bank said in a report on Wednesday, marking a steep 0.8 percentage-point drop from the December forecast. This "largely reflects the economic damage caused by Omicron outbreaks and the prolonged lockdowns in parts of China from March to May," the report said, referring to the highly transmissible variant of the coronavirus.

In those months, restrictions on dozens of cities including the manufacturing hubs of Shenzhen and Shanghai as well as the breadbasket province of Jilin battered business operations and kept consumers at home. "In the short term, China faces the dual challenge of balancing COVID-19 mitigation with supporting economic growth," said Martin Raiser, the World Bank country director for China, Mongolia and Korea. "The dilemma... is how to make the policy stimulus effective, as long as mobility restrictions persist." Activity is expected to rebound in the latter half of 2022, helped by fiscal stimulus and more easing of housing rules, the World Bank said. But domestic demand will likely recover gradually and only partly offset the earlier pandemic-related damage, it added. —AFP

## Canadian offices going to the dogs as WFH ending

**OTTAWA:** Daisy moseys over to greet visitors, her tail wagging. She's listed as chief morale officer on Tungsten Collaborative's website, and is among the many pets joining their owners returning to Canadian offices after working from home through the pandemic. The 12-year-old Lab sniffs for treats. Before long, a Basset Hound named Delilah waddles over, offering up her belly for a rub, along with other four-legged colleagues Eevee the Greyhound and German Shepherd puppy Hudson, who lets out a bark.

Daisy's proficiencies include "stress management" and "client engagement," according to her biography, which notes that many of the industrial design studio's "greatest innovations can be traced back to a long walk" with her. "We encourage people if they have pets to bring them (to work)," Tungsten president Bill Dicke, 47, said in an interview with AFP. "You develop this relationship being at home with your pet on a day-to-day basis and all of a sudden you go back to work, so now they have to be created for the day or roam the house alone, it's not fair to them," he opined. "The tolerance for pets (at work) during the pandemic has increased," he added.

These dogs sleep under desks or in the board-

room throughout the day, chase balls down a hallway or chew squeaky toys. There's a row of water bowls in the office kitchen, if they get thirsty. The Ottawa company is listed by the Humane Society as dog-friendly, and it's actually helped drum up business, Dicke said, as well as increased staff productivity. Workers are forced to take regular breaks for dog walks instead of "eating lunch at their desk," for example, and are not fretting about their pet being left alone at home, he explained. According to a recent Leger survey for PetSafe, 51 percent of Canadians support bringing dogs to the office.

Younger workers were the most supportive, with 18 percent of those aged 18 to 24 years saying they would change jobs if their employer refused to allow them to bring their pet to work. With an estimated 200,000 Canadians adopting a dog or cat since the start of the pandemic in 2020, bringing the nationwide total to 3.25 million, it could force employers now pressing staff to return to the office to consider this option.

### 'Going to w-o-r-k'

Johan Van Hulle, 29, joined Tungsten last year. Its dog policy, he said, "was a key part of the decision" to take the job, after working from home with Eevee. "Allowing dogs is a good indicator" of a company's culture, he said, and the kind of "not too corporate" workplace that appeals to him. Across town at construction joint venture Chandos Bird, people designing a nuclear research laboratory are visibly smitten by 10-year-old Samson. His owner Trevor Watt didn't want to leave the Yorkshire



**Bill Dicke, pictured giving his dog Nature a high five, says his company likes to 'encourage people if they have pets to bring them (to work)'. —AFP**

Terrier alone after moving into a new house and starting work in a new office in January. It was supposed to be a temporary arrangement until Samson got used to his new surroundings, but he endeared himself with colleagues and staff in neighboring offices, who take turns walking him. "He loves going to work," Watt said. "When I say I'm going to w-o-r-k, he's ready to jump in the car." Watt likes it, too. "I don't have to worry about him." "Dogs in new environments get very anxious, when left alone," he explained. "I think a lot of new owners know that now that they've had their puppies through COVID." If Samson needs to go out, he just puts a paw on Watt's leg. He has toys and a bed at the office, and wanders from desk to desk. —AFP

have fuelled rapid price increases in food markets across Europe.

Last month Orban also blamed the "sanctions policy in Brussels" for stoking inflation before levying windfall taxes on the banking, energy, and airline sectors among others. Orban, who has been tussling with Brussels over the release of EU funding that the bloc's executive ties to rule of law and anti-corruption conditions, said the taxes would partly fund the price caps. Re-elected for a fourth straight term in April Orban, in power since 2010, is also under pressure to fill budgetary holes left after he handed out lavish financial incentives to groups such as young families and pensioners before the vote. —AFP

## Hungarian inflation hits double figures

**BUDAPEST:** Hungarian inflation hit 10.7 percent Wednesday according to official data, the first double figure reached in 20 years, despite a range of price caps fixed by Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Annual inflation in May, up from 9.5 percent in April, was the fastest increase

## Stocks mixed as traders assess recession risk

**LONDON:** Stock markets diverged Wednesday as investors weighed recession prospects and inflation around the world hit the highest levels in decades. The yen hit fresh multi-year lows against the dollar and euro with the Bank of Japan refusing to raise interest rates to combat high consumer prices, in contrast to rival central banks.

The OECD on Wednesday warned that the world economy would pay a "hefty price" for Russia's invasion of Ukraine as it slashed its 2022 world growth forecast and said inflation to keep rising.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development predicted that the world economy would grow three percent this year-down sharply on its 4.5-percent estimate in December.

"This argument which the market appears to be having with itself, over whether we see a recession... is likely to become a lot clearer over the next week or so, starting with US" inflation data Friday, noted Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK. European stock markets were lower Wednesday approaching the half-way stage and after Asian indices had rallied as China eases COVID lockdown restrictions and is forecast to lift its crackdown on the tech sector. China's approval of dozens of new video game releases sent shares of some of its biggest tech firms soaring Wednesday.

Global equities have enjoyed some respite in recent weeks from a painful sell-off caused by central bank monetary tightening, in particular by the Federal Reserve. All eyes are on the release of US inflation data for a clearer idea about the pace of future Fed rate hikes. —AFP

## Business

# Out of frying pan: Indonesians pay price of cooking oil crisis

## Producers rush to shift goods abroad to cash in on soaring rates

**JAKARTA:** About three weeks after Russian troops invaded Ukraine, Indonesian housewife Liesye Setiana was forced to close her banana chip business as cooking oil supplies dried up across the country. Millions of consumers and small business owners in the world's fourth most populous nation have been rattled for months by skyrocketing cooking oil prices.

As the war between the two major grain and sunflower seed producers sent jitters through global markets, many producers rushed to shift their goods abroad to cash in on soaring rates.

Setiana would travel to a supermarket over an hour from her remote East Java village of Barubarjo to buy a daily eight-liter batch of palm oil that could keep her business alive. But the 49-year-old mother of two would be turned away, with sellers heavily rationing the commodity used in products ranging from cosmetics to chocolate spreads. "I was fuming and told the employees that I really need the cooking oil for personal use, not for hoarding," said Setiana, who used to make up to 750,000 rupiah (\$52) a day selling her savory yellow snack. "How come we have cooking oil shortages when Indonesia is the world's top palm oil producer?"

Her battle for supplies is just a snapshot of the cooking oil crisis that has spurred hours-long queues of residents with jerry cans in hand across Indonesia's most populous island, Java, and others such as Borneo. Two people died in March from exhaustion-including one who had queued at three different supermarkets, according to local media-as they waited in searing heat to get their hands on a product that rose to 20,100 rupiah a liter at its height.

### Counting costs

Indonesia produces about 60 percent of global

palm oil supplies, with one-third consumed domestically. India, China, the European Union and Pakistan are among its major export customers. The squeeze on cooking oil at home forced the Indonesian government to impose a now-lifted ban on exports last month, easing prices and shoring up domestic supplies.

But at the end of May, the price of bulk cooking oil, the most affordable in the country, still hovered at about 18,300 rupiah per liter on average, above the government's target of 14,000 rupiah, according to official data. The price spike has left many with difficult decisions to make.

Sutaryo, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, runs a tempe chip business out of his home in South Jakarta. He was forced to jack up his prices and lay off four employees to stay afloat.

"After the surge of cooking oil prices, we have to be smart in calculating our production cost. Our consumers are left with no other choice but to accept a higher price for our kripik tempe," he said, referring to the traditional soy-based crackers. With demand yet to recover, production at Sutaryo's home factory has slid from 300 to 100 kilograms a day, and daily revenue is down to six million rupiah from 15 million before the pandemic. About half-a-dozen workers cut thin slices of tempe before throwing them into frying pans of hot oil, letting them sizzle until crispy.

It is a far cry from the hustle and bustle of the business's pre-pandemic peak, said Sutaryo, when he had workers frying tempe chips outside for lack of space.

### 'Significant' impact on poor

Cooking oil prices were already on the rise in 2021, but the impact of Moscow's assault has driven them to record highs, said Mohammad Faisal,



**JAKARTA:** Employees fry sliced tempe, a traditional Indonesian food made from fermented soybeans, at a home industry that produces chips in Jakarta. —AFP

executive director of the Center of Reform on Economics (CORE Indonesia) think tank. The government is now moving to secure even more supplies at home, meaning there is unlikely to be a repeat of the spike seen after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, he said.

But while prices may come down in Indonesia's towns and cities, they will stay high for those living in rural and remote areas like Setiana. "For

lower-income people, the impact is significant because, at the same time, there are increases in the prices [of other commodities]," Faisal told AFP.

With local prices unlikely to fall, and with little money coming in since her husband was laid off, Setiana now has other worries-like no longer being able to afford school fees for her children.

"If prices of staple goods go up, we have little left for other expenses." —AFP

## World Bank slashes 2022 global growth forecast to 2.9%

**WASHINGTON:** The World Bank slashed its growth estimate for the global economy to 2.9 percent, 1.2 percentage points below the January forecast, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine which has caused a severe downturn. "The world economy is expected to experience its sharpest deceleration following an initial recovery from global recession in more than 80 years," the bank said Tuesday in its Global Economic Prospects report.

The slump comes after growth recovered to 5.7 percent in 2021 following the downturn caused by COVID-19 pandemic. The Russia invasion and Western sanctions on Moscow have sent grain and oil prices soaring, and drivers around the world are facing eye-popping prices at the pump.

"The war in Ukraine, lockdowns in China, supply-chain disruptions, and the risk of stagflation are hammering growth. For many countries, recession will be hard to avoid," said World Bank President David Malpass. The war is compounding the damage from the COVID-19 pandemic, magnifying the slowdown in the global economy, "which is entering what could become a protracted period of feeble growth and elevated inflation," according to the report.

"This raises the risk of stagflation, with potentially harmful consequences for middle- and low-income economies alike." The report notes some similarities to the 1970s when growth stalled and inflation skyrocketed with supply factors fueling price hikes and a long period of low interest rates. But in contrast to that period, the US dollar is strong, and major financial institutions are in solid position. —AFP

## Gulf Bank launches partnership program with SparkAdemy

**KUWAIT:** In line with its strategy for the year 2025, and in order to develop its employees' skills and efficiencies, Gulf Bank has announced the launch of a digital transformation program for its employees as part of a strategic partnership with the Swiss company, SparkAdemy. The partnership marks the first of its kind in the Kuwaiti banking sector and the region.

SparkAdemy is the world's number one digital institution, bringing measurable learning to the corporate world. SparkAdemy trains major corporations and banks around the world in the latest advances in scientific research and education, upskilling their employees to advance the futures of their businesses.

Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajjaj, said that 16 Gulf Bank employees were selected to participate in the transformational program. Participants were selected after passing rigorous evaluations and interviews at the Bank. She noted that the Bank's Human Resources and Talent Development teams continue to work to employ and upskill employees who will implement the Bank's 2025 strategy, becoming distinguished banking hires with competitive skills and expertise. Gulf Bank continues to consolidate its leading position as the Kuwaiti Bank of the Future, implementing a variety of programs aimed at training new graduates and upskilling new employees in line with global best practices. Gulf Bank aims to help candidates develop key banking skills, cultivating holistic bankers that can contribute to the bank's culture of excellence and results-oriented performance.

Al-Hajjaj noted that the digital transformation program will play a major role in accelerating Gulf Bank's ongoing digitization plans. As part of the program, Gulf Bank will be upskilling and training a select group of the bank's employees in all the knowledge, materials and market trends necessary to achieve Gulf Bank's vision of consolidating its position as the leading



Kuwaiti Bank of the Future.

She stressed that the program would assist all relevant departments to achieve the bank's digital transformation goals and upskill local employees. Gulf Bank continues to be at the forefront of digital transformation due to its commitment to providing technology-based solutions and fostering a performance culture based on merit and excellence, in addition to its adoption of high-level risk management practices.

On her part, the Assistant General Manager for Human Resources, Hanan Al-Khalifa, said: "At Gulf Bank, we believe in developing our local talents in line with the Bank's strategic objectives. We remain committed to developing and upskilling our local talents so that we may be better equipped to face new changes in the digital world - it is this spirit of self-development and self-improvement that every Gulf Bank leader embodies."

She added: "Our pioneering collaboration with SparkAdemy will mitigate future challenges in the digital world, and will enable Gulf Bank to support and develop its local talents and employees to become

faster, more innovative, smarter, and always at the forefront of digitization. In this way, we are proud to be creating a new generation of Kuwaiti talents that are more capable than ever of keeping pace with Gulf Bank's revolutionary digital transformation plans."

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.



## IKEA is recalling METALLISK espresso maker

**KUWAIT:** IKEA urges all customers who own METALLISK espresso maker for hob 0.4 l with the stainless-steel safety valve, date stamps between 2040 and 2204, to stop using it and to contact IKEA for a full refund.

Safety is a top priority for IKEA and therefore



we are recalling METALLISK espresso maker with the stainless-steel safety valve, date stamps between 2040 and 2204, due to an increased risk of the product bursting during use.

The risk has increased after a change of material and construction of the safety valve therefore only the products with the stainless-steel safety valve (silver/grey in color), are included in the recall. No other units are affected by this recall. METALLISK espresso maker with the stainless-steel safety valve, date stamps between 2040 and 2204, can be returned to any IKEA store for a full refund. Proof of purchase (receipt) is not required. IKEA apologizes for any inconvenience this recall may cause.

## Helium shortage deflates American celebrations

**WASHINGTON:** Helium balloons are part of nearly every American celebration, but a global shortage of the lighter-than-air gas has disrupted many traditions. One college football team has suspended its traditional release of red balloons, and party planners will have to make do with less - if they get any. "Due to the global helium shortage, we only allow 20 balloons to be ordered," Litin's Party Value, a party supplier in Minneapolis, Minnesota, warns on its website.

"We've had some customers pretty disappointed that they couldn't get more," Kristi Holmstrom, the chain's general manager, told AFP. "I've never seen it this bad before," she said, adding that many stores have run out of helium entirely. Whether it floats at the end of a string or grouped in a bouquet, shaped like a cartoon character, a number, or a Halloween pumpkin, helium balloons are a must.

Between the lost sales and the suspension of the helium rental business, Holmstrom estimates the shortfall to be between \$5,000 and \$10,000 a month. The University of Nebraska football team, the Cornhuskers, will do without its traditional release of red balloons - the school color - before each home game this season. "Acquiring helium ... is really challenged and it's been hard to get," university athletic director Trev Alberts said in late May.

University officials asked "that the helium we are getting as a university we need to use for medical purposes" at the university's medical center in Omaha, he

said. The inert gas, a byproduct of natural gas production, is liquefied to cool magnetic resonance imaging scanners (MRIS), was once deployed on space shuttle missions, and also is used in the manufacturing of semiconductors.

### 'No store had helium'

Only a handful of countries - led by the United States - produce the gas, and the already-fragile supply chain has been disrupted by plant closures: in Texas over safety issues, in Russia after a fire (prior to the war in Ukraine), and in Qatar for maintenance. Brad Weston, chief executive officer of Party City, said during an earnings call last month that the party supply chain has faced higher costs for helium, which cut about \$2 million from gross profit in the first three months of the year and will inflict a bigger hit in the second quarter.

"The good news is we've secured helium to meet our customers' needs," ahead of the peak graduation season in May and June, he said of the retailer, which has 830 stores in North America. The situation is even worse for the Dollar Tree discount chain. "We are once again, experiencing shortages in availability of helium, and have not been able to procure the volume and the needs which will negatively affect balloon sales," CEO Mike Witynski lamented late last month. That's small comfort for families trying to celebrate graduations, weddings and birthdays. "Tried to get my baby some balloons for her graduation. No stores got helium," Guy Fisher of Indiana said on Twitter.

Anna Bondareva, creator of the Wonder Party Rental agency outside of Washington, DC, along with her partner Laura Badmaev, said they are trying to find alternatives. "I think it's getting worse because it's getting more expensive. It's harder to get it," Bondareva told AFP. "That should give us a chance to more creative to rethink our decorations." —AFP



## KUWAIT ARTS ASSOCIATION HOSTS 'PLAY COLORFUL MELODIES' EXHIBITION

By Nawara Fattahova

On the 55th anniversary of its foundation, the Kuwait Arts Association is hosting an exhibition by Kuwaiti artists titled 'Play Colorful Melodies' at its headquarters in Hawally. The weeklong exhibition opens daily for the public from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. The 44 artworks displayed

at the exhibition are the result of a workshop that was held recently. Twenty-three female Kuwaiti artists are presenting contemporary artworks. "All the artworks displayed here express the melody of love, passion and happiness. It's a light of hope in the path of creativity that attracts the heart. It's a kind of visual memory magic interacting with the spirit of

the artists, who expressed their femininity in these great creations," said Abdul Rasoul Salman, Chairman of Kuwait Arts Association. "The artworks present visual messages that the artists succeeded to deliver to the audience, as they connected the colors with human feelings and senses. They did a great job, and we congratulate them for

holding this beautiful exhibition. I encourage all artists to join all workshops that are organized by the Kuwait Arts Association to keep updated with the modern development of arts," added Salman. Atared Al-Thaqeb, one of the participating artists, said the beauty of the workshop during which they created these artworks is that they didn't know what they would

paint. "It gave us power and ability to combine colors, and each of the artists had her unique touch. The colors used in these artworks are modern to match the title of our workshop, especially grey, as it matches all colors. I love bright colors, so I used it in my artworks, especially turquoise," she said.



## Thai railway market back on track post-pandemic

A train bell rouses a Thai grandmother dozing in her fruit and flower stall, sending her rushing to fold in her awning before the locomotive slowly rumbles past, so close it almost touches her wares. Six times a day at the Mae Klong Railway Market, local customers and foreign tourists scramble into nooks and crannies while vendors calmly move their woven baskets of goods away from the tracks and close their umbrellas to make way. Hundreds of stallholders carve out a living along this 500-metre stretch of railway in Samut Songkhram, 80 kilometers (50 miles) west of Bangkok, selling everything from fresh produce to live turtles to clothes and souvenirs. "Even though it looks risky and dangerous, it's not dangerous at all," said fruit and vegetable vendor Samorn Armasiri.

Her family has run a stall in the bazaar-nicknamed in Thai "talad rom hup", or the umbrella-pull-down market for five decades, and she's never witnessed an accident. "When the train enters, officers sound the horn and everybody packs their stuff-they know the drill," she said. **Big train, tiny space** The sides of the train carriages pass directly over-with just centimeters to spare-bags of lettuce, broccoli, onions, ginger, chilli, tomatoes and carrots placed carefully on the outside of the rails. In recent years, the spectacle had become a hub for coconut-drinking backpackers in elephant pants and Instagram selfie enthusiasts, but the pandemic hit hard. Now, with Thailand dropping COVID-19 entry restrictions, tourism is picking up

once more. Australian Ella McDonald, on a two-day stopover on her way to Turkey, was among those marveling at the market's organized chaos. "It was crazy and hectic," she told AFP. "I was shocked at how big the train was in the small amount of space. It's a unique experience. I've never seen anything like this anywhere else in the world." **Not just for tourists** Before COVID-19 hit, the market was also beloved by Chinese tourists buying durian-the pungent-smelling "king of fruit". Strict quarantine rules presently discourage would-be visitors from China, who once made up the largest share of foreign tourists in Thailand. But even without them, fishmonger Somporn Thathom-a stallholder since 1988 — said business was finally picking up after two

years of hardship and financial strain. "During COVID, I barely made enough to pay my staff. I managed to sell 10 fish per day," the 60-year-old said. "I used up all my savings... and had to borrow money from the bank." Station manager Charoen Charoenpun believes the market's authenticity ensures its popularity. "It's not made up. It's not built for the tourists," he said. "The tourists, when they come they can see the tradition and culture of the local people of Samut Songkhram." But for eight-year-old Australian William, the pandemic ensuing as the train passed through was captivating. "The most exciting thing is when you get the train going past-just seeing the (market vendors) pack up," he said. — AFP

## Academy names new CEO after years of Oscars drama, reforms

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences named its new CEO Tuesday, ending a tumultuous 11 years under Dawn Hudson that included the #OscarsSoWhite controversy, a huge expansion of the group's membership and Will Smith's infamous slap. Hudson first announced plans to step down last October, shortly after the successful opening of the Academy's major new film museum in Los Angeles. She will be replaced by Bill Kramer, who oversaw that museum launch. Kramer is "the ideal choice to lead at this pivotal moment for the organization," Academy president David Rubin said in a statement.

As Hollywood's most elite group of filmmakers, which also oversees the Oscars, the Academy has had to navigate multiple controversies in recent years, including accusations of a lack of racial diversity. Most notably, the group was pummeled with criticism for a dearth of Black Oscar nominees during the #OscarsSoWhite movement, which emerged in 2015. Hudson oversaw and fulfilled a pledge to double the number of women and minority members by 2020, significantly expanding overall membership from around 6,000 to nearly 10,000 in the process.

"She initiated unprecedented efforts to create more space for diverse voices, both within the membership and our industry," said Rubin. Hudson and senior leadership faced criticism for their perceived lack of reaction after Smith struck comedian Chris Rock on stage during this year's Oscars ceremony. The Academy has said Smith was asked to leave the Hollywood ballroom shortly after the attack-but that claim was disputed, including by Smith's representatives.

Smith-who won the Academy Award for best actor shortly after the altercation-was later banned from attending the Oscars for the next decade. Kramer, who will start as CEO next month, oversaw nearly \$400 million in fundraising for the Academy Museum, which was decades in the planning, and has become a top priority for the organization's future. The museum-home to Tinseltown memorabilia from Judy Garland's "Wizard of Oz" ruby slippers to Dracula's cape-has sold more than 550,000 tickets in nine months, the Academy said. — AFP



This photograph shows a passenger train passing through the Mae Klong railway market in Samut Songkhram province, around 80 kms (50 miles) southwest of Bangkok. — AFP photos



This photograph shows fish vendor Somporn Thathom sitting at her stall as a passenger train passes through the Mae Klong railway market in Samut Songkhram province.



This photograph shows residents shopping at the Mae Klong railway market in Samut Songkhram province.



This photograph shows a passenger train passing through the Mae Klong railway market in Samut Songkhram province.

## Lifestyle | Features

## Beloved Japanese manga 'One Piece' heads into final chapter

After 25 years and 490 million copies sold worldwide, the beloved Japanese manga "One Piece" is entering its final chapter, according to its creator Eiichiro Oda. The manga, which follows the adventures of the swashbuckling pirate Monkey D Luffy, has captivated millions of fans worldwide as its characters hunt for One Piece, the treasure coveted by all pirates. In a tweet on Tuesday, Oda announced he would be taking a month off from his usual publishing pace of one installment per week, citing various demands, including his work on the last part of the long-running series.

"A break for me!" he wrote in a handwritten announcement posted on the series' official Twitter account. "I want to rearrange the structure (of the manga)

so that I can wrap up the final chapter as soon as possible. Soooo... Forgive me, but I will take a short breather to prepare for it all!" "One Piece" first appeared in manga form in Japan in 1997, with an animated TV series version following two years later.

Since then, the franchise has become a global cultural phenomenon, and Oda holds the Guinness World Record for "most copies published for the same comic book series by a single author". Last year, the 1,000th episode of the TV series was released, with special screenings in the United States and France—the world's biggest manga and anime market after Japan. A live-action adaptation by Netflix is also in the works, with fans speculating it could catapult the franchise to global household name status, on par

with "Star Wars" or "Harry Potter".

Meanwhile, the publishers of another cult manga series, "Berserk", announced Tuesday that the cartoon would be relaunched following the death of its creator, Kentaro Miura, just over a year ago. Miura's friend Kouji Mori will continue the author's work based on discussions they had about the direction of the series, the publishing house Haksensha announced. "I will only write the episodes that Miura talked to me about," Mori said in the statement released by Haksensha. "I will not flesh it out. I will not write episodes that I don't remember clearly. I will only write the lines and stories that Miura described to me." — AFP



## Disney pulls blockbuster from French cinemas in streaming row

Disney will not release blockbuster animation "Strange World" in French cinemas, it said Wednesday, in protest against the country's strict streaming rules. Under French law, the company's streaming platform, Disney+, would have to wait 17 months to show the movie after its release in cinemas, which had been due in November. Disney told AFP it would instead send "Strange World" straight to streaming and skip cinemas entirely, confirming reports by movie website Deadline and French paper Les Echos.

Helene Etzi, Disney France president, told Les Echos that France's rules were "unfair, constraining and poorly adapted to audience demands." "Strange World" is one of its most-anticipated releases of the year, with Jake Gyllenhaal voicing the lead character in the English version of the fantasy adventure tale.

France has tried to prevent streaming

platforms from undermining its large cinema network and the TV stations—notably Canal Plus—that finance many of its films and get a shorter wait for prime releases. The National Federation of French Cinemas said it "protested with the greatest vigour against Disney's desire to deprive the French of its Christmas animated film." The debate over how long to wait between cinema and streaming releases has also been fierce in Hollywood—though with much shorter delays being considered.

After trying various strategies at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the US industry has settled on 45 days as the optimum gap. Scarlett Johansson sued Disney last year for loss of earnings after it released "Black Widow" simultaneously to cinemas and streamers. Director Denis Villeneuve said the same move by Warner Bros for his sci-fi blockbuster "Dune" showed "absolutely no love for cinema".

Even a 45-day window was reportedly not enough for Tom Cruise, who is rumored to have launched legal action against Paramount to get a longer delay for his next "Mission: Impossible" installment next year. So far, Disney has no plans to pull "Lightyear" from French cinemas—the "Toy Story" spin-off is due later this month. But the fate of other massive productions—including sequels to "Black Panther" and "Avatar"—rests in the balance. "We continue to evaluate the situation film by film and country by country," said Disney's Etzi. — AFP

about more than witty catchphrases.

"Everyone Needs Peace," reads one of his latest creations, hanging over the entrance to his Partisan Press poster workshop. Besov, 45, gained instant attention when, in the early days of Russia's military offensive he started printing "No to War" posters in the shop. One video of a poster being made garnered 3.6 million views on Instagram.

"It was unclear whether martial law was going to be introduced... Everyone was in a panic," he says. Besov stopped making the "No to War" posters after Russia introduced strict new censorship laws, making it illegal to refer to the intervention as a war and setting jail terms for those found guilty of discrediting Russia's military. He began printing the "Everyone Needs Peace" posters instead but the police still turned up at this shop in early March and detained two of his employees.

**'They talk about fear'**

"They were very nervous," he says. The

## Eight on trial for stealing Banksy from Paris attack site

Eight men go on trial in Paris on Wednesday accused of stealing a Banksy artwork, painted on the door of the Bataclan concert venue to honor 90 people killed in the 2015 terror attacks. The seven French defendants and one Italian are suspected of removing the metal door from the building before dawn in January 2019 and transporting it to Italy.

It was decorated in 2018 with the stencil of a mournful young woman by the anonymous British street artist, giving it an estimated value of up to one million euros (\$1.1 million). A white van with concealed numberplates was seen stopping on January 26 in an alleyway running alongside the Bataclan in central Paris.

Many concertgoers fled via the same alley when the Bataclan became the focal point of France's worst ever attacks since World War II, as Islamic State group jihadists in November 2015 killed 130 people at a string of sites across the capital. Three of those on trial, in their 30s, confessed to the theft when they were arrested, though two said they were only carrying



In this file photo a policeman stands guard near a piece of art attributed to Banksy, that was stolen at the Bataclan in Paris in 2019, and found in Italy, ahead of a press conference in L'Aquila. — AFP

two women are now waiting to know whether they will face any charges. The workshop took a few weeks off in March "simply out of fear", Besov says, but is now up and running again. On one recent spring day, Besov was out in the streets of Moscow in sunglasses and a black T-shirt, using a paint brush to slather glue on one of his posters in front of a brick wall covered with graffiti.

Once the glue was applied, he stuck up the poster reading: "If there are dreams, there will be journeys." Tens of thousands of Russians have decided to take one-way journeys since the start of the conflict, fleeing the country with no plans to return. But Besov says he plans to stay. "Today the posters are about what happens to us. They talk about fear. 'Fear is no reason not to act' was the first poster we printed after our break," he says.

The posters' slogans are vague and eerie, loaded with the words that cannot be said: "The wave will sweep everything away", "The main thing is not to lose your-

out the orders of a man who was not present when the door was removed, Mehdi Meftah.

Meftah, 41, who founded a luxury brand of T-shirts embellished with 18-carat gold bars after claiming to win 7.5 million euros in the lottery, told police that his friend Kevin G., also on trial, presented him with the Banksy unannounced. This version was confirmed by Kevin G., one of the three believed to have removed the door, but contested by the other two. Four more defendants, aged between 31 and 58, are accused of transporting the stolen artwork.

## Generators and grinders

On the morning of the theft, three masked men climbed out of the van, cut the hinges with angle grinders powered by a generator and left within 10 minutes, in what an investigating judge called a "meticulously prepared" heist. A burglary of a generator and angle grinders from a DIY shop in France's southeastern Isere region 12 days earlier put police on the trail of three of the suspects, who were recorded talking about the art theft when their phones were tapped.

Phone records showed the men were in Paris on the night of the heist. Investigators pieced together the door's route across France and into Italy, where it was found in June 2020 on a farm in Sant'Omero, near the Adriatic coast. —AFP

## MeToo film movement shifts from rhetoric to action

As the MeToo movement evolves, the film industry is seeking practical ways to ensure its opposition to harassment and abuse is translated into tangible improvements. Campaign group Time's Up UK is the latest to offer a concrete initiative, announcing plans for a panel of experts to hear complaints, similar to standards authorities for doctors, teachers and other professionals. Currently, staff on movie productions often fear "that if they make a complaint against a senior figure, they will be devoured", Dame Heather Rabbatts, chair of Time's Up UK, told AFP.

The proposed three-person panel will include experts in harassment and abuse who can offer "help, mediation and investigation", she said. The idea cuts both ways in the debate, seeking to counter those who say abuse allegations lead to people being "cancelled" before there has been a proper inquiry. "We want to avoid trial by media. It doesn't help anybody," said Rabbatts. "The independent standards body would have the highest levels of confidentiality and mitigate the problem of people being treated as though they are guilty until proven innocent."

## 'Profound distrust'

The Hollywood Commission, set up in 2017 to tackle abuse in the US industry, is working on a similar panel, as well as an anonymous reporting platform to gather complaints. France has also introduced practical measures, including insurance that covers the cost of a production being halted while a complaint is investigated. Previously, "people spoke out but nothing happened because there was too much money involved to stop filming", said Iris Brey, a writer specializing in cinema and gender.



Since last year, the Centre National du Cinema has been running training courses in preventing and detecting sexual harassment—mandatory for any film accessing France's generous subsidies. Having more women on sets is also a crucial part of the battle. Some companies, including Netflix and Amazon, now require productions to have diverse heads of department before a project gets green-lit. But there is a long way to go. Riley Keough, who happens to be Elvis Presley's granddaughter, won in the newcomer's Un Certain Regard section at last month's Cannes Film Festival with her first film, "War Pony".

She told reporters that, despite her fame, she and co-director Gina Gammell found it very difficult to raise funding. "Many first-time male filmmakers are getting a lot more money than first-time female filmmakers," she said. "There's a profound distrust in women being in positions of leadership. Maybe that isn't conscious but I see it happening."

France's prolific industry has a particularly high proportion of women directors but misogyny is still entrenched, said Reine Prat, who writes about gender and culture. "An exception is made for culture," she told AFP. "Behavior is permitted in this sector that is unacceptable elsewhere." She highlighted Roman Polanski's best picture win at the 2020 Cesar Awards—France's version of the Oscars. This was despite fresh rape allegations against him, adding to his long-standing conviction for violently raping a 13-year-old girl, for which he remains a fugitive from US justice. "We talk about separating the art from the artist but they were clearly paying homage to Mr Polanski himself," said Prat. "It was a green light to anyone who behaves that way." —AFP

## Against Type: Russian print artist makes posters for peace

Before the launch of Russia's military campaign in Ukraine, printer Sergei Besov was part of a burgeoning art scene based out of a converted factory in northern Moscow. Using an old printing press with hefty wooden Cyrillic type and vintage red ink, Besov created nostalgia-tinged posters with updated Soviet-style slogans. More than three months after Russian forces moved into Ukraine in late February, Besov is still working, but these days his posters are



Sergei Besov, the 45-year-old artist and the Partisan Press poster workshop founder, wearing a black T-shirt with a slogan reading "Fear is no reason not to act" makes a poster using an old manually-operated printing press in his workshop in Moscow. — AFP photos



Sergei Besov poses wearing a black T-shirt with a slogan reading "Fear is no reason not to act" in front of a wall adorned with his posters outside his workshop.

Lifestyle | Features



# Marathon dhow race seeks to preserve ancient Gulf heritage

Under a blazing sun, far from the skyscrapers and SUVs of modern Dubai, hundreds of enthusiasts took to Gulf waters in traditional wooden vessels, keen to preserve an ancient heritage. Around Sir Bu Nair, a teardrop-shaped island roughly 100 kilometers (60 miles) from both Dubai and Abu Dhabi, two of seven emirates that make up the UAE, 118 teams raced dhows, the sailboats that have plied the Arabian peninsula's waters for centuries.

"I started about 10 years ago, when I was 23, with my father and my brothers," one of the sailors, Abdullah Al-Mheiri, told AFP under the setting sun. He had just ventured out across

**'Duty' to preserve environment**  
Like much of the Gulf prior to the discovery of oil, the settlements that now make up the United Arab Emirates, including Dubai, were formed largely around maritime activities, notably pearl-diving using the once-ubiquitous dhows. But with the establishment of the federation in 1971 and the advent of oil driven development, the UAE's economic activity would swiftly balloon to become the Arab world's second largest after Saudi Arabia. Despite sitting on relatively low oil wealth compared to its neighbors, the emirate of Dubai saw a spectacular rise, capitalizing on its strategic location to transform itself into a finance, air travel and tourism hub. But away from the flitting of



Sailors participate in the annual long-distance dhow sailing race, known as Al-Gaffal, near Sir Abu Nuair island towards the Gulf emirate of Dubai.— AFP photos

Preserving heritage is vital for the organizers of Al-Gaffal and they have sought to set an example with the competing sailboats, which are not fitted with engines.

"One of the most important messages we send is the transmission of this heritage from one generation to the next," tournament director Mohammed al-Falahi told AFP. "But the fact is that it also doesn't pose a risk for nature," he added. "We haven't forgotten that Sir Bu Nair is a

nature reserve that shelters many species of turtles" in the Gulf.

The teams of sailing enthusiasts set off at dawn on Saturday, at times battling the searing heat as much as the waters. Their sails hoisted, the vessels caught the wind, like white clouds floating across the expanse of blue, towards the Dubai shoreline, where the nearby Burj Al-Arab hotel towers in the shape of a sail. — AFP



choppy waters with 11 crew mates to take part in the Al-Gaffal dhow race, a grueling annual tournament that stretches from early morning to early afternoon. On one dhow, the crew, clad in white robes, toiled to unfurl a white sail, pulling at arm's length on ropes and then scrambling for balance as the giant fabric caught the wind. For Mheiri, taking part is his way of paying tribute to his heritage—Al-Gaffal refers to the return of fishermen to Dubai's coasts after journeying out to sea.

social media influencers and luxury high-rises, Mheiri prefers the quiet respite that he finds on the open sea.

The race's starting point, Sir Bu Nair, is ideal, he believes, as it is also home to a nature reserve. "We have lived with the sea for hundreds of years," he said. "Preserving the environment is a duty." According to the UN's cultural agency UNESCO, the island "is one of the most important hawksbill nesting sites within the entire Arabian Gulf and certainly by far the most important location in the UAE".



## Matthew urges 'gun responsibility' at White House podium

Actor Matthew McConaughey took the podium at the White House on Tuesday to deliver an emotional appeal for "gun responsibility" following the massacre at an elementary school in his hometown of Uvalde, Texas. "We are in a window of opportunity right now that we have not been in before, a window where it seems like real change, real change can happen," the 52-year-old McConaughey told reporters.

McConaughey, who visited Uvalde and met with families of the victims after 19 children and two teachers were shot dead on May 24, spoke powerfully about some of the children who died. He displayed a colorful drawing made by Alithia Ramirez, a 10-year-old who had wanted to attend art school in Paris one day. McConaughey also pointed out a pair of green Converse shoes held by his wife, Camila Alves, that belonged to another of the victims, Maite Rodriguez.

"Green Converse with a heart on the right toe," McConaughey said. "These are the same green Converse on her feet that turned out to be the only clear evidence that could identify her after the shooting." "How about that?" he said, pounding the lectern in a hushed White House briefing room. McConaughey, who met with President Joe Biden and members of Congress before addressing the White House press corps, said the families of the victims told him that they wanted to make "their loss matter."



US actor Matthew McConaughey speaks during the daily briefing in the James S Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC.— AFP

"They want their children's dreams to live on," he said. "We consoled so many people," he said. "And you know what they all said? 'We want secure and safe schools and we want gun laws that won't make it so easy for the bad guys to get these damn guns.' "We need to invest in mental health care. We need safer schools," he said. "We need to restore our American values and we need responsible gun ownership. "We need background checks," he continued. "We need to raise the minimum age to purchase an AR-15 rifle to 21."

### 'Life preservation problem'

McConaughey, who won a best actor Oscar in 2014 for the film "Dallas Buyers Club" and has flirted with running for governor of Texas, said it should be a "nonpartisan issue." "As divided as our country is, the gun responsibility issue is one that we agree on," he said.

"There is not a Democratic or Republican value in one single act of these shooters," he said. "Can both sides see beyond the political problem at hand and admit that we have a life preservation problem on our hands?" Gun violence is common in America but the nationwide shock over recent mass shootings at a grocery store in Buffalo and the school in Uvalde has once again spurred calls for action.

Democratic Senator Chris Murphy has been working with a bipartisan group of senators on reform measures—a heavy lift, with many Republicans routinely rejecting most forms of gun control. A recent CBS News/YouGov poll found that 62 percent of Americans back a nationwide ban on semi-automatic rifles. Support is even higher for background checks on all gun buyers (81 percent). US gun violence has killed more than 18,000 people so far in 2022, including nearly 10,300 suicides, according to the Gun Violence Archive.— AFP

## Sports

# Let's get physical: Celtics ready for Warriors challenge

**BOSTON:** Boston Celtics coach Ime Udoka has urged his team to fight fire with fire as they prepare for the physical challenge of the Golden State Warriors in game three of the NBA Finals. The Warriors outmuscled the Celtics in their series-leveling game two win on Sunday, with Golden State enforcer Draymond Green leading a superb defensive performance that shut down Boston's scoring threat.

Green was a thorn in the side of the Celtics lineup throughout the win, sparring both physically and verbally with Boston's players incessantly. Udoka says he has given his players no special instructions in how to deal with Green other than to "be who you are." "If you want to ignore it, ignore it," Udoka said on Tuesday. "If you engage, engage. Do what you do. Be who you are."

"The main thing is to continue to stay composed. With us, I don't think it's the talking as much as the physicality that they brought ... We know obviously that's what Green does. Kind of bleeds over into the team." Udoka said he if he had been suiting up in this year's finals as a player "I would probably get a double technical immediately". "But that's not everybody," Udoka said. "Do what you do. Block it out or meet physicality with physicality."

Udoka is also only too aware of Green's importance to the Warriors as a rallying point when the

team needs lifting. "When their team is struggling, he sets the tone for them. That's one of the ways he does it. But we embrace that," Udoka said. "One of the best defensive teams, we like to impose our will, as well. I have to meet that with the same thing."

Celtics ace Jaylen Brown was involved in a flashpoint with Green in game two after being fouled by the Warriors star on a three-point attempt. The two ended up in a shoving match after tangling on the floor, and Brown later accused Green of trying to yank his shorts down. Brown said Tuesday he planned to ignore any needling by Green in game three.

"We ain't got time for that. Just come out and play basketball, let everything else take care of itself," Brown said. "I'm going to come out, do my job. We're here to play basketball, so don't get caught up in all the antics and stuff like that."

Warriors coach Steve Kerr meanwhile said he had no plans to ask Green to temper his physical approach. "No, just let him be him," Kerr said. "He's at his best when he's passionate and emotional. I thought he played a great game the other night. The play is always going to be physical in the playoffs. Being physical is part of it. The main thing is you have to leave the officials alone, and Draymond did a good job of that." —AFP



**SAN FRANCISCO:** In this photo taken on June 5, 2022 Draymond Green #23 of the Golden State Warriors drives against Marcus Smart #36 of the Boston Celtics during the third quarter in Game Two of the 2022 NBA Finals at Chase Center. —AFP



## Teams set to play handball cup semis

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The 38th Gulf Handball Cup tournament will enter its decisive stage on Thursday with two semifinal matches. Kuwait Club, which lead group one, will play Saudi Arabia's Mudar, which is in second place in group two at 5:00 pm. At 7:00 pm, Bahrain's Najma will play Qatar's Al-Ahli. Kuwait Club on Tuesday defeated Al-Ahli 28-19 to collect 6 points and go on top of the standings. Al-Ahli is second with 4 points. UAE's Al-Jazeera third with 2 points and Muscat last without any points. Kuwait's player Saleh Al-Musawi received the best player's



award at the end of the match.

In the last match of group two, Al-Najma defeated Salmiya from Kuwait 34-30. Najma top the standings with 4 points, while its player Mohammad Habeeb was selected best player. Mudar are in second place with 2 points, while Salmiya are pointless in third place. Al-Jazeera will play Mudar for the fifth and sixth places, while Muscat remain in seventh.

Salmiya coach Dr Ahmad Foulad said he is satisfied with the technical performance Salmiya displayed during its match with Al-Najma, despite the loss. "Despite the absence of three key players, we were able to keep up with one of the best teams in Asia, but finally experience gave Al-Najma the edge," he said. Salmiya player Haidar Dashti congratulated Al-Najma for their win and being on top of the standings in group two. "We had a satisfactory performance during our matches, but results were not as hoped for. But the gains we had can compensate for the bitterness the players feel," he said.

Former national and Kuwait Club players Waleed Ali and Jarrah Al-Ateeqi asked fans to attend Kuwait's match with Mudar and back the team to reach the final. "Our duty is to be behind any Kuwaiti team that participates in any international event," Waleed Ali said, with teammate Jarrah Al-Ateeqi seconding his call.

Member of the technical committee of the tournament said the Gulf clubs tournament is the strongest as far as the technical level is concerned, adding that this is due to the presence of experienced professional players. He said the four teams that qualified for the semifinals are the best and most deserving to compete for the title.



## Winning shooters return to Kuwait

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi along with Kuwait Shooting Club officials received the shooting delegation that arrived from Azerbaijan. Abdelrahman Al-Faiham, Talal Al-Rashidi and Nasser Al-Miqqid won the team trap gold medal.



Talal Al-Rashidi also won the singles silver. Shooters Abdullah Al-Rashidi, Mansour Al-Rashidi and Abdelaziz Al-Saad won the bronze medal of the skeet team event at the World Cup Championship in Azerbaijan that concluded on Tuesday.

Otaibi dedicated the medals to III the Amir, III the Crown Prince and Kuwait's people, adding the club is keen to have its shooters participate in the most important continental and international tournament to qualify for Paris 2024 Olympics. Shooter Talal Al-Rashidi said the competition was very tough in all its events, especially since the best teams of the world participated in it.



## Futsal tourney sees final prelim rounds

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The preliminary rounds of the fourth West Asia futsal tournament will conclude on Thursday. UAE play Bahrain at 4:00 pm, then Lebanon will play Oman at 7:30 pm in the third and final round in the second group. Oman and Lebanon are co-leaders of the group with 4 points each, followed by Bahrain in third with 2 points and point-less UAE in fourth and out of competition.

Winning is a must for Oman, Lebanon and Bahrain, because the draw may put any of them in danger of exiting the tournament in case Bahrain wins big. The second round, which was played on Tuesday, resulted in Lebanon's winning against UAE 2-1, while Bahrain drew with Oman 2-2.

Lebanon's coach Rabee Abu Shiya said he is not



satisfied with his players' performance in general, particularly in the first 10 minutes, adding some players lack experience. He said the team must avoid mistakes against Oman if they want to qualify for the semifinals.



## Tennis tourney for seniors a success

**KUWAIT:** The Arab senior tennis tournament held in Amman concluded Tuesday under the patronage and in the presence of President of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah. The tournament was organized by Jordan's tennis club in cooperation with Jordan's tennis federation at the Dunes Club in Amman.

The final match and closing ceremony was attended by Secretary General of the Arab Tennis Federation Waleed Sami, Assistant Secretary General and Secretary General of Kuwait Tennis Federation Faleh Al-Otaibi, President of Jordan Tennis Federation Khalid Naffa and other tennis officials in Jordan.

Kuwait's former tennis star Ahmad Taqi Shatti won first place in mixed doubles, and third place in men's doubles (over-35 years). Kuwait was represented by Fahad Al-Haddad, Adel Safar and Hassan Al-Yousufi, in addition to Ahmad Dashti. Around 175 senior players participated in the tournament representing nine countries: Kuwait, Oman, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Algeria, Yemen and Palestine, in addition to host country Jordan.



Sheikh Ahmad thanked Jordan's tennis federation and the tennis club for the outstanding organization of this first tournament of seniors under the umbrella of the Arab federation. He also lauded the achievements of Ahmad Dashti and Fahad Al-Haddad in the tournament.



Sports

# Australia coach wants more from team after World Cup playoff win

**AL-RAYYAN, Qatar:** Australia coach Graham Arnold warned his team they must improve to beat Peru and make it to a fifth straight World Cup after Ajdin Hrustic fired a late winner in a nerve-wracking 2-1 play-off victory over United Arab Emirates in Doha. The Eintracht Frankfurt midfielder's deflected volley in the 84th minute decided the feverish Asian playoff on Tuesday in the Ahmad bin Ali Stadium that will host seven games in the World Cup finals in November.

More than 4,000 UAE fans made up the majority of the crowd in the 40,000 capacity arena in the Doha suburbs, where the players were blasted with air conditioning to keep the evening temperatures down. Australia will take on a dangerous Peru side in the same stadium in a do-or-die clash on June 13 in their quest to qualify for the finals and Arnold said he expected more from his players.

"We need to improve more. I expect another big improvement after this game," he said. "Obviously one game at a time and I thought the UAE put in a very good performance, a tight game, but we have had good preparation ... there was more cohesion with our play and after that game I expect we will be even better against Peru."

"My focus has been on our defense because we have been sloppy, conceding goals in the last couple of (FIFA) windows. We could have scored more, but at the same time there are things that we need

to tidy up as well defensively to make it tougher." Nineteen-year-old forward Harib Al-Maazmi, who scored the winner in UAE's surprising 1-0 win over South Korea that got them to the playoff, was a constant nuisance in the first half.

**Fighting spirit**

He threatened after 18 minutes with a dangerous left wing run and again 10 minutes before the break with Socceroos goalkeeper Mathew Ryan making a top-rate block. Minutes into the second half, Al-Maazmi again forced Ryan into a low save before attacking midfielder Jackson Irvine put Australia ahead. Martin Boyle stole the ball on the right wing, took it into the box and Irvine, who plays for German second-division side St Pauli, tapped in at the near post.

Australia barely had time to savor the goal when Al-Maazmi again found space. His cross broke to Caio Canedo, a Brazilian who first got an East Timor passport and then qualified for the UAE in 2020, who blasted home from close range. The game seemed destined for extra-time when Hrustic, fresh off winning the Europa League with his German club, met the ball from a corner that was only half cleared and his left-footed volley took a big deflection to find the net.

"We conceded a goal and we shouldn't have," said Hrustic. "But we kept going, kept fighting and



AR-RAYYAN, Qatar: Australia's forward Mathew Leckie and UAE's defender Khalifa Al-Hammadi vie for the ball during the FIFA World Cup 2022 playoff qualifier at Ahmad bin Ali stadium on June 7, 2022. —AFP

we took our chance, and the goal for Australia was for all the boys, for the staff, because we have been through a lot and it hasn't been easy." UAE had been looking to qualify for the World Cup for only the second time since their debut in 1990. Their

Argentine coach, Rodolfo Arruabarrena, said the UAE players "lacked the stamina in the last 15 minutes". New Zealand take on Costa Rica in Doha on June 14 to decide the final qualifier for the tournament that starts November 21. —AFP

## Kane's 50th goal rescues draw with Germany

**MUNICH:** England captain Harry Kane scored his 50th international goal on Tuesday by converting a late penalty in Munich to seal a 1-1 Nations League draw with Germany. Germany broke the deadlock when Jonas Hofmann fired the hosts ahead at the Allianz Arena, but Kane levelled from the spot with two minutes left. Germany defender Nico Schlotterbeck stumbled into Kane in the area and the penalty was given after a VAR review.

The Tottenham striker moved into outright second - just three behind Wayne Rooney - on England's list of all-time leading goalscorers, passing Bobby Charlton's total of 49. "It's a really nice feeling," Kane told Channel Four. "I had a couple of early chances and thought it could be one of those days. It's good to get the goal and it's just a shame we didn't nick it in the end," added Kane, who had earlier been denied by a superb Manuel Neuer save.

Gareth Southgate's side remain bottom of Group A3 after losing 1-0 to Hungary in Budapest last Saturday. Southgate was "pleased with lots of parts" of the England performance. "The Germans are the masters of tournaments and this was a



MUNICH: England's forward Harry Kane shoots from the penalty spot to score his team's equalizer during the UEFA Nations League match against Germany on June 7, 2022. —AFP

good test," he told ZDF. "Most of this (England) team has played a World Cup semifinal and the Euro 2020 final - they showed the character to fight for a point."

Germany, who visit Hungary on Saturday, are a point above them in third as the Germans' coach

Hansi Flick extended his unbeaten run to 11 games, dating back to September. "We played a really good game, but weren't rewarded for the performance," Flick told ZDF. Germany, playing in the shirts of their national women's team, twice breached the England defence in the first half without reward. —AFP

## New-look Italy beat Hungary to top group

**CESENA, Italy:** Italy moved top of their UEFA Nations League group on Tuesday after a new-look team continued their unbeaten start to the campaign with a 2-1 win over Hungary. Roberto Mancini's side lead the way in League A, Group 3 thanks to first-half goals from Nicolo Barella and Lorenzo Pellegrini in Cesena which put them a point ahead of second-placed Hungary.

A largely impressive display was blighted by Gianluca Mancini's 61st-minute own goal which gave the match a scoreline that flattered Hungary, led by coach Mancini's former Sampdoria teammate Marco Rossi. The European champions, who are trying to rebuild after failing to qualify for a second straight World Cup, now travel to Wolverhampton to face bottom side England on Saturday before taking on Germany in Moenchengladbach three days later.

"It was a good performance, especially in the first half. Their goal made us a little bit fearful but it was a match which we should have won by a bigger margin," Mancini told RAI. "This is a team full of young players who need to work a lot, we've got a long way to go." Mancini selected a host of players who played little or no role in Italy's triumph at Euro 2020, the glow of which has dimmed after they were dumped out of this year's World Cup in Qatar by North Macedonia in March.

Before Tuesday's match Italy had won just three of the 11 fixtures played since being crowned kings of Europe at Wembley in July, one of those meaningless wins in Turkey days after their play-off defeat to North Macedonia. The hammering Italy took at the hands of Argentina in last week's 'Finalissima' in London seemed to confirm a deep crisis.

But a youthful XI showed signs of life in Saturday's 1-1 draw with Germany and they took that momentum to Cesena, frequently playing with the style and verve which characterised Mancini's team before the Euro. Barella opened the scoring in the 30th minute, firing home his eighth Italy goal via two slight deflections after great work down the left from Leonardo Spinazzola, who seems near to top form after nearly a year out injured. —AFP



CESENA, Italy: Italy's forward Alessio Zerbin challenges Hungary's defenders Adam Lang and Bendeguz Bolla during their UEFA Nations League match on June 7, 2022 at the Dino-Manuzzi Stadium. —AFP

## Mane snatches dramatic victory for Senegal

**JOHANNESBURG:** Liverpool star Sadio Mane scored a penalty eight minutes into added time to give Senegal a dramatic 1-0 win over heart-broken Rwanda on Tuesday in 2023 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying. Forced to play a home match in Senegal because they do not have an international-standard stadium, Rwanda were on the verge of holding a team ranked 116 places higher in the world.

But Mane rescued the Teranga Lions on 98 minutes, with a hard, low penalty that eluded the outstretched hand of goalkeeper Olivier Kwizera. Mane has starred in the first two matches for the title-holders, scoring four goals, including a matchday one hat-trick against Benin. Despite the huge rankings gap, Senegal took no chances against the Rwandan Wasps, who have qualified for the Cup of Nations only once in 13 attempts.

Coach Aliou Cisse chose seven of the team that started the final victory over Egypt in Cameroon four months ago and introduced two more off the bench. Mozambique, who began their campaign by drawing with Rwanda, could close the gap behind Senegal to two points by winning away to bottom team Benin on Wednesday. In Group H, Kings Kangwa rifled a free-kick into the net on 88 minutes to give Zambia a vital 2-1 victory over the Comoros in Lusaka.

Former African champions Zambia achieved success the hard way, coming from behind in a fast-tempo, foul-riddled regional showdown. Serbia-based Ben Nabouhane took advantage of two defensive mix-ups to fire the visitors into a 13th-minute lead at a packed National Heroes Stadium.

**Kangwa is Zambia hero**

Constant Zambian pressure paid off in first half added-time when a corner was partly cleared and Brighton and Hove Albion midfielder Enoch Mwepu netted with a low shot through a crowd of players. Comoros wasted several early second-half chances to get in front again and the misses came back to haunt them as Kangwa snatched a deserved victory.

Zambia needed maximum points after losing away to the Ivory Coast last Friday, the same day the Comoros won at home against Lesotho. This group is the only one among 12 where the winners and runners-up do not qualify for the 24-nation tournament in June and July 2023. The Ivory Coast qualify automatically as hosts, but are competing to gain competitive match practice rather than relying on friendly games. —AFP

# Classifieds

**Hospitals & Clinics**

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khalidiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908

**Clinics**

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144

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Jahaber Sathick. (C 2006)

My name Marsal Tioph Fernandes, I want to change to Marshal Tioph Fernandes, holding Passport No. T4012610 Passport expiry - 29/05/2029. (C 2007)

**EMERGENCY ☎ 112**



**EMBASSY OF INDIA - KUWAIT**

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR THE THREE POSTS OF 'A - MARKETING ASSISTANT', 'B - BILINGUAL TYPIST' & 'C - MESSENGER':

Post	Qualification	Age Limit
<b>Marketing Assistant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduate, Preference would be given to MBA and Experience in Marketing</li> <li>Candidate should be Computer Literate and Proficient in Typing.</li> </ul>	Not more than 35 Years old as on 01.04.2022
<b>Bilingual Typist</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduate - Preference would be given to those experienced in government/non-government and Diplomatic organization</li> <li>Professional proficiency in spoken, written Arabic and typing in both English and Arabic</li> <li>Competence in Computers</li> </ul>	Not more than 35 Years old as on 01.04.2022
<b>Messenger</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12<sup>th</sup> or above</li> </ul>	Not more than 35 Years old as on 01.04.2022

Candidates applying should have valid Kuwaiti residency (transferable). Knowledge of English & One More Indian language is essential. Knowledge of other Indian language and Arabic would be an added advantage. Interested candidates may visit Embassy's website for submitting their candidature <https://indembkwt.gov.in/index.php> for more details by 21 June, 2022 till 5:00 PM. For any queries please ask us on: [eoikwaitrecruitment@gmail.com](mailto:eoikwaitrecruitment@gmail.com)

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# Indonesia beat Kuwait in Asian Cup qualifiers



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti captain Bader Al-Mutawa controls the ball during the AFC Asian Cup 2023 qualifying match against Indonesia at Jaber Stadium on Wednesday. Indonesia beat Kuwait 2-1. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

**KUWAIT:** Indonesia got off to a winning start by defeating the AFC Asian Cup 2023 Qualifiers Group A hosts Kuwait 2-1 at Jaber International Stadium on Wednesday. The home side started brightly and came within a whisker of opening the scoring inside five minutes when midfielder Omar Al-Hebaitir took possession of a loose clearance 30 yards out and curled an effort, but watched the ball just brush the top of the netting.

Indonesia responded in a similar fashion in the 18th minute, and it was a series of quick, intricate passes that ended with Marc Klok attempting an effort from outside the box that was deflected off a Kuwaiti defender and just wide off target. Goalkeeper Nadeo Argawinata was called into action for the first time in the 26th minute as veteran

Bader Al-Mutawa fed Eid Al-Rashidi on the edge of the penalty area and the Kuwaiti midfielder controlled and hit a powerful left-footed effort that forced a diving save from the Indonesian keeper to keep the scores level.

Saddil Ramdani came within inches of scoring a wonder goal after dancing his way through the Kuwaiti defense into the box and looking to beat goalkeeper Hussain Kankone at his near post, but his finish just lacked accuracy, hitting the wrong side of the netting instead. The goal arrived at the other end a minute later and it was striker Youssef Nasser who opened the scoring, rising unopposed to head home Mutawa's chipped cross from the right. The lead lasted mere seconds before a quick counterattack saw Rachmat Irianto break through

on goal, before he was brought down by goalkeeper Kankone, prompting the referee to point to the spot and book the Kuwaiti keeper.

On his competitive debut for Indonesia, Dutch-born Klok stepped up and powered home the equalizer from the resulting penalty. Coach Shin Tae-yong's men picked-up right where they left-off after the restart and within two minutes, they had taken the lead for the first time on the night through Irianto. Substitute Witan Sulaeman had taken advantage of a defensive mix-up to take possession of the ball inside the box, but his initial effort was blocked and fell into the path of Irianto who drilled home Indonesia's second.

Having scored a brace against Indonesia when the two sides last met in Kuwait 13 years ago, Al

Mutawa was denied an instant equalizer after his drilled shot from 25 yards out just clipped the outside of the upright. Vitezslav Lavicka's side pushed on in an attempt to draw level as the Czech manager made several changes, one of whom, Ahmad Al Dhefiri looked to take matters into his own hands, going on a jinking run from the right and rifling an effort, but was unable to direct it within the frame of the goal.

At the other end Sulaeman wasted a glorious chance to settle the game when he broke free on the counter and with the goal at his mercy, curled one with his left but it sailed wide. Kuwait will look to bounce back when they face Nepal on Saturday while Indonesia face Jordan in their next game on the same day.

## Blatter and Platini start fraud trial

**BELLINZONA, Switzerland:** Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini, once the chiefs of world and European football, appeared in a Swiss court on Wednesday to face trial over a suspected fraudulent payment. Former FIFA president Blatter, 86, and Platini, 66, appeared in Switzerland's Federal Criminal Court in the southern city of Bellinzona, following an investigation that began in 2015 and lasted six years.

The pair are being tried over a two million Swiss franc (\$2.08 million) payment in 2011 to Platini, who was then in charge of European football's governing

body UEFA. Both are accused of fraud and forgery of a document. Blatter is accused of misappropriation and criminal mismanagement, while Platini is accused of participating in those offences.

Retired Swiss football administrator Blatter, wearing a three-piece suit and a white shirt, arrived at the court with his daughter Corinne and his lawyer Lorenz Erni. "I am very confident", Blatter told reporters before going inside, adding that he had a "clear conscience". Platini arrived wearing a suit and a blue and white pinstripe shirt. The trial will conclude on June 22, with the three judges expected to deliver their verdict on July 8. If convicted, the pair could face up to five years in jail or a fine.

In court, before going into the charges levelled at the defendants, Platini's legal team attempted to widen the scope of the case to bring in a separate investigation

into the current FIFA president Gianni Infantino, which has been running since 2020. Before the 2015 fraud investigation launch, Platini had ambitions to take over the FIFA helm. Infantino was appointed in 2016.

"There is a direct link" between the suspicions of fraud against Platini, and several secret meetings between Infantino and the former Swiss attorney general, claimed Platini's lawyer Dominic Nellen. But prosecutor Thomas Hildbrand dismissed any purported link between the two dossiers, while FIFA lawyer Catherine Hohl-Chirazi branded it a "conspiracy theory" put forward "again and again" to evade the substance of the charges.

The defense and the prosecution agree on one point: Platini was employed as an adviser to Blatter between 1998 and 2002. They signed a contract in 1999 for

an annual remuneration of 300,000 Swiss francs. Both FIFA and UEFA are headquartered in Switzerland, in Zurich and Nyon respectively. The Office of the Attorney General of Switzerland (OAG), which brought the indictment, says this amount was invoiced by Platini and paid in full by FIFA. But it is alleged that more than eight years later, Platini submitted a fictitious invoice for money still due for his time as an advisor.

The former France captain "demanded a payment in the amount of two million francs", the OAG alleges. "With Blatter's involvement, FIFA made a payment to Platini in the said amount at the beginning of 2011." The evidence gathered by the OAG has corroborated that this payment to Platini was made without a legal basis. "This payment damaged FIFA's assets and unlawfully enriched Platini," the federal prosecution alleges.—AFP

## 'King of Lions' vows to pounce on UFC chance

**SINGAPORE:** There are 1.4 billion people in India but none currently on the books of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). Anshul "King of Lions" Jubli believes he's about to change that. The 27-year-old mixed martial arts fighter this week takes his unbeaten 5-0 record to Singapore and the inaugural Asia-wide edition of the "Road to UFC".

The tournament is designed to unearth untapped potential from the region and Jubli believes that he will win - and the floodgates will open for Indian fighters wanting to join the world's major MMA promotion. "Getting to the UFC is the dream," Jubli, who fights in the lightweight category, told AFP. "I can promise you that once I get signed that within four years you will see many, many Indian fighters follow me. This is just the beginning."

There has previously been one Indian-born fighter with a UFC contract, featherweight Bharat Khandare, who in 2017 lost his only fight and was consequently let go. Jubli was born in the picturesque northern Indian mountain town of Uttarkashi and his father was in the Indian Army's border security forces. The young Jubli ended up going with him to postings all over the country, before deciding to follow in his footsteps and sign up.

That's when Jubli's life changed forever. "I started learn-

ing MMA because I knew it would help with my army physical exams, but I soon realized it was MMA that I wanted to do, not join the army," said Jubli. "My father is quite happy but I know my mother still hopes that I will quit and become a doctor or a lawyer. There's no chance of that. "I am strong, I have all the skills and I am only getting better and better."

### 'Pressure-cooker'

After a 13-0 run through India's amateur MMA ranks, Jubli turned professional in 2019 and is unbeaten since. Road to UFC is the first edition of an Asia-wide version of the UFC's The Ultimate Fighter series which has unearthed 11 future champions, among them current welterweight king, the Nigerian-American Kamaru Usman.

It offers a window of opportunity for 32 fighters from as far afield as India and China, Indonesia and the Philippines, nations that are among the world's major population centers but relatively unrepresented on the global stage, in a sport that bills itself as the fastest growing on the planet. Jubli will be joined in the lightweight tournament by compatriot Pawan Maan (7-2-1). The victors this week will proceed to further events later in the year and, if they keep winning, the chance for a UFC contract.

"You've got to imagine if you take just India and China, the billions of people they have there, then there has to be some incredible, incredible talent somewhere," UFC president Dana White told AFP. "This tournament is a good way to get these kids some experience. Put them in a little bit of a pressure-cooker situation and see how they do."

### 'Ready to rock'

Road to UFC kicks off at the Singapore Indoor



Anshul Jubli

Stadium on Thursday as part of the lead-up to Sunday's UFC 275 in the city-state. The double world championship bill features the light heavyweight clash between Brazilian champ Glover Teixeira and Czech Jiri Prochazka, and the women's flyweight title fight between Kyrgyzstan-born Valentina Shevchenko and Brazil's Taila Santos. There is also a return to action for China's strawweight former world champion Zhang Weili. It is the first time the UFC has held title fights in Southeast Asia. Jubli is nowhere near that level yet, but believes that when he enters the cage for his fight against Japan's Sho Usami (4-1) on Friday he will show that the UFC is where he belongs. "I think I'm the best fighter in India," said Jubli. "I truly, truly believe that I am the best. I'll win this fight and I'll win this tournament. "I'm very prepared mentally, I'm prepared physically and I'm ready to rock." —AFP

## Champ Inoue's home burgled during fight

**TOKYO:** Japanese boxing champion Naoya Inoue reacted with horror on Wednesday after reports said his home had been burgled while he was busy taking down Nonito Donaire at a much-anticipated match. More than a dozen expensive bags and pieces of jewelry were stolen from the 29-year-old bantamweight champion's home near Tokyo on Tuesday evening, broadcasters TBS and Fuji TV said, citing unnamed police sources.

Local police declined to confirm details of the case when contacted by AFP. But it appeared the burglars had taken advantage of Inoue's absence as he beat 39-year-old veteran Donaire to add the WBC bantamweight world title to his WBA and IBF belts. The unbeaten Japan boxing great tweeted in annoyance in an apparent reference to the incident. "What a disgusting story on an otherwise celebratory day... Everyone be careful!"

On Tuesday, two men were seen fleeing in a white vehicle after they allegedly prised open the door to Inoue's home, TBS said, adding that police are still pursuing the duo. Meanwhile, Inoue floored Donaire at the end of the first round and then continued the onslaught into the second at the fight in Saitama, north of Tokyo, winning the title in a breathless display of power punching.

Donaire said he was felled by "the hardest punch I've ever been hit with". The unbeaten Japan boxing great known as "Monster" scored his 20th KO victory in 23 fights to add the WBC title to his WBA and IBF belts in a breathless display of power punching. In the pair's first, classic fight three years ago in the same arena, five-weight world champion Donaire fractured a bone in Inoue's face as the Japanese was pushed all the way before scoring a unanimous points victory.

But in Tuesday's rematch the 39-year-old "Filipino Flash" Donaire was demolished like never before in his storied career. Just seconds before the end of an even first round, Inoue's lightning quick overhand right to Donaire's temple scrambled the senses of the future Hall-of-Famer and sent him sprawling. "That was the hardest punch I've ever been hit with. I came up completely blank," Donaire said to fans live on his YouTube channel following the defeat. When I got hit I didn't even know I got dropped. I didn't see that punch coming at all because I was trying to counter him and got caught. That was pretty much it." —AFP