

## 2 Booklovers flock to Kuwait International Book Fair



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# Kuwait rejects interference in country's internal affairs

## European Parliament postpones vote on Kuwaitis' Schengen visa exemption



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah holds a press conference on Nov 17, 2022. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah strongly rejected on Thursday interference in the country's internal affairs, particularly from what he called "friends". In a press conference, Sheikh Salem said he also strongly rejects interference in the country's judicial system and its rulings.

"Kuwait is a democratic state and we are proud of it, proud of its system and the separation of powers in the country. Thus, we as a government or individuals cannot interfere with the work of the judicial branch from any outside party," Sheikh Salem said. The minister noted that decisions made by the judicial apparatus are independent without any interference

either internally or from abroad.

Sheikh Salem also expressed wishes that European countries would not "politicize" waiving Kuwait from the Schengen visa system, because the overall purpose of the waiver is to improve relations between the two sides. He made the remarks after statements by Vice President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas, who said Wednesday's execution of seven people could have consequences on waiving Kuwait from the Schengen visa system.

On Thursday, the European Parliament postponed until further notice voting on applications to exempt citizens of Kuwait and Qatar from the Schengen visa requirement, which was scheduled in Brussels

Thursday. The European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs did not disclose the reason behind the postponement.

The executions were the first since Jan 25, 2017, when the country also hanged a group of seven people. They coincided with a visit by Schinas. "The EU calls for a halt to executions and for a complete de facto moratorium on carrying out the death penalty, as a first step towards a formal and full abolition of the death penalty in Kuwait," the bloc said in a statement. The EU also summoned Kuwait's ambassador and warned the country's bid to get visa-free travel to the bloc was at risk because of the executions. — KUNA

## Greek FM snubs Libya counterpart

TRIPOLI: Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias snubbed his Libyan counterpart on Thursday, abandoning a planned visit to Tripoli to avoid being welcomed by the top diplomat of a government allied with archrival Turkey.



Nikos Dendias

Libyan Foreign Minister Najla Al-Mangoush was left waiting on the tarmac at Tripoli airport when Dendias refused to disembark from his plane and instead flew on to second city Benghazi, where a rival administration holds sway.

Athens blamed the incident on Tripoli, where Dendias had been scheduled to meet the head of Libya's Presidential Council, Mohamed El-Manfi, without meeting members of the executive, according to the Greek foreign ministry. Dendias' visit to the politically divided North African nation comes after Libya's Tripoli-based government signed a memorandum of understanding with Ankara over exploration for Mediterranean oil and gas that is bitterly contested by Athens.

Mangoush had been waiting on the tarmac to welcome Dendias "in keeping with diplomatic norms", a statement from her ministry said. But "in a surprising and insulting move, the Greek minister refused to disembark from his plane and left without any clarifications," it added. Mangoush's ministry said it would take "appropriate diplomatic measures" in response.

Shortly afterwards, it recalled its ambassador from Athens and summoned his Greek counterpart in Tripoli, government spokesman Mohamad Hamouda told Al-Ahrar, a satellite news channel. Built on a 2019 border deal between Tripoli and Ankara, the energy exploration agreement signed last month angered Greece, Egypt and Cyprus which argue that neither side has a right to drill in those areas.

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## School official fired over call to visit Zionist entity

KUWAIT: The education ministry has sacked the assistant director of a foreign school after she called

on students to visit the Zionist entity. The employee has also been banned from joining any other school in the country. "The ministry of education has initiated legal procedures over what occurred after receiving complaints from parents and students due to the assistant director urging students to visit the Zionist entity," ministry spokesperson Ahmad Al-Wuhayda said.

The private education department has opened an investigation on the incident and agreed to end her services, as well as ban her from joining any other

school. Legal procedures against the school have also been taken after a warning was issued for the violation, in order to ensure these acts are not repeated again.

"The ministry expresses its disagreement over the personal actions of the assistant director of a private school. The ministry will not hesitate to take legal measures against any institution that is proved to have expressed Zionist sympathies, either by action or verbally," Wuhayda added.

## Republicans take control of House; Pelosi to bow out

WASHINGTON: Republicans on Wednesday took control of the US House of Representatives from Democrats, networks said, narrowly securing a legislative base to oppose President Joe Biden's agenda for the final two years of his term - and leaving power in Congress split. The slim Republican majority in the lower house of the US legislature will be far smaller than the party had been banking on, and Republicans also failed to take control of the Senate in a historical-

ly weak performance in the Nov 8 midterm elections.

Democrat Nancy Pelosi, the trailblazing first female speaker of the US House of Representatives, said Thursday that she will step down from the party leadership when Republicans take control of the chamber in January. "For me, the hour has come for a new generation to lead the Democratic caucus that I so deeply respect," said the 82-year-old Pelosi, who first became speaker in 2007 and later presided over both impeachments of Donald Trump. "I will not seek reelection to Democratic leadership in the next Congress," Pelosi told lawmakers in a speech on the House floor.

NBC and CNN projected the victory for Republicans with at least 218 seats in the 435-member House of Representatives - the magic number

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## Mouth diseases hit nearly half of world's people

GENEVA: Rotting teeth, swollen gums and oral cancers: Nearly half the world's population suffer from mouth diseases, the World Health Organization

said Thursday. A new report highlighted glaring inequities in access to oral health services, saying it badly affected the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. "Oral health has long been neglected in global health," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, insisting that "many oral diseases can be prevented and treated with the cost-effective measures."

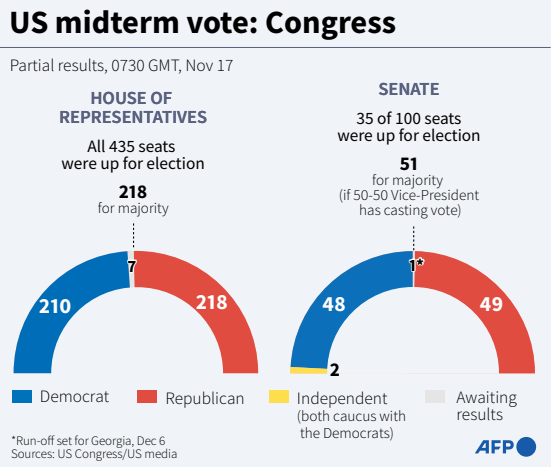
The UN health agency found that 45 percent of the global population, or around 3.5 billion people, are battling tooth decay, gum disease and other oral

down on street violence that erupted over a shock overnight decision to hike fuel prices.

Security forces on Thursday killed one protester in Bukan and two in Sanandaj, where mourners were paying tribute to "four victims of the popular resistance" 40 days after they were slain, the Oslo-based Hengaw rights group said. The state news agency IRNA later confirmed that police colonel Hassan Youssefi was killed after being stabbed repeatedly in Sanandaj, about 200 km west of the capital Tehran.

People had thronged the streets even as the sound of gunfire was heard in a video published by Hengaw and verified by AFP. Separately, two Basij members were stabbed to death and three others

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illnesses. The report, the first comprehensive picture of the situation across 194 countries, found that global cases have increased by one billion over the past 30 years. The WHO said that was "a clear indication that many people do not have access to prevention and treatment of oral diseases".

The most common diseases are dental caries, or tooth decay, severe gum disease, tooth loss and oral cancers. Untreated dental caries is the single most common condition, affecting some 2.5 billion people

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VIENNA: A placard and Iranian opposition protesters are seen outside the IAEA headquarters on Nov 16, 2022. — AFP





## Local

# Hundreds of book-lovers flock to Kuwait International Book Fair

Despite a shift in reading preferences, many still opt for printed books



KUWAIT: The Kuwait International Book Fair displays a large number of books on a variety of topics.



## Restructuring of administrative responsibility-IV

By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi

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**T**he war and terrorism in the Middle East, the crises of leadership in many of the oil supplying countries in the developing world, the crises of global warming - all these are very clearly tied to energy." - Julia Louis-Dreyfus

There are those who speak about direct and indirect industrial investment in Kuwait. Also, there are those who describe the situation with negativity and the lack of feasibility of investment in the industry in Kuwait, and each has their justification without a doubt. But we will talk about what we believe is realistic here, and we will not fly high without imagination and dreams. I will speak about what is possible and not what is imposed, especially since I am not specialized in such a field. I am speaking purely from an administrative point of view, and this has merit, otherwise I would not allude to this subject.

Every observer knows that the top financial source in Kuwait is the oil sector, as out of oil sales, Kuwaitis' life is made. Each interested party knows we in Kuwait have not used "black gold" ideally so far, as oil in the scientific and economic concept is a primary source for many industries such as petrochemicals and others. So let us suppose, for example, that the selling price of a barrel of oil is \$80, be sure that with simple mathematics, the value of this barrel if used ideally will be over \$200.

There is also the strategic security benefit, and I will allude here to the northern fields project that was discussed and not approved by the state's political establishments (government and National Assembly). Its idea was to bring in international oil companies to operate in Kuwait's northern fields, which affords Kuwait many benefits, most notably with advanced technologies in discovery and refining and reducing carbon emissions, in addition to training Kuwaitis on the most advanced oil technology platforms in the world. Last but not the least, considering the presence of these international companies as a security wall to protect the country, especially under the political and security circumstances known to all, and by this the country can hit many birds with one stone!

What is the ideal use? It is using the oil barrel in petrochemicals and transformative industries, so it will be possible to benefit from this barrel higher than the market price; rather making double the financial return from sale. This is an important matter that should be discussed and make sure about the ability of implementation and the availability of the necessary facilities.

There is huge and tremendous wealth in the oil sector, and it is possible to benefit from it in creating unlimited number of employment opportunities. The oil sector is not as many people believe - establishments that work like accountants, selling oil and using the money - rather there are many benefits from it.

To have oilfields does not mean to only be a seller of gasoline and diesel at gas stations, or aviation fuel, or invest surplus income in sovereign funds. Despite the feasibility in this, we must not ignore industries linked to this valuable wealth, as their returns have an added value to the economy, politics, security and society.

These are only several points, and not all can be done. But it is important for the state to take interest through research and studies related to this important matter. It is also very important to establish academically recognized research centers, such as a university specialized in oil and its sciences. Kuwait deserves this, as it is not realistic for a country that produces and exports oil like Kuwait to not have a specialized university and institutes that provide the country with competent and trained people educated in such an important academic field.

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Hundreds of booklovers continued to flock to the Kuwait International Book Fair that opened on Nov 16 at Kuwait International Fairgrounds. Kuwait Times visited the book fair and asked people about their reading preferences and how they choose the subjects of their books.

Haya Al-Sulaibi, 21, said due to the types of books she used to read previously, such as science fiction, it led her to not like reading. However, when she started reading self-development books, she found herself enjoying it and was encouraged to read more books. "I started spending around KD 20 on books every month, since I found it is more interesting to learn new information and get more knowledge that improves my skills. That's why I prefer reading self-development books more than novels or science fiction. I wanted to learn on my own, not by reading about other people's lives," she said.

Sulaibi said reading e-books distracts her due to notifications that appear on the devices. She said paper books have their own pleasure, adding her generation mostly prefers not to read and watch movies instead.

Mustafa Al-Jebali said he prefers to read books in the field of human development, in addition to history books. "The book fair is full of books in all fields, but prices are very high, which is affecting visitors' choices," he said, adding most visitors expected prices would be cheaper due to competition between publishing houses, but found prices of books are very high. "Choosing books depends on readers' ages as well. For example, the new generation mostly prefers



Haya Al-Sulaibi



Mustafa Al-Jebali



Asmaa Al-Awadi



Basil Al-Zeer

novels, especially fiction, while older generations prefer more realistic books and novels," Jebali said.

Writer Bothayna Al-Essa said people's preferences have changed to be more toward nonfiction, autobiography, and books on sociology, history and philosophy while novels and books on humanities come second. "Despite technological developments in e-books, people still prefer paper books, although demand for audiobooks has increased as well," she said. "The information sources have changed, therefore the new generation have changed their way of getting information. One of the alternatives for them are podcasts, which is a great way to benefit from others' experiences," she said.

Writer Asmaa Al-Awadi had another opinion on book fairs in Kuwait, as she thinks most people visiting book fairs are coming to while away their time, as they are not interested in reading books like before, as the pandemic made people more isolated and attached to online shows and movies. "Many people don't want to exert efforts and spend time reading, as movies attract them," she said. "There is nothing

wrong with watching movies, except that it shouldn't be in place of books. Personally, I started to shift my writings to series due to the high demand for them, especially among the new generation."

Writer Basil Al-Zeer said people are still hungry to read, so demand for books is still high. "The only problem with choosing the topics among people is that they follow trends, whether the book is good or not," he said. He said there are a great number of books in the market, but their purpose is marketing and earning profits and do not provide knowledge or information to readers. "We should have more control and supervision on the content of books, as it will affect the tastes of readers, especially the new generation," he added.



Bothayna Al-Essa

## KU celebrates Dr Al-Salem's appointment

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait University's media department celebrated the appointment of Dr Fatima Al-Salem as the General Manager of KUNA. Head of Department Dr Hussain Murad expressed his happiness and pride for his colleague, wishing her the best in her mission, as she is deserving of her position. Dr Heba Al-Musallam said: "It is our honor and privilege that our colleague Dr Fatima Al-Salem was appointed as the head of KUNA, as she is a source of pride for the department."

In other news, Kuwait University's cultural and art department for students' affairs organized an exhibition titled 'Creativity with the tradition of our forefathers' on Nov 16. The event was at the Sabah



KUWAIT: Dr Fatima Al-Salem with the members of the department.

Al-Salem campus, where a number of officials of the university attended along with students, under the supervision of Dhuha Al-Awadhi. Management supervisor Khulood Al-Yaqoub said: "The event aims to achieve the necessary benefit for students

and visitors regarding the importance of Kuwaiti heritage and tradition. The department has always organized various beneficial cultural activities that serve the students of the university." The event was joined by a Kuwaiti medical team and Expo 965.



## Nursing Institute holds exhibition on 60th anniversary

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Nursing Institute has celebrated on Thursday its 60th anniversary by holding an

exhibition on its departments and its history. The event showcased the most important milestones of the institute over the years in developing its departments and enhancing its role by supporting the workforce and its technical staff in various fields. The event also shed light on different aspects of training in medical nursery in the institute such as the Kuwaiti Army and National Guard. The institute was founded in October 27th of 1962. It offers courses and trainings in different aspects of nursing in highest international standards.

## Kuwait braces for rainy weekend

**KUWAIT:** Heavy rain could hit some areas in Kuwait during the weekend as chances for scattered rain and thunder are expected through Saturday, Kuwait Meteorological Center warned Thursday. The center said day time on Friday and Saturday would be partly cloudy and light to moderate rains may occur at times while temperatures could drop further during nights.

## Kuwait Customs seizes 24 bottles of kratom

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Customs at the airport has seized 24 bottles of Kratom which were within a parcel coming from a European country. With the instructions of the customs to pay more attention on shipments arriving at the country, inspectors became suspicious about a consignment and searched it discovering 24 bottles of Kratom. The bottles contained the chemical Mitragyna speciosa also known as liquid Kratom and were sent for concerned departments for further investigations.





## Local

# OPEC chief: Our approach must be guided by trust, inclusivity

## Multilateral process must support energy affordability, access and sustainability: Al-Ghais

**VIENNA:** The Secretary General of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Haitham Al-Ghais said its "approach must be guided by trust and inclusivity, considering the particular circumstances and priorities of developing countries, and ensuring a low-emissions future in which every person has access to energy."

Al-Ghais made the remarks at the Resumed High-Level Segment of the UN Climate Change Conference in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. "We need to abide by the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, with developed countries taking the lead to address climate change and fulfilling their commitments to support developing countries," Al-Ghais said, adding, "a promise made, but unfortunately not yet delivered." "Clarity and transparency with commitment are required on climate finance and investment."

We have heard calls for energy-exporting coun-

tries to play a key role in ensuring stable global energy markets, and, simultaneously calls for an end to financing hydrocarbon projects. The complex and intertwined challenges of energy affordability, energy access, energy security and sustainability must be supported through this multilateral process, recognizing the sovereignty of all nations and the right to development," he noted.

"The multiple global crises we face underline the importance of working with, rather than against each other. A just and inclusive transition is not about the misguided narrative of abandoning one energy source for another. The key lies in ensuring a long-term investment-friendly climate, with sufficient finance available; one that is fair and viable for both producers and consumers; developed and developing nations," Al-Ghais said. "For the oil industry alone, we see global investment requirements totaling \$12.1 trillion between now and 2045, and the oil industry is part of the solution," he



Haitham Al-Ghais

added. "Its resources and expertise can be harnessed to help develop efficient technological solutions, such as CCUS, the CCE framework and hydrogen, ones that can contribute to a reduction in emissions as part of unlocking a low-emissions future. There are already technologies available in OPEC Member Countries that can contribute to significant emission reductions. Oil is set to represent at least 29 percent of the global energy mix by 2045. Relying solely on renewables will not provide the energy the world needs. The focus should be on all energies," Al-Ghais added. — KUNA

## Martyrs' office committed to its core mission

**KUWAIT:** Martyrs of Kuwait are the purest certainty and the most eloquent indication of the meanings of giving and sacrifice for the sake of the country and its future. The martyr's office in the Amiri Diwan puts such sentiments at the core of its mission and approach to such loyalty by martyrs who have given everything to the homeland. In an interview, the Martyrs' Office Director General Salah Al-Awfan made the remarks to KUNA. He added, the Martyr's Office works tirelessly to take care of Kuwaiti martyrs' children at all levels and their families, to those who gave the most precious thing they possess deserve such honor.

Therefore, we can only honor their memory, immortalize their sacrifices and care for their children and their families, Al-Awfan added. The Martyrs' Office chief undertook this lofty mission, especially since it was established by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah through an Amiri Decree No 38 of 1991, Al-Awfan said. The office was created to take care of martyrs after their participation in the Arab wars and Kuwaiti martyrs who defended the land during the Iraqi invasion. Al-Awfan added that it is a cause for pride and honor that such office was also reshaped during the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who took upon himself the task of carrying this mission out of respect for martyrs and the value of citizenship.

In August 2011, the late Amir Sheikh Sabah issued Decree No 325 amending some provisions of Decree No 38 of 1991 regarding honoring the martyrs and to care of their families, which receives care and attention as well from HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Al-Awfan said the office's mission is also to perpetuate the martyr's heroism and invest it in instilling, consolidating the values and concepts of good citizenship, translating them into programs and activities that go in this direction, and disseminating appropriate programs to communicate with the martyr's families and follow up on their conditions.

Al-Awfan said that the objectives of the office are as well to achieve prominent leadership position at the regional level in the humanitarian work, and to achieve the highest levels of rapid action in all operations of the office, including excellence in performance, while raising the efficiency of inter-communication inside and outside the office with workers and beneficiaries, in addition to obtaining the administrative, technical, regional and international qualifications that are achieved for the office. He explained that the educational department of the office is represented in helping the martyrs' children in school and through specialists in the educational field, providing the necessary assistance to students, helping them solve their problems, conducting school visits and providing assistance to students.

Regarding housing and legal care, Al-Awfan stated that the office was able, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare and the Credit Bank, to secure and meet many requests of families to obtain a private residence. Regarding healthcare, Al-Awfan referred to the full cooperation and coordination between the Martyr's Office and all service branches of the Ministry of Health to ensure the provision of required health care, whether inside or outside the country are taken care of. — KUNA



Martyrs' Office Director General Salah Al-Awfan



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Mazen Al-Nahedh attends South Korea embassy ceremony. — KUNA

## S Korea envoy hails Kuwait's humanitarian role

**KUWAIT:** South Korea's Ambassador to Kuwait Chung Byung-ha on Wednesday described Kuwait as a "great country" in its ability to embody aspirations for peace and helping others. During an embassy ceremony marking his country's October 3, National Foundation Day, the ambassador

praised Kuwait's humanitarian role, and its endeavors to peacefully mediate regional and global disputes, making it a source of inspiration for the promotion of human values. The event was attended by Kuwaiti officials, including Minister of Commerce and Industry, Minister of State for Communications and Information Technology Mazen Al-Nahedh, and the representative of the Chief of Staff and Commander of the Air Defense Force, Maj Gen Adel Al-Hafidh.

He praised Kuwait's 2035 development plan as a "great strategy" that will make the country more sustainable, stressing that his country remains a reliable partner in realizing this vision. Cooperation

between the two countries, he added, has achieved a great boost to include new areas such as healthcare, renewable energy, smart cities, agriculture and education.

He said his country is proud of this common relationship, adding that friendship, trust and partnership are the appropriate way to describe that relationship, worked for so diligently over the past four decades. He also noted to Kuwait as a major supporter to Seoul, mentioning its role as one of his country's largest oil suppliers. On bilateral cultural exchange, he said that a Korean Language Center will be launched at Kuwait University later this year. —KUNA

## Health minister meets MS organization



KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi meets members of the management of Kuwait Multiple Sclerosis Association.



**KUWAIT:** Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi met members of the management of Kuwait Multiple Sclerosis Association and discussed ways to increase cooperation between the two sides for the service of patients. The meeting also discussed research to initiate a center specialized for treating MS. The center will include multiple specialties, as well as a special depart-

ment for research, studies and cooperation to support and execute programs.

The programs aim to increase awareness of MS as well as to improve the wellbeing of people who suffer from it. The improvement will be on the psychological, physiological and social levels, as well as provide all necessary means of comfort to help patients live with the disease.

## Oman celebrates 52nd National Day Friday

**KUWAIT:** The Sultanate of Oman will celebrate the 52nd National Day on Friday, the 18th of November. Omani people will mark the Renewed Renaissance and its glorious reign under the leadership of Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, who affirmed his constant quest to advance Oman's modern cultural and economic status and his keenness to make Omani citizens as true partners in their country's comprehensive development.

The Sultan's vision for the future of this benign land reflected positively on the integration of government departments with private sector establishments and civil society institutions. This has in turn brought about tangible results in different social, economic and political fields. The attention that the Sultan accords to the study of decision-making mechanisms is aimed at serving the country's supreme interests. The outcome was a set of decisions, the most prominent of which the restructuring of the Council of Ministers on 16 June 2022. The decision was the second one after the Sultan assumed the reins of power.

It affirmed the Sultan's resolve to follow up the efforts exerted to improve government performance towards the realization of Oman Vision 2040.

The establishment of the Supreme Judicial Council, under the Sultan's own chairmanship, was yet a step forward in founding a system capable of achieving the loftiest standards of justice, impartiality and transparency in line with pillars of Oman Vision 2040. The step also combines all parties of litigation into a single judicial schema. The Royal Decree on enhancing the role of the governorates constituted a major step in achieving the modern approach to decentralize local administration. It empowers Oman's 11 governorates, defines their roles in development and defines their economic and social priorities to benefit from the comparative advantage among governorates.

Decentralization also streamlines service procedures for citizens, an objective underscored by the Sultan upon his chairmanship of the Council of Ministers on 11 October 2022. In the meeting, the Sultan stressed the importance of coordination among units of the States' Administrative Apparatus and the governorates, the acceleration of electronic transformation, interconnection among governorates to streamline procedures, facilitate the execution of transactions, develop the quality of government services and address the existing challenges. A decision was issued to add two new states to Oman's adminis-



Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

trative division-namely by according the status of "States" to both "Al-Jabal Al-Akhdar" and "Sinaw", raising the total number of states in Oman to 63 states. The decision was aimed at attracting investments, developing resources and upgrading services and activities in the two states. His Majesty the Sultan's keenness to hold direct meetings with sheikhs and dignitaries of Oman constitutes a strong manifestation of the leader's keenness to get firsthand knowledge about citizens' needs, despite the existence of public institutions such as the Council of Oman—a legislative monitoring body—and municipal councils, which undertake developmental and service roles in

their respective wilayats.

The Royal-meet-the-people gatherings affirm His Majesty the Sultan's sincere desire to implement decentralization and make it the most straightforward administrative application for the future in Oman's governorates. The new administrative setup offers governors and governorates direct authority to run their internal affairs, including planning and implementation of missions. This makes governorates' affairs more closely associated with the districts themselves, their governors and their municipal councils. Much hope is pinned on elections of municipal councils, due to be held on 25 December for local voters and 17 December 2022 for citizens voting from abroad. The tasks of municipal councils keep pace with the Royal vision of His Majesty the Sultan and the role that the councils are expected to undertake. Royal Decree No 38/2022 introduces amendments to some provisions of the Municipal Councils Law, which aims to facilitate their missions in different governorates. This was stated by the Sultan who has affirmed that time is ripe for decentralization of decisions pertaining to local communities. This brought to the limelight the role of governors and the role of municipal councils. The Sultan's emphasis on interaction between governors, municipal councils, Oman Investment Authority and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry assumes a special significance. — KUNA



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## News in brief

## Importance of anti-terrorist conference

**NEW DELHI:** Kuwait Ambassador to India Jassim Al-Najem affirmed on Thursday the importance of the third International anti-terrorism conference to be held in New Delhi, India under the slogan 'No Money for Terror.' This came in a statement by the ambassador on the sidelines of Kuwait's participation in the conference scheduled to kick off on Friday in the Indian Capital. Ambassador Al-Najem noted that the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the third edition of the conference, whereas the first edition was held in Paris 2018, and the second in Melbourne 2019. He mentioned that a large Kuwaiti delegation is partaking in the conference with several senior officials. Al-Najem added that the conference will tackle main issues concerning the technical, legal, and organizational aspects of funding terrorism, and ways to dry off these resources. — KUNA

## Trade surplus with Japan jumps

**TOKYO:** Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan in October swelled 84.4 percent from a year earlier to JPY 123.7 billion (\$887 million), up for the 19th consecutive month, as exports outpaced imports by a big margin, government data showed Thursday. Kuwait posted black ink with Japan for 14 years and nine months, the Finance Ministry said in a preliminary report. Overall exports from Kuwait to Japan soared 85.5 percent year-on-year to JPY 141.1 billion (\$1.0 billion) for the 19th straight month of expansion. Imports from Japan also jumped 93.6 percent to JPY 17.4 billion (\$125 million), up for the sixth month in a row. Middle East's trade surplus with Japan surged 83.3 percent to JPY 1.1 trillion (\$8.0 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region inflating 87.7 percent from a year earlier. — KUNA

## Kuwait oil price up to \$92.04

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait crude oil gained \$1.27 during Wednesday's trading sessions to settle at \$92.04 per barrel compared with \$90.77 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Thursday. Brent futures however dropped to \$92.86 per barrel, also the case with the West Texas Intermediate declined to \$85.59 per barrel. — KUNA

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A flock of pigeons flies over a building against the blue sky. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Zain strategic partner of SpeakUp Kuwait 2023

## Program develops youth's personal, business and public speaking skills

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership with SpeakUp Kuwait 2023, the second edition of the unique training program that targets university students and fresh graduates to develop their personal, business, and public speaking skills.

Zain joined the program's launch event held at the VOLVO Studio and attended by MP Alia Al-Khalid, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, the program's organizers and mentors, entrepreneurs, and Kuwaiti youth.

Zain's support to this unique program for the second year running comes as part of its efforts to actively participate in the community's most vibrant sectors, including education, youth, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The company seeks to shoulder initiatives that embrace young people and work to develop their skills, ultimately empowering them to enter the business world and contribute to progressing the socio-economic wheel in the nation.

Last year, the first edition of SpeakUp Kuwait achieved great success and was hosted at Zain's Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh. This year, the program



KUWAIT: Alia Al-Khalid and Waleed Al-Khashti during the event.

comes back to offer a comprehensive developmental training program that targets university students and fresh graduates, covering a wide range of personal and business skills like public speaking, leadership, emotional intelligence, business management, social skills, and communication skills. The program's mentors include top local speakers, experts, academics, and media personalities.

By continuing to support this unique program, Zain seeks to offer the best environment for the youth to nurture their talents and promote innova-

tion within the community. Zain believes in the important role the youth play in building the future and progressing national economy.

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



'SpeakUp Kuwait 2023' event

## KUNA attends FANA meeting

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) participated in the 49th conference of the general assembly of the Federation of Arab News Agencies (FANA) held in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday, in its capacity as a FANA member and vice-president. The FANA general assembly kick-started in the Emirati capital earlier in the day, with the participation of representatives of 14 member news agencies and several other world media organizations.

In a keynote speech during the conference, Director-General of Emirates News Agency (WAM) and FANA Vice-President Mohammad Al-Rayssi hoped that the event would lead to wiping out obstacles impeding further development of relations between Arab and European news agencies. He added that all world news agencies share the same nature of work and concern, and mainly aim at delivering facts to people across the world with high credibility and transparency. KUNA was represented at the event by its Deputy Director-General for Administrative, Financial and Communication Affairs Mohammad Al-Manaie and Chief of Public Relations Esam Al-Ruwaihi. —KUNA



KUNA's Deputy Director-General for Administrative, Financial and Communication Affairs attends FANA meeting.

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## African students face tough battle for Canada visas

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KYIV, Ukraine: This photograph taken on November 17, 2022, shows cars driving past bicycles covered with snow after the first snow fall of the season in Kyiv, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

# Fresh Russian strikes batter Ukraine

## Kyiv warned of ‘difficult’ days ahead with cold spell approaching

KYIV: Fresh Russian strikes hit cities across Ukraine on Thursday, officials said, the latest in a wave of attacks that have crippled the country’s energy infrastructure as winter sets in and temperatures drop.

AFP journalists in several Ukraine cites said the new barrage had come with snow falling for the first time this season and after officials in Kyiv warned of “difficult” days ahead with a cold spell approaching. The salvos of Russian missiles this week came as officials announced good news Thursday on the extension of the agreement allowing Ukraine to export grain through the Black Sea, which aims to help the global supply of food.

Yet the fresh strikes have pounded Ukraine and come on the back of another stark battlefield setback for Russian forces, which retreated from the southern city of Kherson. “Two cruise missiles were shot down over Kyiv. Information about any casualties and damage is being clarified,” the Kyiv regional administration

announced, adding that Russian forces had also deployed Iran-made drones. The head of the central region of Dnipropetrovsk Valentyn Reznichenko said Russian strikes hit the administrative centre of Dnipro.

“An industrial enterprise has been hit. There is a big fire,” he said, later announcing that 14 people were injured, including a 15-year-old girl.

In the southern Odessa region, a Russian strike also targeted infrastructure and the governor warned residents of the threat of a “massive” missile attack on the Black Sea territory.

“I ask the residents of the region to stay in shelters,” Maksym Marchenko said. The eastern region of Kharkiv was also struck governor Oleg Synegebov announced, adding that Russia hit “critical infrastructure” in strikes that injured three people.

President Volodymyr Zelensky published amateur footage of what he said showed a Russian strike on

Dnipro, calling Moscow a “terrorist state” and saying Moscow “wants to bring Ukrainians only more pain and suffering.”

### ‘Difficult situation’

The largest wave of Russian missiles on cities across Ukraine earlier this week cut power to seven million homes but supplies were largely restored to people cut off within hours. Ukrainian energy company Ukrenergo however said that “a cold snap” had brought increased demand in regions where electricity was recently restored. “This has further complicated the already difficult situation with the power system,” the company said.

Ukraine celebrated the recapture recently of Kherson, which was followed by the announcement from Russian proxy officials in the nearby town of Nova Kakhovka that they were pulling out administrative offi-

cials as Kyiv’s forces were bearing down.

Kyiv was also fiercely critical of Russia a day after Western leaders said a missile blast in Poland was likely an accident involving Ukrainian air defences.

The missile killed two people when it struck the village of Przewodow near the Ukrainian border on Tuesday, shocking NATO member Poland. Ukraine’s foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba, however appeared to roll back Kyiv’s determined position that it was a Russian missile that struck Poland following a call with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

“We share the view that Russia bears full responsibility for its missile terror and its consequences on the territory of Ukraine, Poland and Moldova,” Kuleba said on Twitter. Russia said images from the impact site showed a missile fired by Kyiv and said its strikes had targeted sites 35 kilometres (20 miles) from Poland’s border. — AFP



YANGON, Myanmar: Relatives gather around a bus carrying prisoners being released outside the Insein prison in Yangon on November 17, 2022. — AFP

## Foreigners among thousands in Myanmar amnesty

YANGON: A former British envoy, an Australian economic adviser and a Japanese journalist left Myanmar Thursday as the junta released almost 6,000 prisoners, an AFP correspondent and diplomatic sources said. The Southeast Asian country has been in turmoil since the military’s coup last year and a bloody crack-down on dissent during which thousands have been jailed. Former British envoy Vicky Bowman, who was jailed for a year in September, was on board a plane that departed Yangon at 5:26 pm local time (1056 GMT), according to an AFP reporter on the plane.

Australian economics adviser Sean Turnell and Japanese journalist Toru Kubota were on the same flight, diplomatic sources told AFP. Altogether, 5,774 prisoners will be released, “including some 600 women”, the junta said in a statement.

Three former ministers from Aung San Suu Kyi’s ousted government and detained US-Myanmar citizen Kyaw Htay Oo would also be released, a junta official said. The junta said all four foreigners would later be deported although AFP could not confirm if Kyaw Htay Oo was on the flight. The junta did not say in its statement announcing the amnesty how many of those pardoned had been arrested during the military’s crack-down on dissent. Bowman, who served as ambassador from 2002 to 2006, was detained with her husband in August for failing to declare she was living at an address different from the one listed on her foreigner’s

registration certificate. They were later jailed for a year. Her husband, prominent Myanmar artist Htein Lin, will also be released, the military official said. Ties between Myanmar and its former colonial ruler Britain have soured since the military’s takeover, with the junta this year criticising the UK’s recent downgrading of its mission there as “unacceptable”.

Turnell was working as an adviser to Myanmar’s civilian leader Suu Kyi when he was detained shortly after the coup in February 2021. He and Suu Kyi were convicted in September by a closed junta court of breaching the official secrets act and jailed for three years each.

Kubota, 26, was detained in July near an anti-government rally in Yangon along with two Myanmar citizens and jailed for 10 years. He was the fifth foreign journalist to be detained in Myanmar since the coup, after US citizens Nathan Maung and Danny Fenster, Robert Bociaga of Poland and Yuki Kitazumi of Japan—all of whom were later freed and deported. At least 170 journalists have been arrested since the coup according to UNESCO, with nearly 70 still in detention.

Hundreds gathered outside Yangon’s Insein prison in the hope their loved ones would be among those released. One woman, who did not want to give her name for fear of reprisals, said she was waiting for her husband, who was halfway through a three-year sentence for encouraging dissent against the military.

“Before, he was a USDP (military-backed political party) supporter. After the coup, he joined in the protests. I’m very proud of him,” she said. Three buses left the main gate of the sprawling, colonial-era prison shortly after 3:00 pm local time (0830 GMT) and passed by a crowd of around 200 people waiting outside, an AFP reporter said.—AFP

## Dutch judges to give long-awaited flight MH17 verdict

BADHOEVEDORP, Netherlands: A Dutch court delivers its verdict Thursday in the trial of four men over the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 above Ukraine in 2014, as tensions soar over Russia’s invasion eight years later. The suspects — Russians Igor Girkin, Sergei Dubinsky, Oleg Pulatov and Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko — will not be in court as they have refused to attend the two-and-a-half-year trial.

They are charged with the murder of all 298 passengers and crew who died when the Boeing 777 flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was hit over separatist-held eastern Ukraine by what investigators say was a missile supplied by Moscow.

Prosecutors have demanded life sentences for the suspects although the men are unlikely to serve time if convicted. The suspects were allegedly part of Kremlin-backed forces and had key roles in bringing the BUK missile from a military base in Russia and deploying it to the launch site — even if they did not pull the trigger.

Relatives have travelled from around the world to listen to the three-judge panel read out the verdict from 1230 GMT at a high-security court near Schiphol Airport, where the doomed plane took off on July 17, 2014. The verdict would “tell us a lot about the role of Russia, and the responsibility of Russia”, Piet Ploeg, chairman of the MH17 foundation, who lost his brother, sister-in-law and nephew, told AFP outside court.

“I don’t believe in terms of closure — ask relatives

who lost their children, you will never find closure for that. But I really hope that this day will give families some space to try to get on with their lives.”

### ‘Hunt them down’

The trial represents the end of a long search for justice for the victims of MH17, who came from 10 countries, including 196 Dutch, 43 Malaysians and 38 Australians. “If they are guilty, the international community should hunt them down,” Evert van Zijtveld, who lost his daughter Frederique, 19, his son Robert-Jan, 18, and his parents-in-law, told AFP.

The crash triggered global outrage and sanctions against Moscow, with Ukraine’s famed sunflower fields littered with bodies and wreckage. Some victims, including children, were still strapped into their seats after the plane was blasted out of the sky.

Eight years later, the region where MH17 crashed has become one of the key battlegrounds in Russia’s nearly nine-month-old war in Ukraine. The MH17 trial has meanwhile emerged as a something test case for efforts to bring perpetrators to justice over war crimes in Ukraine since 2014.

The trial opened in March 2020 with a sombre reading of the names of all 298 victims. The court also visited the twisted wreckage of the plane, which has been reconstructed at a Dutch military base. Three of the suspects are formally being tried in absentia, while Pulatov has had legal representation at the trial and made a video statement in which he said he was not guilty. Prosecutors say Girkin, 51, a former Russian spy who became the so-called defence minister of the separatist Donetsk People’s Republic, was in contact with Russia to obtain the missile system. He has denied the rebels were involved in downing MH17.—AFP



GRABOVE, Ukraine: File photo shows pro-Russian gunmen guarding as Dutch investigators (unseen) arrive near parts of the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 at the crash site near the Grabove village in eastern Ukraine. — AFP



## International

# Xi, Kishida hold first face-to-face talks in three years as N Korea fires missile

## Seoul, Washington warn the North could be preparing to carry out a nuclear test

**BANGKOK:** The leaders of China and Japan held their first face-to-face talks in three years on Thursday, after North Korea fired the latest in a record missile blitz that has sent nuclear fears soaring. Chinese President Xi Jinping flew in to the talks in Bangkok from a G20 meeting in Bali where US President Joe Biden pressed him to use his influence to rein in Pyongyang's activities.

North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile as Xi and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida prepared to meet, and warned Washington and its allies to expect a "fiercer" military response. The pair met on the sidelines of a summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum focused on pandemic recovery and the global economic turmoil unleashed by the war in Ukraine.

"It is important that we accelerate the building of a Japan-China relationship that is constructive and stable, through the efforts of both sides," Kishida said at the start of the meeting.

His office had earlier condemned the latest launch by North Korea, which adds to a flurry that began this month and has included an intercontinental ballistic missile. Seoul and Washington have warned the North could be preparing to carry out a nuclear test, which would be its seventh.

Biden held a three-way summit in Phnom Penh last week with allies Kishida and South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol to discuss the latest drama with the North. The trio issued a joint statement warning that any new nuclear test would be met with a "strong and resolute" response, without giving further details.

out giving further details.

Biden said after his talks with Xi on Monday he was confident China-Pyongyang's main diplomatic and economic ally-did not want Kim Jong Un's regime to escalate tensions any further.

### 'No new Cold War'

China and Japan-the world's second- and third-largest economies-are key trading partners, but relations have soured as Beijing bolsters its military, projects power regionally, and takes a harder line on territorial rivalries.

Chinese missiles fired during massive military drills around Taiwan in August are believed to have fallen within Japan's exclusive economic zone, and Tokyo has protested at what it calls growing aerial and maritime violations in recent months.

Xi last held face-to-face talks with a Japanese prime minister in December 2019, when he met Shinzo Abe in Beijing, although he has spoken to Kishida by phone. The APEC gathering, which French President Emmanuel Macron and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will also attend, caps a diplomatic blitz in Asia, following the G20 and the ASEAN summit in Cambodia.

In written remarks to an APEC business summit on Thursday, Xi laid out a vision of economic cooperation for the Pacific rim, urging more open trade, closer cooperation and smooth supply chains. "The Asia Pacific is no-one's backyard and should not become an arena for big power contest," he said in the remarks in English.

"No attempt to wage a new Cold War will ever



**BANGKOK:** Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (L) shakes hands with China's President Xi Jinping during their meeting in Bangkok on November 17, 2022, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit. —AFP

be allowed by the people or by our times." Biden and Xi's landmark summit talks on Monday sought to cool their rivalry, which has intensified sharply in recent years as Beijing has become more powerful and more assertive about replacing the US-led order that has prevailed since World War II. — AFP

## African students face tough battle for Canada visas

**TROIS-RIVIERES, Canada:** Long viewed as a multicultural and inclusive nation, Canada admitted recently that its immigration system is tinged with racism and concern has risen over high rejection rates for African students.

"I have met people who have had their visas refused more than five times," even though they had been accepted by Canadian universities, says Serge Nouemssi, white coat and pipette in hand. Originally from Cameroon, the 33-year-old biology student has been working on his doctorate for more than three years in a laboratory at the University of Quebec at Trois-Rivieres (UQTR).

Surrounded by greenery, the campus located halfway between Montreal and Quebec City hosts almost 15,000 students, including the largest proportion of Africans in the province — 65 percent of international students.

But "we have seen rejections of up to 80 percent of applicants coming from Africa," says the school's rector, Christian Blanchette, who noted it has been an ongoing problem "for several years." In a report quietly released at the end of September, the national immigration department said it "recognizes the presence of racism in Canada and within our own organization."

According to federal data, Quebec is the Canadian province with the highest rejection rate of African students-around 70 percent from French-speaking African nations between 2017 and 2021.

The data says applications from France, Britain or Germany to study in Quebec are almost always accepted-approximately a 90 percent approval rate.

### 'Absurd' refusals

As well as having to pay tuition ranging on average from Can\$17,000 (US\$12,750) to Can\$19,000 per academic year to study in Quebec and rising up to Can\$50,000, African students must also provide financial guarantees. "For us Africans, generally they (immigration officials) insist on proof of financial means" to be able to afford to live and study in Canada, explains Nouemssi.

"There are cases where we have demonstrated financial resources that were close to one million dollars," explains Caroline Turcotte-Brule, an immigration lawyer. "The agent replied that our client did not have enough financial resources."

"I have the impression that it's a bit random," she adds, specifying that the reason for refusal is often the same: "a fear that the person will not return to his country of origin after" his studies. "It's a bit of hypocrisy," said Krishna Gagne, another lawyer who notes that students have the legal right to consider staying in Canada after their studies.

Ottawa has even been encouraging foreign students to do so as it rolled out incentives in recent months in order to help deal with a labor shortage. Sitting at her desk in a small laboratory at the end of a maze of underground corridors, Imene Fahmi says that she had to try twice before being able to come and study in Quebec.

"I encountered a lot of difficulties", explains the Algerian-born doctor, who was refused the first time because the program she'd chosen was "not related to her previous studies," even though she had been aggressively recruited by her future research director.



**TROIS-RIVIERES, Canada:** Professor Mathieu Piche speaks to his student in his lab at the UQTR in Trois-Rivieres on November 2, 2022. Perceived as a multicultural and inclusive nation, Canada recently had to admit that its immigration system was tinged with racism after unusually high rejection rates among African students came to light. —AFP

She had to apply a second time and wait eight months before finally getting approvals. "In regards to immigration, there doesn't seem to be an understanding of the nuances and backgrounds of certain students, so we have refusals which are a bit absurd," her research supervisor Mathieu Piche says, unable to hide his frustrations. Refusals and delays have consequences on the students but also "on the work of the teachers," he adds. The problem does not only affect students. In July, Canada faced a backlash over its denials of visas for hundreds of delegates, including Africans, that were to attend the AIDS 2022 conference in Montreal. —AFP

## Republicans take control of House...

Continued from Page 1

needed to take control. This came a week after millions of Americans went to the polls for the midterms, which typically deliver a rejection of the party in the White House. Biden congratulated top House Republican Kevin McCarthy "on Republicans winning the House majority" and added that he was "ready to work with House Republicans to deliver results for working families."

Last week's vote, he said, was "a strong rejection of election deniers, political violence and intimidation" and demonstrated "the strength and resilience of American democracy". Tweeting soon after the projection was called, McCarthy said that "Americans are ready for a new direction, and House Republicans are ready to deliver".

The news came one day after former president Donald

Trump - who loomed large during the election cycle, and whose endorsement appears to have doomed some of his party's candidates - announced a new run for the White House. With inflation surging and Biden's popularity ratings cratering, Republicans had hoped to see a "red wave" wash over America, giving them control of both houses and hence an effective block over most of Biden's legislative plans.

But instead, Democratic voters - galvanized by the Supreme Court's overturning of abortion rights and wary of Trump-endorsed candidates who openly rejected the result of the 2020 presidential election - turned out in force. And Republicans lost ground with candidates rejected by moderate voters as too extreme. "In the next Congress, House Democrats will continue to play a leading role in supporting President Biden's agenda - with strong leverage over a scant Republican majority," House speaker Pelosi said.

Biden's party flipped a key Senate seat in Pennsylvania and held onto two more in battleground states Arizona and Nevada, giving them an unassailable majority in the upper chamber with 50 seats plus Vice President Kamala Harris' tie-breaking vote. — AFP

was followed," the Greek minister said in the eastern city of Benghazi. There, he delivered three small boxes of coronavirus vaccines and a \$550,000 (\$568,000) donation towards a World Food Program reconstruction of the port.

He also met members of the eastern-based parliament, tweeting that he had thanked them for "their clear stance on condemning the Turkish-Libyan 'memorandum' in 2019 and the one signed in October". Later, Dendias met military strongman Khalifa Haftar, for talks he said focused "on the need for #Libya stabilization & promoting peace and stability in the wider region", according to his Twitter account.

Libya has been plagued by violence since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in a 2011 NATO-backed uprising. Dbeibah was appointed as part of a United Nations-guided peace process following the last major battle in Libya in 2020. Tripoli's troops, backed by Turkey, pushed back Haftar's forces - backed by Egypt and others - after their year-long attempt to capture the city. The parliament and Haftar say Dbeibah's mandate has expired, further complicating the country's foreign relations as well as its domestic landscape. — AFP

## Iran mourners hit streets as protests...

Continued from Page 1

injured as they sought to intervene to prevent "rioters" from threatening shopkeepers in the north-eastern city of Mashhad, the news agency said. "Death to the dictator", protesters chanted in another online video as they marched down a street in Sanandaj filled with bonfires, directing their fury at Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The tradition in Iran of holding a "chehelom" mourning ceremony 40 days after a death has fueled the demonstrations that have become the regime's biggest challenge from the street in decades. Fears are growing that the regime is turning "more violent after being unable to suppress the people for two months", said Saied Golkar, from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Speculation has mounted that Iran's leadership has decided to crush the protest movement in the same way that it did in Nov 2019, when security forces killed at least 304 people, according to Amnesty International.

The demonstrations were sparked by the death of

22-year-old Amini on September 16, after her arrest for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code for women. The unrest has been fanned by fury over the brutal enforcement of the mandatory hijab law, but has grown into a broad movement against the theocracy that has ruled Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Gunmen on motorcycles killed nine people in two mysterious attacks Wednesday, state media said, as the protests intensified. In the southwestern city of Izeh, "a terrorist group took advantage of a gathering of protesters" to shoot dead seven people - including a 45-year-old woman, two children aged nine and 13, IRNA said. Three police officers and two Basij members were wounded, a security official told state TV.

But a family member of the nine-year-old boy killed on Wednesday, identified as Kian Pirfalak, accused security forces of carrying out the attack. The accusation came in a tweet shared by US-funded Radio Farda. "He was going home with his father and was targeted with bullets by the corrupt regime of the Islamic republic. Their car was attacked from all four sides," the unidentified family member is heard saying in an audio recording. In a separate attack hours later in Iran's third city Isfahan, two assailants on a motorcycle shot dead two members of the Basij paramilitary force and wounded another two, Fars news agency said. — AFP

## Greek FM snubs Libya...

Continued from Page 1

The rival administration which holds sway in Benghazi also condemned the deal, insisting the Tripoli-based government of Abdulhamid Dbeibah no longer has a mandate to rule or sign international agreements. The Libyan ministry said Dendias had been invited in response to a request from Athens, "despite (him) taking offensive positions... and making unbalanced statements about Libya's sovereignty and its right to establish relations that meet the hopes of its people".

After the signing of the hydrocarbons memorandum in October, Dendias had said it "threatens stability and security" in the region. "Ms Mangoush tried to impose on me by her presence at the airport to meet with her. As a result I interrupted the visit in Tripoli and we flew to Benghazi, where the schedule

diseases, it said. These patterns are the same found for other noncommunicable diseases such as cancers, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, WHO said.

The risk factors are also similar, with high sugar intake, tobacco use and alcohol abuse taking their toll. Thursday's report highlighted barriers to delivering adequate oral health services, including dentist visits, which often require high out-of-pocket expenses. This can lead to "catastrophic costs and significant financial burden for families and communities," WHO said.

At the same time, reliance on highly specialized providers and high-tech equipment make these services inaccessible to many. Inadequate information and surveillance also mean that many people go far too long before seeking or receiving treatment. WHO presented a long list of proposals to address the problem, including calling for countries to include oral health services in their primary health care systems. —AFP

## Mouth diseases hit nearly half of...

Continued from Page 1

around the world. Severe gum disease, which is a major cause of total tooth loss, is estimated to affect around one billion people. And approximately 380,000 new cases of oral cancers are diagnosed every year, WHO said.

Three-quarters of those suffering from oral diseases live in low and middle-income countries, the report found. And in all countries, people on low incomes, the disabled, older people living alone or in care homes, those living in remote and rural communities, or minority groups carry a higher burden of oral



## International

# Xi spat with Trudeau lays bare China's frayed ties with Canada

'Everything we discussed has been leaked to the papers, that is not appropriate'

**NUSA DUA, Indonesia:** Chinese President Xi Jinping scolded Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in an on-camera dressing down at the G20 summit, an unusual public spat that could further complicate strained relations between the countries.

Video recorded by reporters at the Bali summit for world leaders on Wednesday showed Xi appearing to upbraid Trudeau after details of talks between the two leaders were leaked to the media. Trudeau had on Tuesday raised with Xi the issue of what he called Chinese "interference" with Canadian citizens after Ottawa in recent weeks accused Beijing of meddling with its democratic and judicial systems.



## "Create the Conditions"

In the one-minute clip captured on the sidelines of the Indonesian summit, Xi tells Trudeau through an interpreter: "Everything we discussed has been leaked to the papers. That is not appropriate." He adds: "And that's not the way (our discussion) was conducted, was it?"

China's foreign ministry on Thursday sought to play down the footage, saying it showed a "normal" conversation between the two leaders and "should not be interpreted as Xi Jinping criticising or blaming anyone". "The reasons for the difficulties in China-Canada relations in recent years are very clear," spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular press briefing. "The fault does not lie with the Chinese side."



**BAMAKO:** A teacher teaches a lesson in Bambara, one of Mali's main national languages, at a school in Bamako. In Mali, a few words in a draft constitution have revived an old debate: Should French remain the country's sole official language? — AFP

## Language proposal stirs thorny debate in troubled Mali

**BAMAKO, Mali:** Mali gained independence from France in 1960, yet even today French is the language of government business, used on road signs and in state TV broadcasts. But on Bamako's streets, French is rarely heard, and out in the bush even less so. Mali has scores of its own languages—which is why, for some, it rangles that the tongue of the former colonial ruler is the only official language. A few lines in the country's draft constitution are now fanning calls for change, albeit at the cost of reminding the West African nation of some of its many problems. "It's been 60 years since independence—is it normal that French is our only official language?" asked Ali Guindo, a resident of the capital Bamako. "We have lots of languages here in Mali," he said outside his home in Torokorobougou district. "It would be good to cement them in our official culture."

The debate has been sparked by the unveiling last month of a draft constitution, billed by the ruling junta as crucial for saving Mali from jihadist insurgents. As in the 1992 constitution it is designed to replace, the charter identifies French as the "language of official expression."

But, in a change, it also says local languages are "intended to become official languages." More than 70 languages are spoken in Mali, a deeply poor Sahel nation with a fast-growing population of some 21 million. Of these 13 are recognised as "national" languages but French is the only official one, meaning that it is used for government and regulatory business, said Amadou Salifou Guindo, a specialist in sociolinguistics.

Among the major local languages, Songhay and Tamashek are widely spoken in the north; Fulfulde in central areas by the Fulani, an ethnic group also known as Peul; Bambara predominates in Bamako; and in the country's far south, Senufo and Soninke prevail.

### Difficult debate

The few words in the proposed Article 31 have now fired up discussion, from TV talk shows to chats over tea in informal get-togethers known as grins. Among the questions: is it time to elevate vernacular languages to the status of official tongues? If so, which ones? And how can this be achieved?

But these questions also have swirling undercurrents. One is Mali's relationship with France, the country's traditional ally, which has hit rock-bottom since the junta came to power in August 2020.

Some have used the bust-up to seize on Article 31 as a means to phase out French and make Bambara, the most-used language in Bamako, the official one instead. But to do so touches on the sensitive question of national identity, potentially alienating speakers of other languages. "Maliens are afraid of an official language being imposed to the detriment of others," said Guindo the linguist. Another problem is rather more basic: Teaching children to read and write in their local languages, which are rooted in oral traditions.—AFP

### 'Create conditions'

In the footage, Xi tells Trudeau: "If there is sincerity, we can have conversations based on an attitude of mutual respect. If not, the results will be unpredictable." Xi then appears to try to walk past the Canadian leader, who replies: "In Canada, we believe in free, open and frank dialogue, and that is what we will continue to have. "We will continue to look to work constructively together, but there will be things we disagree on." Raising his hands, Xi cuts him off, saying: "Create the conditions. Create the conditions."

He then broadens his smile, barely looking at Trudeau as he shakes his hand and leaves his counterpart to make his way out of the room. It is not clear when, if ever, Xi becomes aware that the conversation is being filmed. The foreign ministry spokeswoman denied that Xi's words "if not" amounted to a threat, saying "both sides are expressing their respective positions". "Frank dialogue is not a problem for China, but we hope (it) will be built on a basis of equal and mutual respect instead of condescending criticism," she said.

### 'Awkward position'

It was "extremely rare" for Chinese leaders to show their displeasure in such an "off-the-cuff" way, said Chong Ja Ian, an associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore. Xi's remarks suggest he feels "he can pressure Trudeau with few repercussions, if any", Chong told AFP, adding that the Chinese leader's "high degree of confidence" might indicate "he does not take either Trudeau or Canada that seriously as interlocutors".

In contrast, "Xi's body language with (US President) Biden just a few days before... seemed more cordial", he said. The Chinese leader's tone was akin to "a great power speaking to a less-great power", said



**BALI:** Handout photo shows Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (L) speaking to Chinese President Xi Jinping as Trudeau arrives at the G20 in Bali. — AFP

Van Jackson, senior lecturer in international relations at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.

"Xi's language and body posture was not at all unusual for government officials who are on less than friendly terms—in private," Jackson told AFP. Tensions between China and the United States put Canada in an "especially awkward position", he said, adding that Ottawa's "embeddedness in the network of Anglo-Saxon, intelligence-sharing democracies all but ensures it will draw China's ire more and more as time passes".

Xi's Tuesday meeting with Trudeau was the first face-to-face dialogue between the two leaders since 2019. It came after the Chinese leader last month broke longstanding political precedent to take a third term in power and stack top government positions

with his personal allies.

Canadian federal police said last week they were investigating so-called police stations set up illegally by Beijing in the North American country. Trudeau also said last week China was playing "aggressive games" after Canadian broadcaster Global News reported on a "clandestine network" of federal election candidates funded by Beijing.

Relations between the two countries plunged into the deep freeze when Canadian authorities arrested Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in 2018 for allegedly flouting US sanctions on Iran. Beijing later detained two Canadian citizens in China, Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, in what critics called a tit-for-tat response. Meng and the two Canadians were released last year after lengthy negotiations. — AFP

## N Korea fires missile after warning of 'fiercer' response

**SEOUL:** North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile Thursday, Seoul's military said, the latest in a record blitz of launches as Pyongyang warned of a "fiercer" military response to the United States and its allies. Washington has been seeking to boost regional security cooperation and ramp up joint military drills in response to increasing provocations from the nuclear-armed North, which views all such moves as evidence of US aggression.

US President Joe Biden discussed North Korea's recent missile tests with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping earlier this week, and also spoke with leaders from Tokyo and Seoul, as fears grow that the reclusive regime will soon carry out its seventh nuclear test.

Washington's moves to bolster its "extended deterrence" and stage joint exercises with regional security allies are "foolish acts", North Korea's minister of foreign affairs, Choe Son Hui, said Thursday in a statement carried by state news agency KCNA.

The more Washington boosts security cooperation with Tokyo and Seoul, "the fiercer the DPRK's military counteraction will be", Choe said, referring to the North by its official name of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.



**SEOUL:** People watch a television showing a news broadcast with a file photo of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul on November 17, 2022. — AFP

## Anti-pothole road warrior revs up Malaysian voting race

**TANJONG KARANG, Malaysia:** Frustrated by dangerous potholes and slow-moving public works officials, Azlan Sani Zawawi decided to become an unofficial road warrior and fight for Malaysian motorists. Armed with a sack of tar and a bag of tools, the film producer from Selangor has become a local hero for his impromptu campaign to even out Malaysia's dangerously bumpy roads. The rebel with a cause, fed up with red tape, is now lining up for Saturday's general election race in the Southeast Asian nation of 33 million people.

Azlan, better known as Lando Zawawi, is the charismatic founder of a nationwide crew of about 250 volunteers that carries out unofficial road repairs and calls out the sluggish officials whose job it is meant to be. The 47-year-old with chest-length hair has built a massive following on social media, where his regular criticisms often vex authorities. "We've been fighting this from outside the system. Sometimes we get lucky. Sometimes (authorities) call us for meetings, sometimes they close the door on us," Azlan said on the campaign trail northwest of Kuala Lumpur.

"I thought this was a good chance to change the

system." Kuala Lumpur-born Azlan began his DIY road safety campaign in 2007 after several friends and an uncle were killed in road accidents. He learned how to seal roads and even formed his own asphalt-making company. His campaign has hit its share of speed bumps along the way, though, with Azlan saying he has been locked up by police eight times. Yet his swagger and can-do attitude have won him a cult status, with many considering him a folk hero.



**TANJONG KARANG, Malaysia:** Azlan Sani Zawawi (C) carrying a bag of asphalt to repair potholes on a road in Tanjong Karang, Malaysia's Selangor state. — AFP

## Macron says Australia submarine cooperation offer 'on the table'

**BANGKOK:** French President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday that an offer to cooperate with Australia on submarines still stood, after a bitter row over a cancelled contract last year threatened to torpedo relations.

Macron was left furious when Australia's previous prime minister Scott Morrison abruptly tore up a contract for France to build a dozen diesel-powered submarines and announced a deal to buy US or British nuclear-powered subs. The row derailed relations and threatened to sink an EU-Australia trade agreement, but the two sides have made up since Prime Minister Anthony Albanese took power in Canberra. The delivery of the new nuclear submarines could take years, potentially leaving Australia short of capacity at a time when China is increasing its assertiveness in the region.

Speaking in Bangkok a day after meeting Albanese on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Indonesia, Macron said the French offer "remains on the table". He said France would not supply nuclear submarines to foreign countries, so the offer related only to conventional vessels. He added it would guarantee Canberra's "freedom and sovereignty", noting that construction would be in Australia.

"We will now see how they adapt to the difficulties (they face)," Macron said. "There is a fundamental choice, which is to know whether they produce submarines in their own country or rely on another—whether they go for nuclear or not."

### China worries

Albanese hailed a new start in ties during a visit to Paris in July, stressing he would act with "trust, respect and honesty" in his dealings with Macron. That meeting came after Australia agreed on a massive compensation deal with French submarine builder Naval Group to end the contract.

The settlement of 555 million euros (\$584 million) drew a line under the spat and was hailed by Albanese as "fair and equitable". The original contract was worth an estimated 33 billion euros at the time.—AFP

### Bumpy ride

Damaged roads are common in Malaysia, where potholes and uneven streets that can cause accidents are often left unfixed for months. Malaysia's works ministry said in December 2020 that nearly 200,000 potholes had been found and repaired the year before.

That report was only made after a federal minister hit one of those potholes and crashed his bicycle. Almost two years since that report, Azlan's convoy was stopped last weekend by a small pothole in the middle of a road cutting past palm oil plantations and paddy fields in the Tanjong Karang countryside.

His assistants poured a glob of tar from a sack into the hole, which he then flattened out with a steel tamping tool. "That's all! Just one minute, brother!" Azlan said after finishing the job. Campaign manager Zariwan Iqmar Zainol Abidin said the group, whose name translates roughly as "We Work for the People", could only do so much on its own and that it was important to fight from the "inside".

Azlan is the underdog in a five-sided battle for the semi-urban seaside federal seat of Tanjong Karang, about 90 km (55 miles) northwest of the capital. Running on ex-premier Mahathir Mohamad's Homeland Fighters' Party ticket, he faces a stiff challenge from the ruling National Front bloc that has held the seat since 1974. "If I don't win, the next day will still be the same," Azlan told AFP. "I will still make sure Malaysian roads are much safer." — AFP



FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2022

## Business



CHESTER, UK: People shop in Chester on November 17, 2022. Britain unveiled an austerity budget with £55 billion (\$65 billion) of tax hikes and spending cuts despite confirming its economy was in recession. —AFP

# UK unveils recession budget following markets chaos

## ‘Painful Budget’ shows \$65bn of tax hikes and spending cuts

**LONDON:** Britain on Thursday unveiled a painful budget with £55 billion (\$65 billion) of tax hikes and spending cuts despite confirming its economy was in recession. Finance minister Jeremy Hunt said the measures were needed to bring financial stability after recent markets turmoil, insisting they would alleviate rather than aggravate the downturn.

A day after official data showed UK inflation rocketing to a 41-year high above 11 percent, Hunt triggered a fresh era of austerity following the calamitous and short-lived tenure of former prime minister Liz Truss.

### ‘UK in recession’

Britain’s Office for Budget Responsibility judged “that the UK, like other countries, is now in recession”, Chancellor of the Exchequer Hunt told parliament on Thursday. Despite the downturn, Hunt and Prime Minister Rishi Sunak insist tough action is needed after Truss unleashed a package of unfunded tax cuts that caused panic on financial markets. The pound had hit a record-low close to parity against the

dollar in late September after Truss failed to reveal the impact of her tax cuts on growth and inflation.

Her budget also triggered temporary purchases of UK government bonds by the Bank of England (BoE). Sterling sank one percent against the US currency following Thursday’s budget. Pantheon Macroeconomics analyst Samuel Tombs warned the budget risked “amplifying the recession already underway”. Hunt said the UK economy was set to shrink 1.4 percent next year.

The BoE, which is raising interest rates to combat sky-high inflation, has warned the UK economy may experience a record-long recession until mid-2024. Despite the grim outlook, Hunt on Thursday confirmed tax rises for workers alongside spending cut-backs. He pledged, however, to increase spending on the cherished National Health Service amid a severe backlog in patient operations. The chancellor added that benefits for the unemployed and pensioners would increase close to the inflation rate, and the minimum wage would climb.

Hunt also ramped up a windfall tax on oil and gas

giants, whose profits have surged on fallout from the Ukraine war, to help fund support for the poorest consumers facing rocketing energy bills.

Energy giants such as BP and Shell will face an exceptional tax on profits of 35 percent, up from 25 percent, lasting an additional three years to 2028. The government will also impose a new temporary levy on electricity generation companies. The conflict in Ukraine has helped push worldwide inflation to its highest levels in decades. Prices are also up on supply constraints fuelled by the coronavirus pandemic. Britain’s economy is additionally being impacted by Brexit, BoE governor Andrew Bailey repeated Wednesday.

Hunt at the weekend likened himself to the penny-pinching miser Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens’ festive favorite “A Christmas Carol”, but argued his plan will “make sure Christmas is never cancelled”. He told MPs on Thursday: “In the face of unprecedented global headwinds, families, pensioners, businesses, teachers, nurses and many others are worried about the future. —AFP

Losses on London stocks deepened, before later easing. Wall Street stocks slid Thursday on worries that the US central bank may overtighten policy, following signals from Federal Reserve officials that interest rate hikes to cool the economy are not over. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.7 percent to 33,308.20 in early trading, while the broad-based S&P 500 shed 1.2 percent to 3,913.45.

The tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index dropped 1.4 percent to 11,026.68. This came as St. Louis Fed President James Bullard said on Thursday that “the policy rate is not yet in a zone that may be considered sufficiently restrictive.” He added in a speech that the rate would need to be raised further to hit a level that is restrictive enough.

CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson said upheaval in markets in September over the profligate fiscal policies of the previous government had largely subsided, meaning a budget that makes Britain a worse place to do business was no longer necessary. “Today’s budget should have walked the line between pushing inflation lower, without com-



pletely crushing demand in the economy with too many tax rises, and spending cuts,” Hewson said in a note to investors. —AFP

## US Fed official open to slower rate hike in December

**WASHINGTON:** Recent signs of easing inflation pressures and a slowing US economy could allow the central bank to dial back the pace of interest rate hikes, Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller said on Wednesday. The Fed has embarked on an aggressive campaign to rein in surging prices this year, raising its benchmark lending rate six times, including four consecutive mammoth moves of 0.75 percentage points.

But positive developments in the latest data “have made me more comfortable considering stepping down to a 50-basis-point hike” in December, Waller said in a speech, although he stressed that more rate increases are still needed to bring inflation down. His comments came after reports showing inflation eased in October, with the consumer price index logging its lowest annual pace since January-fueling hopes that soaring costs will start to pull back.

Russia’s war in Ukraine this year has sent food and fuel prices soaring, and the US annual inflation rate reached a harsh 9.1 percent in June, its highest in four decades. Waller noted that the pullback in prices was “widespread,” involving a deceleration in services costs and the first drop since March in core goods prices, which strip out the volatile food and energy segments.

But he cautioned that “one report does not make a trend,” adding that it remains too early to conclude that prices are heading sustainably down. “More interest rate hikes are needed to get inflation down,” he said in the speech prepared for delivery to a conference in Phoenix, Arizona.

### Still ‘significant’

While inflation remains well above the Fed’s two percent target, there has been a growing number of voices advocating for smaller steps in the coming months. Fed Vice Chair Lael Brainard said Monday it would likely be “appropriate soon” for the US central bank to slow the pace of interest rate increases, but she agreed more moves will be needed in the fight against inflation.

She noted that it will take time for the Fed’s policy moves to flow through to the economy, adding that moving at a more “deliberate” pace would allow officials to assess the data. Fed officials walk a tightrope to try and tamp down prices while avoiding an economic downturn. The central bank’s actions have rippled through the economy, with the interest-sensitive housing sector slowing most significantly. Further rate hikes are expected to dampen consumer and business spending, making it more attractive to save rather than spend. —AFP

## UK austerity budget stings global markets

**NEW YORK/LONDON:** A British austerity budget hit the pound and gilts on Thursday, with stocks suffering worldwide on the glum economic outlook and the prospect of painfully high interest rates to curb inflation. Britain unveiled a painful budget with £55 billion (\$65 billion) of tax hikes and spending cuts despite confirming its economy was already in recession.

Finance minister Jeremy Hunt said the measures were needed to bring financial stability after recent turmoil in the markets, insisting they would alleviate rather than aggravate the downturn. But the measures didn’t reassure British markets, with the pound falling and government borrowing costs rising.

## Ukraine war casts shadow over APEC summit

**BANGKOK:** Pacific Rim leaders flew into Bangkok on Thursday for a summit on pandemic recovery and the global economic turmoil unleashed by the war in Ukraine.

French President Emmanuel Macron and Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman will join rulers from the 21 members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum for the high-level talks. The gathering follows a meeting of the G20 in Indonesia that was upended by fears that a deadly missile strike on Poland signalled a dangerous escalation of Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Western leaders have moved to dial down the alarm, saying the blast was probably an accident, with both Poland and NATO saying the explosion was most likely caused by a Ukrainian air defence

missile launched to intercept a Russian barrage. US President Joe Biden held emergency talks with G7 and NATO allies on the sidelines of the G20 on Wednesday before saying it appeared unlikely

that the missile was fired from Russia. China’s President Xi Jinping was to arrive in Bangkok later Thursday, days after a landmark summit with Biden in Bali. —AFP



BANGKOK: US State Secretary Antony Blinken (left) attends a bilateral meeting with Thailand’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai (right) on the sidelines of the APEC summit, in Bangkok, on November 17, 2022. —AFP



Business

# ‘Hardcore’ or bust: Musk gives ultimatum to Twitter staff

## Overhaul of Twitter’s ‘organization structure’ to be done this week

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter's new boss Elon Musk has asked staff to choose by Thursday between being “extremely hardcore” and working intense, long hours, or losing their jobs, according to an internal memo seen by AFP. The Tesla tycoon has come under fire for radical changes at the social media company, which he bought for \$44 billion late last month.

He has fired half of the company’s 7,500 staff, scrapped a work-from-home policy, and imposed long hours, all while his attempts to overhaul Twitter have faced chaos and delays. “Going forward, to build a breakthrough Twitter 2.0 and succeed in an increasingly competitive world, we will need to be extremely hardcore,” Musk wrote in the internal memo.

“This will mean working long hours at high intensity. Only exceptional performance will constitute a passing grade,” he added. Staff have been asked to follow a link to affirm their commitment to “the new Twitter” by 5pm New York time (2200 GMT) on Thursday.

If they do not do so, they will lose their jobs, receiving three months of severance pay. Twitter did not respond to AFP requests for comment on the new measure. Since Musk took over Twitter, his stumbling attempts to revamp user verification with a controversial subscription service have led to a slew of fake accounts and pranks, and prompted major advertisers to step away from the platform.

On Tuesday, Musk postponed the relaunch of Twitter's paid subscription service, Blue Verified.

Musk wants users to pay \$8 for the coveted blue tick, which has until now been granted free to verified accounts, lending authority to public figures and media using Twitter. However, the system was suspended as accounts impersonating others—including Musk—proliferated. The relaunch is now set for November 29.

**‘Somebody else’**

Musk on Wednesday said his overhaul of the company’s “organization structure” would be done this week. After “an initial burst of activity” to reorganize the company, “I expect to reduce my time at Twitter and find somebody else to run Twitter over time,” he said. Musk was speaking in a court hearing linked to his \$50 billion pay package at Tesla, the electric car giant. A shareholder has accused the South African multi-billionaire of being a part-time CEO for Tesla, saying that the board of directors did not sufficiently scrutinize the compensation.

Musk has warned Twitter's employees that the company risks bankruptcy if it is not quickly fixed. In recent days, Musk has carried out more firings, sacking one engineer in a tweet after he openly criticized decisions under the new leadership. “I would like to apologize for firing these geniuses. Their immense talent will no doubt be of great use elsewhere,” Musk tweeted. —AFP

## Musk defends his \$50bn pay deal at Tesla

**WILMINGTON:** Tesla tycoon Elon Musk on Wednesday defended his \$50 billion pay package as CEO of the electric vehicle giant, arguing that the pioneering company was on the verge of collapse when the deal was agreed. Musk is being sued, along with Tesla and some board members, by a shareholder who accuses them of improperly signing off on “the largest compensation package ever awarded to an executive.”

Around 2018, when the pay deal was approved, investors “thought we would fail and go bankrupt,” Musk told a courtroom in Wilmington, Delaware. “We were in quite a tough position at the time. We were losing a lot of money... The probability of survival was extremely low,” he said.

Musk testified in the same Delaware court where he faced a lawsuit by Twitter to ensure he went through with his buyout of the social platform. The \$44 billion purchase of Twitter has put the South African billionaire under intense scrutiny after he conducted massive layoffs, provoked concern among advertisers, and struggled to control a surge of fake accounts. Musk arrived discreetly at the hearing in a black Tesla, which parked at the back of the courthouse in a tent set up for the occasion. A few minutes later, wearing a black suit and tie, he passed through security to enter the building.

The Boring Company. Musk countered that investors in Tesla were some of the “most sophisticated in the world” and able to keep tabs on his management. He said Tesla had been the laughing stock of the auto industry, and it was only the massive success of the company’s Model 3 that proved electric cars were the future.

“They thought electric vehicles were a joke. When the Model 3 started taking market share, they changed their plans,” he said, defending his vision for the company. According to a legal filing, Musk earned the equivalent of \$52.4 billion in Tesla stock options over four and a half years after virtually all of the company’s targets were met. Musk insisted that he played no role in coming up with the package nor discussed his deal with the board members, some of them close friends, who ultimately signed off on it.



**WILMINGTON:** Tesla CEO Elon Musk departs after he testified at the Leonard L Williams Justice Center in Wilmington, Delaware, on November 16, 2022. —AFP

The non-jury trial began Monday with testimony from Ira Ehrenpreis, head of the compensation committee on Tesla's board of directors, who said the targets set were “extraordinarily ambitious and difficult.” Ehrenpreis argued that the board wanted to spur Musk to focus on Tesla at a time when the company was fighting to gain traction.

The trial, which will run through Friday, was presided over by Judge Kathaleen McCormick, the same judge who was to preside over the dropped Twitter case. There is no deadline for her decision which could take months. She largely let questioning by lawyers for Musk and the plaintiff proceed uninterrupted, but jumped in when she found the tycoon's answers rambling.—AFP



**SAN FRANCISCO:** In this file photo, the Twitter sign is seen at their headquarters on October 28, 2022 in San Francisco, California. — AFP

<div><div>AL SAFAT</div><div>شركة الصفاة للاستثمار</div><div>AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY</div></div>			KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT											<div><div><div><div></div><div>(965) 22 675 140</div></div><div><div></div><div>Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.</div></div><div><div></div><div>alsafatinvest.com</div></div><div><div></div><div>research@alsafatinvest.com</div></div><div><div></div><div>alsafatinvestment</div></div><div><div></div><div>al-safat-investment-company</div></div></div></div>			
No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,130	1,117	1,131	1,116	15	17,243,745	-3	-0.27%	17.64%	1,100	1,131	18.5	2.16	2.2%	1.00
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	353	339	355	335	20	15,850,952	-11	-3.14%	27.58%	338	346	18.0	1.56	1.9%	1.25
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	205	204	213	204	9	40,883,394	2	0.99%	-2.68%	203	209	36.9	0.65	1.9%	1.17
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	230	228	233	226	7	8,608,285	1	0.44%	-4.62%	227	233	22.8	0.83	2.1%	1.29
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	865	862	873	849	24	98,402,165	14	1.65%	13.97%	860	874	29.0	3.54	1.3%	1.15
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	841	843	849	830	19	3,544,553	5	0.60%	18.34%	826	847	54.9	3.35	0.5%	1.08
204	National Investments	Financial Services	282	269	283	268	15	5,143,414	-8	-2.89%	22.83%	267	274	19.7	1.09	16.8%	1.84
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	127	145	147	125	22	28,425,929	23.9	15.08%	2.11%	137	148	20.5	0.71	3.6%	1.01
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	84	80.1	87	80	7	12,367,336	-3.8	-4.53%	-32.12%	78	82.9	-	0.47	11.3%	1.25
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	109	110	114	108	6	75,649,945	2	1.85%	-36.70%	108	119	16.1	0.81	2.6%	1.09
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	899	896	908	892	16	1,930,191	-2	-0.22%	19.77%	889	898	18.5	1.97	1.5%	1.03
501	National Industries	Financial Services	245	246	252	243	9	49,612,842	9	3.80%	2.09%	232	247	12.3	1.08	4.6%	1.49
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,263	1,275	1,340	1,252	88	1,241,364	1	0.08%	46.38%	1,260	1,290	12.1	1.21	4.8%	0.97
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	823	813	825	810	15	1,772,337	-3	-0.37%	-4.58%	790	820	9.2	1.66	7.4%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	815	787	820	777	43	20,845,503	-16	-1.99%	-0.06%	769	788	51.9	1.46	2.1%	1.54
605	Zain	Telecommunications	610	617	629	607	22	30,333,079	11	1.82%	3.70%	613	617	14.1	2.21	5.4%	0.79
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,420	3,422	3,445	3,405	40	279,588	0	0.00%	6.14%	3,400	3,440	7.2	3.45	11.7%	0.69
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	168	170	175	168	7	11,088,431	2	1.19%	-22.02%	167	171	-	0.63	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,750	1,785	1,850	1,734	116	1,273,379	15	0.85%	38.37%	1,780	1,820	13.4	10.41	2.6%	1.43
821	Warba Bank	Banking	255	252	256	247	9	23,541,684	1	0.40%	-8.03%	249	258	25.0	1.36	0.0%	1.08
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	350	366	371	345	26	6,864,782	7	1.95%	-36.62%	360	375	36.8	1.14	4.4%	0.48
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	361	361	376	355	21	7,912,175	6	1.69%	-2.43%	360	370	27.2	1.47	2.8%	0.75
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	197	196	198	195	3	2,949,376	1	0.51%	-14.04%	195	201	16.1	1.82	9.2%	0.48
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,374	2,360	2,410	2,300	110	478,359	-13	-0.55%	16.83%	2,350	2,349	24.4	7.51	2.8%	0.92
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	848	830	848	812	36	2,808,868	-10	-1.19%	-6.11%	830	860	11.9	4.15	5.7%	0.31

\* As of end of week closing



## Business

## Russia falls into recession

## Western sanctions weigh on economy after war on Ukraine

**MOSCOW:** Russia has entered a recession, nine months after launching its offensive in Ukraine as Western sanctions weigh on the economy, according to official data published on Wednesday.

Gross domestic product shrank four percent in the third quarter, according to a preliminary estimate by the national statistics agency Rosstat. As that follows one of the same size in the second quarter, Russia now meets the technical definition of a recession with two consecutive quarters of falling GDP. The four percent drop in economic output between July and September was less than the 4.5 percent contraction many analysts had expected, however.

The contraction was driven by a 22.6 percent plunge in wholesale trade and a 9.1 percent drop in retail trade. Meanwhile, construction grew by 6.7 percent and agriculture 6.2 percent.

Russia's economy has been struggling under a myriad of problems. Western sanctions have limited exports and imports, including of key manufacturing components and spare parts.

Companies have also been suffering from a lack of staff as a partial mobilization has taken several hundred thousand men out of the workforce. Despite a contracting economy, Russia's unemployment rate stood at 3.9 percent in September, according to Rosstat.

As a result, the Russian economy has become even more dependent upon energy exports, which have accounted for about 40 percent of federal government revenue. According to the office of Boris Titov, the presidential commissioner for entrepre-

neurs, about a third of the 5,800 Russian companies recently surveyed had suffered a drop in sales in the past months.

The September mobilization of 300,000 military reservists has impacted a third of companies, according to that same survey, the daily Kommersant said. "The situation has continued to deteriorate, it's no surprise," said Dmitry Polevoy, director of investments at Locko Invest in Moscow.

## Worse to come?

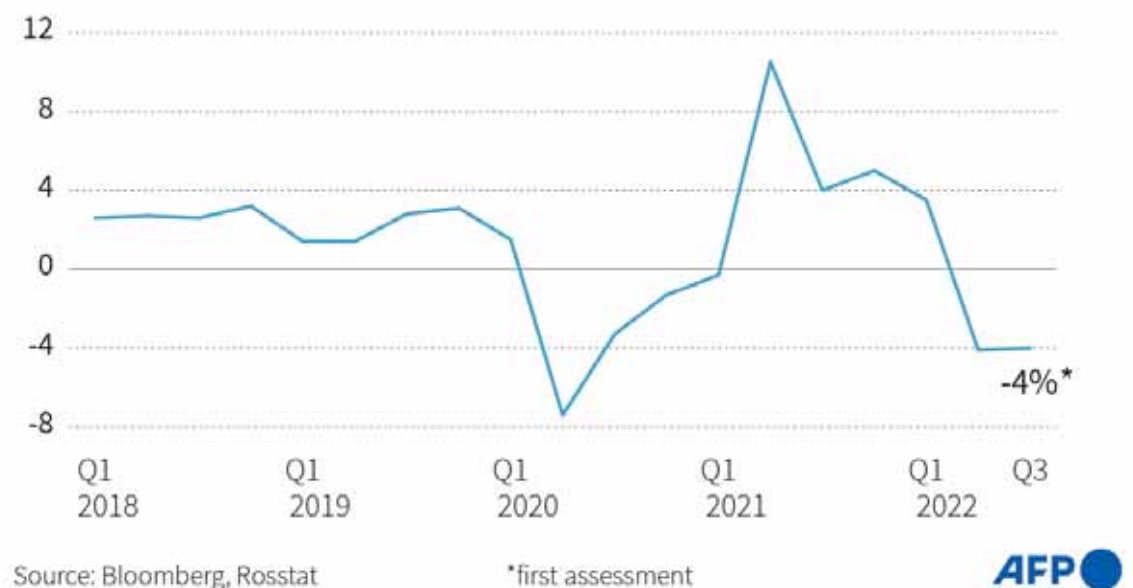
Yet the Russian economy has so far survived Western sanctions better than many economists expected. On November 8, the central bank predicted gross domestic product would contract by 3.5 percent this year. The IMF and the World Bank are respectively estimating a fall in Russian GDP of 3.4 percent and 4.5 percent.

The resilience of the economy is due in large part to the surge in global energy prices following the offensive in Ukraine and a restrictive monetary policy. After Russia was hit by Western sanctions, the central bank drastically raised the key rate from 9.5 percent to 20 percent in a bid to counter inflation and prop up the ruble.

The Bank of Russia quickly reduced it thereafter and last month left it at 7.5 percent in what governor Elvira Nabiullina called a sign of "adaptation" by the economy to a "new reality". But many analysts believe things are going to get worse for Russia's economy before they improve. "GDP could contract even more sharply, by up to seven percent" in the fourth quarter, Polevoy told AFP.

## Russia enters recession

Quarterly change in GDP, %.



Valery Mironov at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow said sanctions were having a delayed impact on the Russian economy. "Problems are clearly already present, but in reality we're seeing their effects being pushed back to 2023," he said,

as the government has taken steps to support companies. Central bank governor Nabiullina said last week that the Western sanctions were powerful and warned "their impact on the Russian and global economy shouldn't be underestimated." —AFP

## UK central bank blames Brexit for trade slump

**LONDON:** Brexit is hurting the UK economy, Bank of England officials said Wednesday, even as government leaders downplay the impact of the seismic EU withdrawal.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government says the war in Ukraine and the COVID pandemic are the primary reasons why Britain is staring at a painful recession, as it readies budget cuts this week.

But the UK's exit from the European Union is having a disproportionate effect on trade, argued Bank of England monetary policy committee member Swati Dhingra. "It's undeniable now that we're seeing a much bigger slowdown in trade in the UK compared to the rest of the world," she told the Treasury committee of the House of Commons. "The simple way of thinking about what Brexit has done to the economy is that in the period after the (2016) referendum, there was the biggest depreciation that any of the world's four major economies have seen overnight," she said.

That contributed to increasing prices and reduced wages, even before inflation soared this year, the economist said. Bank of England governor Andrew Bailey said the central bank was sticking by its initial prognosis issued after the June 2016 referendum, when it warned that Brexit would shrink the UK economy. "This (estimate) was done pretty soon after the referendum, it essentially assumes that there is a long-run downshift in the level of productivity, a little over three percent," he told the same committee of MPs.

"As a public official I'm neutral on Brexit per se, but I'm not neutral in saying that these are what we think are the most likely economic effects of it." —AFP

## Struggles at energy spin-off hit Siemens

**BERLIN:** German industrial conglomerate Siemens on Thursday reported a drop of around a third in annual profits due primarily to problems at its former energy unit. The company, which makes products ranging from trains to factory equipment, said net profits were around 4.4 billion euros (\$4.6 billion) in the 2021-22 fiscal year, down 34 percent.

The fall was due mainly to a 2.7-billion-euro devaluation in the third quarter related to its stake in Siemens Energy, said the company. Siemens Energy was spun off in 2020 from Siemens, which still owns a 35 percent stake. Siemens Energy's loss-making wind turbine maker subsidiary, Siemens Gamesa, has faced huge struggles, and announced in September that it would cut about 11 percent of its total workforce. The company's difficulties are linked to soaring commodity prices and increased competition from low-priced rivals especially from China.

Siemens, which is based in Munich and runs its business year from October to September, also took a hit of around 300 million euros in the fourth quarter from its move to wind down activities in Russia due to the Ukraine war. There were some bright spots, however.

Net profit in the fourth quarter more than doubled to 2.91 billion euros. Revenue in the 2021-22 fiscal year was up 16 percent while operating profit also rose strongly. "Despite a continuing complex macroeconomic environment influenced, among other things, by economic sanctions on Russia, high inflation and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Siemens grew again in all key markets," said the company. —AFP

## Airbnb CEO wants your home to make money

**NEW YORK:** After years of trying to expand into other sectors, the CEO of holiday home giant Airbnb, wants to get back to the basics: helping people make money. "I had tried to create too many things at the same time," explained Brian Chesky to AFP.

"Then the pandemic occurred. We had to get back to our core business," he said. The sudden halt to world tourism was a shock to the home rental company and forced layoffs of a quarter of Airbnb workforce in 2020. It also snapped the company's foray into travel "experiences", Airbnb's move into tourist activities. The health of Airbnb, along with the whole travel sector, had begun rebounding since the COVID-19 lockdowns, but once again, dark clouds are looming.

"The big obvious thing is that (in most countries) we're going to enter a recession probably, if we're not already in one," said Chesky. The company which has a headcount of about 6,000 people, has

## Alibaba reports loss of \$2.9 billion in third quarter

**BEIJING:** Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba on Thursday reported a loss of 20.6 billion yuan (\$2.89 billion) for the third quarter, as the company grapples with an economic slowdown and an anti-monopoly crackdown. The heavy net loss attributable to ordinary shareholders was primarily due to a "decrease in market prices of our equity investments in publicly traded companies", among other factors, the company said in a statement. Alibaba's performance is widely seen as a gauge of Chinese consumer sentiment, given its market dominance.

Revenue for the three months ending September 30 was up three percent year-on-year at 207.2 billion yuan, which Chief Financial Officer Toby Xu said was achieved "in spite of the impact on consumption demand by the COVID-19 resurgence in China as well as slowing cross-border commerce".

Alibaba said it achieved revenue growth by "enhancing operating efficiency" as well as through

## Germany eyes diversity to save forests

**BERLIN:** Once a sea of green, thousands of spruces with brown crowns and charred trunks now stand in a forest in eastern Germany, testament to one of the most ferocious forest fires to have ravaged the region in years. Germany recorded its worst bout of forest fires in 2022, and experts believe such calamities will only intensify in the coming years because of climate change.

Foresters are now racing to make the woods more resilient, including by giving Germany's forests-known for its acres of evergreens—a complete makeover. If they are successful, Germany's forests will in the future no longer be populated primarily by rows of spruces, but by a mish-mash of tree species like oaks, aspens and lindens. Walking through the tree skeletons in the dry woods near the town of Beelitz, forester Martin Schmitt peeled off the black bark of a tree, saying: "You can clearly see the charred tree trunks that have burnt down on the outside. If we look up now, we can already see a lot of brown crowns. "Many, many trees are now dead, as we can see... And these trees will also not recover."

## Generational task

In June and July, the fires that consumed 200

no plans for layoffs unlike tech giants Meta, Amazon or Twitter. Instead, it wants to encourage more people to become hosts on its platform, increasing options as the euphoria of reopened travel has cooled. "We have to be affordable" in terms of pricing, Chesky insisted, to allow consumers to travel despite a deteriorating economic climate.

## 'Huge business'

In order to face the challenge, more hosts are needed: "We got to help people make money," said Chesky, especially those that are reluctant to open up their properties to strangers. To encourage the reluctant, Airbnb unveiled on Wednesday a new feature that offers neophytes advice from the site's highly experienced "superhosts" who, for a fee paid by the company, provide advice and suggestions. In another move to attract skittish property owners, the San Francisco-based group will expand its user identity requirements to even more markets. It will also offer hosts tools to better set their rates and offer discounts. Airbnb also announced the launch of its anti-party screening technology across the US and Canada. Partying is the company's bete noire, with revelers breaking the rules to host wild bashes, scaring away hosts or dissuading potential ones. The San Francisco group also increased the damage covered by its inhouse insurance scheme

the expansion of its logistics and services businesses, despite a slump in e-commerce sales within China. It comes after the company earlier this year reported flat quarterly revenue growth for the first time ever.

## Flagging demand

The company said in its statement on Thursday that revenue from domestic commerce had fallen in the third quarter, "mainly as a result of softer consumption demand, COVID-19 resurgence and restrictions, as well as ongoing competition".

In a sign of difficulties for Alibaba, the company appears to have laid off a number of employees, with its headcount down more than 1,700 from the previous quarter. China's major tech companies have faced economic uncertainty, COVID-19 restrictions that have depressed consumer spending, as well as heightened scrutiny from regulators in recent months. Fellow tech titan Tencent reported on Wednesday its second quarterly drop in revenue in a row. Alibaba in particular has been at the centre of regulatory crackdowns at home and abroad. US authorities have put the company on a watchlist that could see it delisted in New York if it does not comply with disclosure orders, causing its shares to slump. Chinese authorities pulled a planned IPO by



Brian Chesky

from \$1 million to \$3 million. Chesky has not given up on diversifying in the long term. In five or ten years, "I hope we will do much more than just hosting travelers," he said.

In particular, the entrepreneur intends to revive "experiences". "There's a huge business on the horizon. But it's going to take longer than I thought.. it just turns out that it's a more difficult thing to match supply and demand," he said. —AFP



the company's financial arm Ant Group at the last minute in 2020, then hit Alibaba with a record \$2.75 billion fine for alleged unfair practices last year.

The company's Singles Day e-commerce festival, which traditionally dwarfs similar US events such as Black Friday and Cyber Monday, has been more muted in recent years. Alibaba-alongside main rival JD.com-did not release full sales figures for the shopping bonanza for the first time ever this year, instead saying in a statement that sales were flat from last year. —AFP



hectares (500 acres) of the forests in Brandenburg swept close to Beelitz town itself. Across the state of Brandenburg where Beelitz is located, about 1,411 hectares were affected this year alone, about three and a half times as much as the annual average of the past 10 years.

Besides recurring drought, the monoculture composition of the forests has also made them more vulnerable. For foresters, an urgent task at hand is to introduce diversity in the tree population.

"Forest transformation is the core work of my generation of foresters," said Schmitt. The patch of

woods with charred trees will now be left alone for a while, to determine which trees might recover. In time, the plan is for deciduous trees to take over the space occupied by spruces that fail to regenerate.

A polyculture forest is generally more resistant to the consequences of climate change such as drought or pest infestation, the forester said. Deciduous trees in particular release water into the air in a process called transpiration at a higher rate than conifers, and as a result, "the forest is ultimately much, much cooler and therefore the fire risk is much lower than in a pure pine forest," said Schmitt. —AFP





# SADHU BOARDS ARE PAINFUL MENTALLY MORE THAN PHYSICALLY



By Faten Omar

**P**eople always search for ways to overcome their daily stress and problems in life, reconnect with their souls, find the real purpose of life and embody true nature to come to peace with the world. Kyrgyzstani Aidana went on a journey with a sadhu board as a way to control her mind and learn how to work with her fears, where according to her, the nail board helps people connect with their body and relieve nervous stress and fatigue.

Aidana, who got interested in yoga when she was in university, embarked on a journey that took her to India, where she acquired certification as a yoga instructor. "After sitting long hours for lectures, I would rush to the yoga studio. I went to India to acquire my yoga instructor certification. This journey led me to share my skills and experiences in Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, UAE and Kuwait," she said.

The need for change directed Aidana to the sadhu board. "Change is an inevitable part of our life and most of the time it's not pleasant. My yoga practice evolved throughout the years from physical to mental focus. One of my teachers introduced me to the sadhu board. It's a very intense experience in facing all your fears and weaknesses. Surprisingly it's more painful mentally than physically," she said.

"There are a few legends related to the sadhu nail board. This board took root many centuries ago in India, where sadhus (people who have dedicated their lives to a spiritual path), made a pilgrimage to the Himalayan mountains barefooted. This kind of long trip required preparation, so they came up with a nail board to train their determination, willpower and spirit. The word "sadh" from Sanskrit translates as reach the goal, overcome something," Aidana

told Kuwait Times.

Aidana came to the sadhu board to release the fears of the future, let go of the past and connect to the present moment, regardless of what it holds for me - discomfort or comfort. "Some things in life have deep roots that require thorough work. The sadhu board is the training for my nervous system to handle stress without being involved emotionally and finding the best solutions. And I realized how much potential I have when I can direct my attention without being distracted by external circumstances," she noted.

"Just like yoga, you can do it by yourself or with instructions, but the person will get the best out of this therapy when guided by a professional, at least for the first time. Because physical and mental pain is a quite strong feeling that is best handled when we are not alone. I'm honored to guide this community towards harmony within!" Aidana explained.

Nail boards originated over 2,000 years ago in India, where similar devices used by yogis are called "sadhu boards" or "bed of nails". Standing on nails relaxes the body and energizes the person for new achievements. Standing on nail boards stimulates a release of endorphins and increases blood and lymph circulation, triggering self-healing mechanisms and eliminating pain.



Aidana standing on the sadhu board.

Besides physical healing, nail boards are an excellent tool for the mind to train the brain to respond to any external stimulation or stress with calm focus, where most people at first experience strong sensations on their feet.

## Burberry sets fashion sales targets after tourist boost

**B**urberry on Thursday increased targets for sales of its luxury fashion goods, adding it would "refocus on Britishness" after first-half earnings were boosted by easing lockdowns in Europe and a weak pound. Net profit jumped nearly a third to £193 million (\$229 million) in the six months to the end of September compared with a year earlier. Sales jumped 11 percent to £1.35 billion. "Our focus in this next phase is on growth and acceleration," chief executive Jonathan Akeroyd said in the earnings statement. "We have a clear plan to achieve this across brand, product and distribution."

With help from new creative director Daniel Lee, Burberry is looking to "broadly double sales of leather goods, shoes and women's ready to wear and grow outerwear by around 50 percent in the medium term", the statement added. In the long

term, Burberry aims to "grow accessories to more than 50 percent of group sales". British national Lee replaced Italian designer Riccardo Tisci in September.

Burberry on Thursday said it wished to "harness the power" of its brand, "informed by a new creative vision set by Daniel Lee". There would be a "refocus on Britishness", with the group strengthening its "connection with British design, craft and culture".

The company's share price was flat in London trading after the update. "Burberry's first half performance has been turbo charged by American tourists spending big in Europe as they took advantage of the stronger dollar," noted Sophie Lund-Yates, equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"With lockdowns in mainland China denting performance both in the region and abroad, it's heartening to see other customers picking up some slack" with recession headwinds on the horizon. "Luxury names tend to be more insulated than other retailers in the face of economic downturns, but Burberry is slightly more exposed than some," she added. — AFP



## Warhol piece sells for \$85 million at New York auction

**A**ndy Warhol's iconic 1960s painting "White Disaster" sold for \$85 million at auction Wednesday evening at Sotheby's in New York. The 1963 piece of art was sold after two minutes and a brief duel between two bidders, for a total of \$74 million, or \$85.4 million with all related costs and fees.

The last time a piece of art from Warhol's "Death and Disaster" series was sold in 2013, it set a record for the artist at \$105 million. In May, Warhol's 1964 portrait of Marilyn Monroe, "Shot Sage Blue Marilyn," was auctioned for \$195 million, becoming the most expensive 20th-century work ever sold at auction. "White Disaster [White Car Crash 19 Times]," as it is formally known, is a work of silkscreen ink and graphite, which depicts the same black-and-white image of a macabre car accident 19 times on a canvas 12 feet (3.6 meters) tall.

"At the end of 1962, Warhol paints Marilyn Monroe, beginning his fascination with celebrity imagery, but it was really her demise at the end of '62 and the spectacle around her death that captured Warhol's fascination," said David Galperin, head of contemporary art Americas at Sotheby's. The piece of art sold Wednesday came from a private collection and Sotheby's gave no information on the buyer. — AFP





## Lifestyle | Features

## Out of the box: Defying stereotypes in 'Return to Seoul'

It is Cambodia's next Oscars entry, has a Korean-born France-based star, a French-Cambodian director, and was shot in South Korea. If "Return to Seoul" sounds hard to categorize, that's precisely the point, director Davy Chou told AFP. The film follows Freddie, a mercurial and ruthlessly unapologetic Korean-born French adoptee who, at the age of 25, embarks on a quest to find her birth parents. Freddie is constantly fighting against "people always wanting to place her in a box, (whether) she's considered French or Korean or adoptee", Chou told AFP.

And the frustration some South Korean viewers at the recent Busan Film Festival expressed in their bid to pinpoint "the film's origin or nationality" is a key parallel to this on-screen battle, he said. The multicultural tale was shot on location in South Korea-from Seoul's Itaewon neighborhood to southern Jeonju city-using a Korean and European crew, a script originally written in French, and 1960s music by South Korea's psychedelic rock legend Shin Jung-hyeon.

Born in France to Cambodian immigrants, Chou discovered in his teens that his grandfather had been one of the Southeast Asian country's leading film producers in the 1960s. Like Freddie, Chou made a life-changing trip to his family's native country at 25. He now lives in Cambodia and says his work is influenced by his own experiences of the "question of double culture and double identity and how you deal with that".



This picture shows South Korean actress Park Ji-min posing for a photo during an interview with AFP for her film "Return to Seoul" at the Busan International Film Festival in Busan. — AFP photos

The plot in "Return to Seoul" was inspired by Chou's experience accompanying a friend, a Korean-born adoptee, on her journey to reuniting with her birth parents. The high-profile joint production-its credits are a who's-who of indie cinema from Paris to Phnom Penh-follows a wave of successful South Korean and diasporic entertainment, including Oscar-winning "Parasite" and Apple TV+'s "Pachinko".

"Return to Seoul" was just one of the films with non-Korean directors and Korean crews to screen at the Busan fest, including Singapore's Oscars entry "Ajoomma" and Japanese filmmaker Hirokazu Kore-eda's "Broker"-which explored South Korea's "baby boxes" where infants are abandoned.

#### Stereotypes

"Return to Seoul" subverts South Korea's narrative on adoption, in particular the spectacle of tearful, seemingly heartwarming reunions between birth parents and adoptees that have repeatedly featured on domestic television. It also touches on the absurdity of South Korea's adoption laws, which prioritize the birth parent's right to privacy over the rights of the adopted, and require authorities to communicate with parents exclusively by old-fashioned telegrams. The film's complicated protagonist is almost impeccably played by first-time actor Park Ji-min, an artist who-like Freddie-was born in South Korea but grew up in France.

For Park, who moved to France with



This picture shows French-Cambodian director Davy Chou posing for a photo during an interview with AFP for his film "Return to Seoul" at the Busan International Film Festival in Busan.

her family at age nine, the film was a rare chance to create the kind of Asian woman character she had wanted to see in French cinema. In France, Asian women are still overwhelmingly viewed as "obedient, accommodating to what men say, and domestic", Park told AFP. "As an Asian woman, I'm immensely proud to have played such a rare-to-find woman character in a French movie," she said. Freddie is frequently fierce and direct-even during her traumatic reunion with her birth father's family.

#### 'Clearly Korean'

"Return to Seoul" also features some of South Korea's acclaimed actors, including Oh Kwang-rok and Kim Sun-young, who play Freddie's well-meaning

but overwhelmed Korean family. Busan Film Festival programmer Park Sung-ho said that, while Chou's film may not be a South Korean movie in legal terms-most of its financing came from Europe-it is still "clearly a Korean film".

"We are living in an era where the definition of Korean cinema is forever expanding," he told AFP. "The topic of adoption has been around in South Korea for decades, and had a Korean director made this movie, it actually could've been rather boring. "It makes us look at what we thought we were in a different way. That's what 'Return to Seoul' manages to do."—AFP



A couple rides past a promotional hoarding banner of Pakistan-produced movie "Joyland" displaying outside a cinema in Lahore.— AFP

## Praised abroad, controversial Pakistani movie 'Joyland' banned at home

The local screening of a Pakistan-produced movie portraying a love affair between a married man and a transgender woman hangs in the balance after the film was cleared by censors, then banned by the government under pressure from Islamists. "Joyland", which has won prizes around the globe including the Jury Prize at Cannes, is also Pakistan's entry for next year's Oscars. But it may not be seen at home unless a review by the censors, ordered by a committee following the prime minister's intervention, rescinds the ban. The movie was due to open in Pakistan this Friday.

"It's almost like we take two steps back every time we make a little progress," Kami Sid, a transgender model and activist, told AFP Wednesday. "I feel sad for my country, for the industry, and most of all, I feel sad for the transgender community." Although their rights are ostensibly protected by law, most transgender Pakistanis are forced to live on the periphery of society—often resorting to begging, dancing at weddings or sex work for survival.

"Joyland" tells the story of the youngest son of a patriarchal Punjabi family who falls in love with a brash transgender dancer. Their affair exposes the hypocrisy of relationships throughout a multi-generational family struggling with sexuality and the clash of tradition and modernity.

The movie was cleared by Pakistan's board of censors in August, but the ministry of information banned it last week following objections from right-wing Islamist groups and individuals. The ministry said it was "clearly repugnant to the norms of

decency and morality", sparking ridicule from the movie's supporters on social media, who speculated the officials had acted without even seeing the film.

#### 'Grave injustice'

In a statement, director Saim Sadiq said he was "gutted" by the decision, adding the movie's principals "fully intend to raise our voice against this grave injustice". Attempts at recognizing and protecting the rights of transgender Pakistanis have been fiercely resisted by Islamist parties, who say they are signs of encroaching Western values.

The ban on "Joyland" comes on the heels of the raging success of "The Legend of Maula Jatt", which has already become the highest-grossing Pakistani film worldwide since its release last month and is viewed by many as the start of a renaissance for local cinema-long eclipsed by neighboring India's glamorous Bollywood. "Joyland" is proving a huge success in India where it premiered at the Dharamshala International Film Festival last week, with patrons lining up around the block for tickets, and extra screenings arranged.

Right-wing Islamist parties have been campaigning for months to amend hard-won transgender rights legislation, which sought to end discrimination and grant equal access to employment and education, among other things. "We clearly see this ban on the film as a continuation of the attacks on the transgender community," Shahzadi Rai, a transgender rights activist, told AFP.

"This film was made in Pakistan, about Pakistan, and then ultimately banned by Pakistan. It's very upsetting for the transgender community." The fate of the film now rests again with the censors after a committee ordered by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told them to review it. "The situation remains very uncertain," the makers of "Joyland" told AFP.—AFP



In this file photo US comedian Jay Leno arrives to the Vanity Fair Oscar Party at the Sunset Tower in West Hollywood, California. — AFP

## Jay Leno needed skin grafts after car fire

US talk show host Jay Leno required skin grafts for significant burns to his face and hands from an explosion involving a vintage car, and will undergo further surgery this week, his doctor said Wednesday. The former anchor of "The Tonight Show" remains in a specialized Los Angeles hospital after suffering second-degree and possible

third-degree burns in an accident while working on a vehicle at his private garage Sunday.

"I do anticipate him making a full recovery," said Dr Peter Grossman, who described 72-year-old Leno's condition as "good." "Our hope is when everything is all said and done he will do well," Grossman said. "But burn injuries are progressive and dynamic and it's hard to predict ultimately what the final outcome will be at this stage of the game."

Leno, a renowned motoring enthusiast with a huge collection of rare and expensive cars and motorcycles, was underneath a vehicle when the accident occurred. A fuel leak covered Leno in gasoline which was ignited by a spark. Grossman told journalists it was too early



This undated handout image obtained from the 59th Golden Horse Film Awards in Taipei shows a scene from the film "The Sunny Side of the Street" with actor Sahal Zaman.



This undated handout image obtained from the 59th Golden Horse Film Awards in Taipei shows a scene from the film "Blue Island". — AFP photos

matter". Black-and-white crime noir "Limbo", which has the most nods at 14, is vying for best picture against another Hong Kong drama "The Sunny Side of the Street" and three Taiwanese films.

But it is unclear if many of the Hong Kong or Chinese nominees will travel to Taipei. Cya Liu, nominated for best actress in "Limbo", has confirmed via her Hong Kong agency that she will not attend the ceremony, without giving any reasons. "I think they want to win but in the current political environment it's probably inevitable that neither the director nor the cast will be present" except for Taiwanese-American actor Mason Lee, film critic Wonder Weng told AFP. Mason Lee is the son of Oscar-winning Taiwanese director Ang Lee, who is a staunch Golden Horse supporter and regularly chairs its jury, a role that is taken up by veteran Hong Kong director Ann Hui this year.

"It would be really awkward... if a film that is recognized with 14 nominations does not appear to support, or even boycott" the event, said Weng of Taiwan's Film Critics Society. Soi Cheang, who is nominated for best director for "Limbo", declined



This undated handout image obtained from the 59th Golden Horse Film Awards in Taipei shows a scene from the film "The Sunny Side of the Street" with actors Anthony Wong (left) and Sahal Zaman.

an AFP request for comment.

#### 'A door for independent films'

The Golden Horse awards have become a bulwark against Beijing's tightening grip on creative freedoms and often showcase titles that would not get past censors in China and Hong Kong. At last year's awards, the best documentary prize went to Hong Kong director Kiwi Chow's "Revolution of Our Times". The film explored the huge and sometimes violent democracy protests that swept the business hub in 2019 but cannot be shown there. Once the crucible of Cantonese cinema and a bastion of free speech, Hong Kong is being transformed into a mirror of the authoritarian mainland after those protests.

A national security law has criminalized much dissent and film censorship powers have been strengthened. Some of the Chinese films nominated this year also touch on sensitive subjects. Short film "Frontier" explores the stereotyping and discrimination against China's Uyghur minority. "Will You Look at Me" is a documentary about homosexuality while "Silence in the Dust" focuses on laborers suffering from industrial pollution.

"Some say the Golden Horse may become less influential with fewer big movies submitting but I think it's crucial that... it opens a door for these independent films," said commentator Weng. "It is the only outlet for their voices to be heard" in Chinese-language film festivals and awards, he added. Hong Konger Chan Tze-woon's "Blue Island" is nominated for best documentary. It focuses on the city's democracy movement and what he calls "a desperate attempt to capture the final moments of a sinking island".—AFP



This undated handout image obtained from the 59th Golden Horse Film Awards in Taipei shows a scene from the film "Limbo" with actress Cya Liu.

for decades. After stepping away in 2009 for a brief stint fronting "The Jay Leno Show," he returned to host "The Tonight Show" until 2014, when Jimmy Fallon took over.

He has also fronted seven seasons of "Jay Leno's Garage." In a statement released Monday, Leno said he would need "a week or two to get back on my feet." But Grossman cautioned Wednesday that his recovery would likely be slower, and that he had warned the entertainer he needed to "step it back a little and realize" treatment will take some time. Grossman added: "I do feel he will be back to work at some point soon and back to the things that he loves to do." — AFP

to say if Leno will require additional surgery beyond the second procedure scheduled later this week.

Leno has also been undergoing hyperbaric oxygen therapy, which stimulates oxygen circulation in the blood stream to speed up the healing process. But, said Grossman, he was in good spirits. "He's Jay Leno. He's walking around and he's cracking jokes," the doctor said. "I can tell you he's incredibly kind to our nursing staff... He's been appreciative of everybody here and he's an ideal patient, and one who understands the seriousness of his injury."

Leno took over the helm of "The Tonight Show" after Johnny Carson retired in 1992, carrying on a tradition of television that has defined US late nights



## Lifestyle | Features



Members of the ghost hunters group, The Upsidedown, prepare to investigate paranormal activities inside the campus of one of the top South African universities in Pretoria.



Members of the ghost hunters group, The Upsidedown, walk through abandoned buildings while investigating paranormal activities. — AFP photos

### Netflix whodunnit 'Glass Onion' teases Elon Musk parallels

World's richest man. Tech tycoon. Social media mogul. Elon Musk goes by many labels, but is he also the inspiration for Netflix's new whodunnit "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery"? In the movie, a detective played by Daniel Craig investigates a murder on the private Greek island of tech billionaire Miles Bron. Bron, played by Edward Norton, is a brash entrepreneur and self-proclaimed genius who has made multiple fortunes with different companies. He delights in confounding those around him with his latest whims and riddles.

Since the mystery-satire first premiered at the Toronto film festival in September, critics have noted parallels to Musk, who founded SpaceX, runs Tesla and recently bought Twitter. Vanity Fair said the film skewered "the foolish, and at times dangerous, messianics of the tech industry," calling Miles a "melange" of Musk and Steve Jobs. Meanwhile, Mashable noted the film's "none-too-subtle scathing and silly send-up of Elon Musk."

"If you think the shoe fits, then they were probably in our conversation," teased Norton at a Los Angeles press conference on Tuesday. "But I also think Miles is kind of like the Carly Simon song 'You're so vain, you probably think this song is about you'," he added. "I think a lot of (tech billionaires) will think it's about them. And that's fine!" Writer-director Rian Johnson ("Star Wars: The Last Jedi") said the character was not based on just one real-life figure. He told journalists that "taking the piss out of any specific person just was not all that interesting."

But, he said the movie was about "our relationship as a society to these Willy Wonka characters who we, on one hand, want to throw elephant poop at, but on the other hand... have some weird childlike wish that they will actually create a chocolate factory and solve all our problems." —AFP



### California lab-grown meat start-up gets first green light

A California-based lab-grown meat start-up received the first green light for such products from the US food safety agency on Wednesday, although the product still has more hurdles to clear before being sold to consumers. The US Food and Drug Administration said it carried out a "careful evaluation" of Upside Foods' cultivated chicken, including data and information provided by the company, and had "no further questions at this time," signaling a go-ahead for the firm.

"We started UPSIDE amid a world full of skeptics, and today, we've made history again as the first company to receive a 'No Questions' letter from the FDA for cultivated meat," founder and CEO Uma Valeti said in a press release. The FDA specified that the evaluation did not constitute "an approval process." Upside Foods will still have to undergo inspection by the US Department of Agriculture, for example, before it can sell its products.

That said, this "is a watershed moment in the history of food," Valeti said. Several start-ups are aiming to produce so-called lab-grown meat, which would allow humans to consume animal protein without harming the environment through farming and without any animal suffering. These products differ from plant-based substitutes such as soy burgers that mimic the texture and flavor of meat but do not contain any animal protein.

The start-up Eat Just, a competitor of Upside Foods, was the first to receive authorization to make artificial meat, in Singapore in 2020. While succeeding in the general lab-meat market has proven complicated and expensive, some companies have set their sights on petfood, whose consumers are much less picky. Bond Pet Foods, a Colorado start-up, is creating animal protein from a microbial fermentation process to feed dogs. — AFP

# S Africa's ghost hunters look for clues in hollow rooms

Shortly after nightfall, flashlight in hand, Rivas Bright knocks twice on the broken window of an abandoned building in Pretoria, South Africa. "Still!" he tells his fellow ghost hunters. They hold their breath, waiting for a response from the shadows. It's been around two years since Bright, 39, set up "The Upsidedown" a group of paranormal enthusiasts hunting ghosts in a bid to prove they are real. It's a daunting task, given spirits are proverbially evasive.

"It's a broken science," Nigel Mullinder, 29, a member of the team who during the day works at a casino, says of the study of paranormal events, which has drawn the interest of researchers and parapsychologists but produced little hard evidence. Bright and his team of "skeptical believers"—five men and two women—have turned to tech to solve the mystery.

Armed with an arsenal of tools including infrared cameras, motion and heat detectors, radios, and a self-developed app to uncover paranormal activity, they scout haunted buildings looking for clues in cavernous hallways and rusting stairwells. "(We) need a set of evidence that would allow us to prove that it's not just the wind (blowing) through the window or a door closing because of some sorts of vibrations," says Mullinder. Tonight they



Nigel Mullinder, 29, a member of the ghost hunters group The Upsidedown, listens to a radio frequency meter while blindfolded inside an abandoned building.

have come to an abandoned building within the campus of one of South Africa's largest universities, which asked not to be named.

Night guards here have been spooked by creepy noises. Lucy Tsoeu, 46, says slamming doors and the clacking of a typewriter at night have led her to believe



Rivas Bright, 39, founder of the ghost hunters group, The Upsidedown, knocks on a broken window of an abandoned building.

a ghost is hanging about. Her colleague Mpho Mthombeni, 30, says he has heard toilets flush and felt a strange presence when there was no one about. "What can I do? Do I pray, or shall I speak louder to scare them away?" asks Tsoeu. "Maybe they'll be able to cool them down," she says of the ghost hunters, half worried and half excited.

#### Shadows, whispers and gunshots

Sporting a grey T-shirt over black trousers, a shaved head and pierced ears, Bright, a retail chain store employee, says he has heard strange sounds and seen sinister shadows since a very young age. "My mother would claim to speak to spirits" in her kitchen, he says. Since he founded "The Upsidedown", the group has gathered a few thousand followers on social media, spent several thousand dollars on equipment and searched about a dozen premises, following tip-offs from anxious locals.

At the university building the group checks every room, placing their detecting tools on a floor covered with dead leaves. "We are literally a bunch of guys that stand in the dark, ask questions... and follow red and green blinking lights," quips Bright.



Rivas Bright, 39, founder of the ghost hunters group The Upsidedown, listens to a radio frequency meter inside an abandoned building.

Bright rings a bell to signal to the ghosts that he wants to talk to them—but there is no reply. "We are not here to hurt anybody or remove you from that place. All we're looking for is answers," says Bright. Gunshots echo in the distance. Pretoria is the capital of what is considered one of the world's most dangerous countries.

"Did you hear that? I could clearly hear someone call my name," says a member of the team. It's hard to corroborate. As the hunt goes on, others in turn sense a movement or hear a sigh. The group, made up of white, middle class South Africans, has been to this building once before a month ago. Then, its members say they communicated with the spirits of children in a room that was used as a makeshift morgue during violent riots in the 1980s.

Mullinder tries to get in touch again, listening to a radio frequency meter while blindfolded. Everything is filmed to capture potential evidence. But the result is inconclusive. "I can understand why people would think we are crazy, but when we finally get that unsolvable massive piece of evidence... who's the crazy one then?" says Bright. — AFP



Members of the ghost hunters group, The Upsidedown, walk through abandoned buildings while investigating paranormal activities.

### Taylor Swift tour chaos spurs calls to probe ticketing industry

When Taylor Swift announced her first tour in five years, Jacob Landry couldn't wait to jump in line to see his favorite artist take the stage. But after diligently registering for and receiving a presale code, the 20-year-old jazzed for his first concert ever was confronted with a massive queue, site glitches and soaring costs. Landry's experience was far from unique: thousands of social media users reported similar experiences, including 19-year-old Kathryn Berry, who told AFP the process that ultimately left her with nosebleed seats in Nashville turned into a "thirteen-hour ordeal."

Berry said she's "happy I got tickets, but definitely holding a grudge against Ticketmaster for a while." For many music fans that grudge is longstanding. The American ticketing industry, which the company Ticketmaster overwhelmingly dominates, has for years left concertgoers frustrated by hidden fees, soaring costs, rampant scalpers and limited tickets due to presales.

Swifties flooding ticketing sites linked to by Ticketmaster described crashes,

outages, and other snafus, and many who were granted presale codes ultimately couldn't nab tickets. Cody Rhodes said his cousin received a code granting access to buy seats for Swift's May show in Philadelphia, but after waiting five hours they were booted out of the queue.

By the time they got back through the line, there were no tickets left. "I was FLOORED," the 23-year-old told AFP. "It was kind of funny at first like wow haha Taylor is so popular everyone wants to see her! Queen!" "But every passing hour I was realizing the seriousness of it."

Rhodes said he'll try again when the general sale opens on Friday, saying his loose budget is \$400 per ticket. "That is a lot of money for us really, but we are



In this file photo American singer-songwriter Taylor Swift poses at the red carpet during 2022 MTV Video Music Awards at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey.—AFP

huge fans and have waited so long," Rhodes said, but added he's already seeing resale tickets in the \$2,000 to \$9,000 range for the kinds of seats they were hoping for. "Ticketmaster is a money-hungry service with little to no regard to real fans. I think they will allow price gauging since it allows them to take advantage of situations like this," he said.

#### 'Unchecked monopoly'

Ticketmaster did not immediately respond to an AFP interview request, but in a statement Tuesday the company said waiting fans should "please hang tight," citing "historically unprecedented demand" from millions. The company also delayed one of the presales a full day. The havoc spurred comment from a number of lawmakers, including Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Richard Blumenthal, who urged an investigation into the "state of competition in the ticketing industry." In 2010, Ticketmaster and the event promotion company behemoth Live Nation merged, which Congressman David Cicilline on Tuesday dubbed "an unchecked monopoly."

He and other legislators in 2021 called for a Justice Department probe into "Live Nation's efforts to jack up prices and strangle competition." Swift fans have an enormous online presence and a zeal that leaves them well-positioned to call attention to their plight, but Krista Brown-an analyst at the American Economic Liberties Project, which has urged unwinding the merger—said the chaos "is just the latest example." "This isn't about one artist's concert or one website crashing," Brown told AFP.





DUBAI: Children play cricket in a parking lot in the Gulf emirate of Dubai. Every weekend, informal cricket matches are played on spare patches of ground across the Gulf region, which is home to millions of migrant workers and expatriates from cricket-loving South Asia. — AFP



DUBAI: Expatriate workers play cricket in a parking lot in the Gulf emirate of Dubai. — AFP

# As WCup looms, street cricket rules for Gulf migrant workers

## Street cricket seen much more commonly than football

DUBAI: It is 7:00 am in Dubai and as the sun peeks above high-rises, it reveals an animated scene below: about 200 people, mostly men, wielding bats and taped-up tennis balls in a weekly festival of street cricket. About a dozen informal games are in progress in a carpark near the city's financial district, as metro trains glide across a bridge overhead and police watch from a parked SUV, wary of players bringing alcohol or otherwise misbehaving.

Every weekend, such games are played on spare patches of ground across the Gulf region, which is home to millions of migrant workers and expatriates from cricket-loving South Asia. And even as the Gulf, namely Qatar, gears up to host the first football World Cup on Arab soil, another tournament dominated conversation among the players in Dubai: cricket's Twenty20 World Cup, which was unfolding in Australia.

Faisal, a 35-year-old Pakistani who drives for a living, followed the tournament so avidly that he nearly crashed during India's tense win over Pakistan in October. "I was almost in an accident—I was watching my phone, the India-Pakistan game," he said. "We real-

ly love cricket." There's no question which is the prime sport among the Gulf's migrant workers, whose treatment has been in the spotlight in the build-up to the Qatar World Cup.

Street cricket can often be seen in Dubai, much more commonly than football. That's a result of the huge numbers of South Asians in the region, including an estimated 3.5 million Indians in the United Arab Emirates. Making up about a third of residents, they dwarf the native population of around one million. "We keep watching scores while playing cricket," said Indian expat Dinesh Balani, 49. "While working, while in the bathroom or anywhere, we follow cricket."

### 'Our own bosses'

As the November morning heats up, more players arrive, clutching paper cups of karak tea, a Gulf speciality, and bags of bats and plastic wickets as they spill out of cars. A children's game is in progress in one corner of the carpark, while in another, an all-women's team undergo a coaching session. Tennis balls wrapped in tape to make them less bouncy, which bet-

ter replicates leather cricket balls for bowling and batting-hurtle across the tarmac, bumping off kerbs and rolling under parked cars.

Balani, who works in real estate, said he has played street cricket in Dubai since 1995. He runs a team, the D-Boys, with 30 players on the roster. He said for many workers, often with boring or stressful jobs, cricket is an important outlet. "A lot of us are between white and blue-collar workers," Balani said. "So they have to go through a lot of things in the week. They listen to a lot of things from bosses and managers," he added.

"But this is the one place where we vent out. Nobody is there to boss us. We are our own bosses." Amreen Vadsaria, 22, who was raised in New Zealand and is playing with the women's team, says India's Virat Kohli is her favorite player. She cannot name any footballers. "I grew up outside of India, and I never really had an interest in cricket. But I think (playing street cricket) has made me want to follow cricket more," she said. "And because it's such a big thing in my country in India, I think it's brought me closer to my culture."

### 'Family get-together'

The players and their games have an itinerant history, moving from place to place as Dubai's breakneck development turns their makeshift cricket grounds into tower blocks and malls. Meanwhile, the UAE has become a fixture in professional cricket, hosting Pakistan's home games for a decade after a 2009 attack on Sri Lanka's team in Lahore. India's glitzy IPL Twenty20 competition shifted to the UAE for two years during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the oil-rich country also hosted last year's Twenty20 World Cup, along with several Asian Cups.

While the UAE's South Asian population ensures a ready-made fan-base for big tournaments, weekly cricket also acts as a glue for the community, according to Balani. "This is what we have done from the age of five. We started playing and never stopped since then," he said. "It is part and parcel of our life... we became friends in cricket and then our families became friends and then our kids became friends and so on and so forth," Balani added. "So this is not only cricket, this is also like a family get-together for us," he said. — AFP

## Indian drums, Argentina fans greet Messi

DOHA: Indian drums drowned out Argentina's diehard fans as hundreds waited hours to get a glimpse of a bus carrying Lionel Messi outside his World Cup team base in Qatar. The drummers and Indian beat dancers again showed how Qatar 2022 is going to be a different experience for players and visiting fans. Supporters from the subcontinent had outnumbered England fans when they greeted Harry Kane's side on Tuesday. A crowd of more than 500 that had waited until nearly 4:00 am (0100GMT) to see the arrival of their heroes was split evenly between Argentina's Indian fans and those from the South American country, many of whom have spent thousands of dollars to get to the World Cup.

The team flew in early Thursday from Abu Dhabi, where they beat United Arab Emirates 5-0 in their final World Cup warm-up on Wednesday night with Messi, 35, scoring his 91st international goal. One of the favorites going into this year's World Cup, the South Americans will begin their campaign on Tuesday against Saudi Arabia in Group C, which also includes Mexico and Poland. Members of the Argentina Fans In Qatar club, who claim more than 5,000 members, brought drums decorated with "Leo" Messi's portrait to the team base at Qatar University.

"If this is going to be Leo's last World Cup there can be no better place for it," said Munish Sharma who recalled seeing Messi score the winning goal when Argentina beat Brazil 1-0 in a friendly match in Doha in

2010. Indian fans have already made their mark with thousands taking part in a march and wearing the jerseys from top football nations, including Argentina, Brazil and England. "They do make a lot of noise," said Laura Valero who arrived from Buenos Aires on Tuesday. "If those drums are going to play here every night then the team will never get to sleep," she said.

### 'We wanted to see Leo'

Valero, 24, said she had also borrowed nearly \$8,000 from her parents to make the World Cup trip to Qatar and that was also a concern. "All my friends are here so I could not say no," she declared. The two groups of fans battled to see who could make the most noise. Silvia Perla, a 68-year-old Argentine from Catamarca, had her picture taken with Hakeem Salih and others from among the Indians.

"I tried to teach them what we were singing and they tried to teach me some words," she said. The wait into the night became interminable for some who left before the Argentina bus sped past about 100 meters from where Messi's adoring fans were kept behind a wire fence. "We wanted to see Leo, it's a shame," said Diego Cordovez, whose voice was hoarse from hours of singing. "But he needs rest, that's more important," he added.

Messi, 35, won a Copa America title last year but the Qatar tournament is probably his last chance to equal Argentine great Diego Maradona in leading his country to World Cup glory. The 1978 and 1986 World Cup winners extended their unbeaten run to 36 matches against the UAE. Messi has been cautious about the team's chances in Qatar. "We have a very nice group that is very eager, but we think about going little by little. We know that World Cup groups are not easy," the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner said in an interview with CONMEBOL, the South American football federation. — AFP



DOHA: France's supporters react in front of their team's hotel in Doha, ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup football tournament. — AFP

## Don't politicize sport: Macron

BANGKOK: French President Emmanuel Macron waded into the controversy around Qatar's hosting of the World Cup on Thursday, insisting that it was a bad idea to politicize sport. "I think we must not politicize sport," said Macron, whose national team are defending the title they won in Russia in 2018. The 2022 World Cup, which kicks off on Sunday, has been dogged by controversy.

"These questions must be addressed when hosting the event is decided," Macron told reporters in Bangkok, where he is attending a summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. French football captain Hugo Lloris has said he will not join other European captains in wearing an anti-discrimination armband during the tournament. Lloris said he wanted to "show

respect" to Qatar, where homosexuality is illegal.

Macron, who will go to Qatar if France reach the semi-finals, said it was "a very bad idea to politicise sport", noting that France will host the Olympic Games in 2024. Paris and some other French cities have said they will not show matches from Qatar on big screens as they normally do for major sports events. But Macron rejected calls for a boycott of the tournament, made by former Bleus star Eric Cantona among others.

"I am not for a boycott of the World Cup. These questions should be put earlier, at the point where the (right to host) Games or competitions are awarded," Macron said in a meeting with French students in Bangkok. The president travelled to Russia in 2018 to see Lloris lift France's second World Cup title with a 4-2 win over Croatia in the final. France begin their defense of the World Cup trophy against Australia on Tuesday, before playing Denmark and Tunisia. The Danes have sought to take a stand on Qatar's rights record, proposing to wear pro-human rights training shirts - until the idea was shot down by FIFA. — AFP

## Absent Nigerians confront World Cup 'bad dream'

ABUJA: Nigerians are facing up to the reality of not qualifying for the World Cup, which kicks off Sunday in Qatar, as the African football giants have to watch from the sidelines the countdown to the quadrennial global showpiece. Fans of the Super Eagles - the Nigeria football team's nickname - have brought color, celebration and drama with their drums, trumpets and costumes at six previous World Cups where their team featured.

In March, perennial rivals Ghana eliminated Nigeria in a World Cup play-off on the away goals' rule after the first leg finished 0-0 in Ghana before a 1-1 draw in Abuja. "It's now a reality, a bad dream, that we will not be at the World Cup," said Segun Olayinka, a fan based in Nigeria's commercial capi-

tal of Lagos. "Our best players like Victor Osimhen and Wilfred Ndidi have been doing great at their clubs in Europe, but now they can only watch the World Cup on television, just like me."

Nigeria's German coach Gernot Rohr was sacked midway through the World Cup qualifiers and the coach said his firing was partly to blame for the team's failure. He said the then-president of Nigeria Football Federation, Amaju Pinnick, had claimed his dismissal was to avert disaster. "But in the end he created the disaster that cost Nigeria the ticket to the World Cup," Rohr said. "I regret that I did not take my team to win the World Cup, I regret my players will not be at the World Cup even though they deserve to be there."

The closest the Super Eagles will come to be associated with the World Cup will be Thursday in Lisbon, where they take on Portugal in a final warm-up game for the home team before they fly out to Qatar. "We're a big football nation and the players are all disappointed they will not be going to the World Cup," said team spokesman Baba Femi Raji. — AFP



DOHA: Argentina's players arrive at the Hamad International Airport in Doha on November 17, 2022, ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup football tournament. — AFP



## Sports

# Celtics notch eighth straight NBA win; Suns beat Warriors

## Timberwolves romp to 126-108 victory over injury-depleted Magic

LOS ANGELES: Boston's bench came up big Wednesday to help the Celtics notch an eighth straight NBA victory, 126-101 over the Hawks in Atlanta. Jaylen Brown led the Celtics with 22 points and his fellow All-Star Jayson Tatum added 19, but Brown said it was the 44 points from the Boston reserves that ultimately made the difference. "We got some big plays, some great energy from guys coming off the bench," Brown said. "We've got a really good team from top to bottom."

The Celtics took their league-leading record to 12-3 while the team that beat them to the title in last season's Finals, the Golden State Warriors, fell to 6-9 with a 130-119 loss to the Suns in Phoenix. Golden State star Stephen Curry poured in 50 points, but with little offensive aid for Curry and lackluster defense the Warriors fell to 0-8 on the road - their worst road start since they went 0-9 in 1989.

"There's no collective grit, we lack grit right now," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "And when you don't have grit the game is really easy for the other team." Cameron Payne, standing in again for injured All-Star point guard Chris Paul, led the Suns with a career-high 29 points, Devin Booker added 27 and Mikal Bridges chipped in 23. Curry did what he could to set an early tone, scoring 31 points in the first half. But Golden State trailed 72-65 at the break, and the Suns opened the third quarter on a 6-0 scoring run to push their lead to 13 points.

Phoenix, who made 21 three-pointers and shot 51.2% from the field, led by 14 going into the final period on the way to their second win over the Warriors this season. In Atlanta, the Celtics drained 21 three-pointers and held the Hawks to 41.6% shooting from the floor. Sam Hauser and

Luke Kornet scored 15 points apiece off the bench for Boston and Payton Pritchard added 14, Brown saying the reserves' effort made up for the injury absences of Marcus Smart and Malcolm Brogdon.

Milwaukee's reserves made a key contribution, too, as the Bucks handed the Cleveland Cavaliers a fifth straight defeat, 113-98. Bucks star Brook Lopez connected on seven of nine three-pointers on the way to 29 points. Superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 16 points with 12 rebounds and eight assists while Jordan Nwora scored a season-high 21 off the bench as the Bucks reserves out-scored Cleveland's bench 45-20.

### 'SGA' rolls for Thunder

Oklahoma City guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander grabbed the game-winning three-pointer in the Thunder's 121-120 come-from-behind victory over the Wizards in Washington. The Thunder trailed by 17 in the first quarter and were down by 13 at the half, but clawed their way back in a game that featured 15 lead changes. Bradley Beal put the Wizards up 120-118 with a fadeaway jumper with 6.7 seconds remaining. But Gilgeous-Alexander had the answer with a step-back trey with 1.9 seconds on the clock.

The Wizards had one more possession, but an inbound pass lofted across the court toward Beal was sent out of bounds by Lu Dort as time expired. Gilgeous-Alexander matched his career-high with 42 points - 30 of them in the second half. He added six rebounds and seven assists for his third straight game of at least 35 points and five assists. "Feels good," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "Last week or so,



ATLANTA: Blake Griffin #91 of the Boston Celtics battles for a rebound against Onyeka Okongwu #17 and John Collins #20 of the Atlanta Hawks during the first half at State Farm Arena on November 16, 2022. —AFP

same situation, we didn't close the game out the way we wanted to. We've learned from it, and we got better. That's our goal every day."

The Minnesota Timberwolves romped to a 126-108 victory over the injury-depleted Magic in Orlando while the Houston Rockets sprung a sur-

prise in Dallas with a 101-92 victory over the Mavericks. Jalen Green and Kevin Porter scored 17 points each to lead seven Rockets players in double figures. But Houston's most astonishing statistic was 19 blocked shots - including five from center Alperen Sengun. — AFP



## Three Kuwaitis win 6 medals in equestrian event

CAIRO: Abdullah Al-Ali, Abdulaziz Al-Nasrallah and Nawaf Al-Qassar won six medals, three gold and three silver medals, for Kuwait in the equestrian event at the Special Olympics held in Egypt on Wednesday. Al-Ali clinched two gold medals, with his fellow riders Al-Nasrallah taking home a gold and a silver and Al-Qassar took two silver medals. Huda Al-Khaldi, Kuwaiti equestrian delegation and Al-Tamouh Sports Club for intellectual disabilities head, expressed her delight at the achievements, mentioning that the tournament was the first on the

international stage for the young riders.

The riders had undergone an intensive 12-day training camp in Egypt under the Egyptian Special Olympics Equestrian technical director, Brig Gen Ahmed Mustafa, and Kuwait national team coach, Mohammad Mudayaf. The Kuwait team director said she was satisfied with the results of this participation, saying that the team consisted of a total seven people, including the three riders, their coach and three administrators.

For his part, Brig Gen Mustafa, said the riders received technical and psychological training during their time at the camp. Equestrianism is a "way of life," he said, and "adds positivity to people in various aspects, psychologically and otherwise, especially for people with determination, because it strengthens memory and balance, develops skill, and remains close to people in all stages of their lives." — KUNA

## Verlander, Alcantara win Cy Young Awards

LOS ANGELES: Houston Astros pitcher Justin Verlander won a third Cy Young Award on Wednesday, adding further gloss to a championship season in the wake of career-threatening elbow surgery. "I've just really tried to enjoy this ride and just be very present and appreciate every moment, because it was almost taken away from me," Verlander, 39, said on the MLB Network broadcast announcing the awards. Verlander won the award for the top pitcher in the American League with all 30 first-place votes in balloting of the Baseball Writers' Association of America conducted at the end of the regular season.

The National League Cy Young went to the Miami Marlins' Sandy Alcantara, from the

Dominican Republic, who also received all 30 first-place votes. It's the first time since 1968 that the winners of both the AL and NL Cy Young Awards were unanimous selections. Verlander won Cy Young Awards in 2011 with the Detroit Tigers and in 2019 with the Astros. But he was an unknown quantity coming into 2022 after pitching just six innings since that 2019 triumph.

He missed all of 2021 after undergoing Tommy John elbow ligament surgery, and became the first pitcher to win the Cy Young having pitched zero innings the previous year. Verlander told MLB Network that a "positive mindset" was the key to his triumphant return. "In talking to all the doctors who were out there, the return to previous form (after surgery) - there was an 89% chance of that," he said. "My previous form was 2019 - I won the Cy Young that year," said Verlander, who added that his ability to recover from a different surgery in 2014 boosted his confidence. — AFP

## Boosted by Australian visa, Djokovic 'flawless' against Rublev

TURIN: Novak Djokovic confirmed Wednesday he has received a visa to travel to Melbourne to play in the 2023 Australian Open after missing this year's tournament when he was deported over his vaccine status. "I was very happy to receive the news yesterday. It was a relief," the Serbian said after beating Andrey Rublev in the ATP Finals in Turin.

"It was a relief obviously knowing what I and people closest to me in my life have been through this year with what happened in Australia and post-Australia obviously. I could not receive better news for sure, during this tournament as well." On



ADELAIDE: England's Dawid Malan plays a shot during the first one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Australia and England on November 17, 2022. —AFP

four overs before Malan strode to the crease. When he departed, they were 259-8 with the next highest score Jos Buttler's 29. The England captain, who four days ago lifted the Twenty20 World Cup trophy at the MCG, said he wasn't concerned at the result.

"It's all about the character we showed," he said. "We wanted to play with intent. David Malan played a fantastic innings and to get to that score from the position we were in was brilliant." Malan's 134, his second ODI century after the 125 he scored against the Netherlands in June, came off 128 deliveries, including 12 fours and four sixes. Cummins, playing his first match as captain following Aaron Finch's retirement, would have been delighted by Australia's start to the innings. — AFP

Tuesday, Australian media reported that the government had decided to grant the unvaccinated Serbian a visa, overturning a three-year ban after his ejection from the country. This year's championship was overshadowed by nine-time Australian Open champion Djokovic being put on a plane on the eve of the contest after a high-stakes legal battle over his visa status.

"Australian Open has been my most successful Grand Slam," said Djokovic. "I made some of the best memories there." Djokovic was speaking after securing a spot in the last four of the season-ending Finals with a 6-4, 6-1 win over Rublev, his second straight sets victory in as many matches. He said the news from Australia had been a boost. "Did it affect my game today? I would like to believe it did," he said. "Knowing that I have clarity now, what I do in the off-season, starting the season in Australia, also of course did relieve some of the pressure." — AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

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

## Clinics

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

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

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, Faruk holder of Indian passport No. N9719524 do hereby change my name to Mubarak for all purpose, I will henceforth be known in the name Mubarak and I, also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2445) —17-11-2022

I, VIJAYA RAJAN holder of Indian Passport No. S9727165 having a permanent address No:9, SUNDAR AVENUE, KAMARAJAPURAM SELAIYUR, TAMILNADU 600 073, INDIA residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given name: VIJAYARAJAN and Surname: NARAYANASWAMY. (C#2443) —16-11-2022

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## Travel-weary Saudi superfan awaits World Cup at 'home'

240 weekly flights linking the Kingdom to Qatar



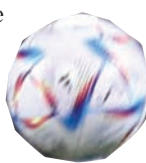
JEDDAH: Saudi national football team fan and the head of the fan association for the prestigious Jeddah-based Saudi club Al-Ahly, Bader Turkistani, poses for a picture in the Saudi Red Sea city of Jeddah. — AFP

JEDDAH: For the past two decades, Bader Turkistani has criss-crossed the globe to cheer on the Saudi national football team, leading crowds in poetic chants that have made him a social media star. This year's World Cup in neighboring Qatar, by contrast, has the feel of a home game: Doha is a mere two-hour flight from his base in Jeddah, on the Red Sea coast. The close proximity has Turkistani dreaming of a ferocious turnout by football-mad Saudis, the kind of support he says could help the Green Falcons break out of the group stage for the first time in nearly three decades.

"The Saudi national team is considered to be playing on its land, playing among its fans. Having the World Cup in Qatar is like having it in Saudi Arabia," the 37-

year-old engineer told AFP. "A simple border separates us... We will be present in very large numbers and fill the stadiums with 50,000 to 60,000 fans." On a recent afternoon, wearing a white-and-green scarf over his traditional white thobe, Turkistani gave a preview of some of the chants he hopes will propel the Green Falcons to glory.

"This is the green of Saudi," he sang into an electronic megaphone, as a friend pounded a drum made of animal hide. "Oh Saudi, we have come." The stands of the Jeddah stadium behind him were empty, but he is certain the scene will be completely different once play gets underway. "50,000 fans



will repeat this chant behind me in Qatar, instead of only 5,000 fans in Russia," he said. "This enthusiasm is transmitted to the players... We hope that we, as fans, will bring out the players' best energy."

### High hopes

In total, Turkistani estimates he has watched more than 100 international matches played by the Green Falcons over the years, most of them documented in a bulging photo album he eagerly shows off to visitors. He also leads the fan association for the prestigious Jeddah-based Saudi club Al-Ahly. Beyond its high cost, the hobby can be trying in other ways: while on the road, Turkistani has struggled with language barriers, fiercely cold weather and unfamiliar for-

eign food. "In Qatar, all these things will be very convenient for us," he said.

Saudi officials are putting on 240 weekly flights linking the kingdom to Qatar, up from six normally, and easing overland travel during the tournament, Tourism Minister Ahmed Al Khateeb told AFP last month. At an event last week marking the World Cup trophy's stop in Saudi Arabia, Ibrahim Alkassim, secretary general of the national football association, told AFP that Saudi turnout would be high enough "to exceed half the capacity of the stadium in each match".

Once Saudi fans are on Qatari soil, Turkistani will be ready for them, having stocked up on green-and-white t-shirts, plastic blowhorns, drums and balloons to

distribute. Turkistani sees it as an opportunity to showcase the unique elements of Saudi fan culture—especially the songs—that he considers "a cultural heritage" and that have earned him nearly 280,000 followers on Twitter.

As for the Green Falcons' chances, Turkistani is well aware they face a tough fight in group play against the likes of Argentina, Mexico and Poland. But he is confident the squad will profit from what he describes as home-field advantage, and he expects the other competing Arab countries-host Qatar, Tunisia and Morocco—to benefit as well. "The Saudi and Gulf fans will support the Arab teams," he said. "This makes me expect the Arab teams will surprise everyone and go far at this World Cup." — AFP

## Germany beat Oman in low-key warm-up

MUSCAT: Germany squeezed past Oman 1-0 thanks to a second-half goal from debutant Niclas Füllkrug on Wednesday in their final friendly before the World Cup in Qatar. Werder Bremen forward Füllkrug scored in the 80th minute in Muscat. Youssoufa Moukoko, who will turn 18 on Sunday, was included and the Borussia Dortmund youngster hit the post at the end of first-half stoppage time. Coach Hansi Flick rested regular first-teamers Joshua Kimmich, Jamal Musiala, Serge Gnabry, and Thomas Müller. Four-time champions Germany open their World Cup campaign against Japan on November 23.

### Croatia beat Saudi

In another development a late Andrej Kramaric goal gave 2018 World Cup runners-up Croatia a 1-0 friendly win over Saudi Arabia on Wednesday in their final warm-up game before this year's tournament in Qatar. Hoffenheim forward Kramaric netted with eight minutes left in Riyadh where veteran Real Madrid playmaker Luka Modric appeared as a second-half substitute for Croatia. The Croatians, who lost 4-2 to France in the final four years ago in Russia, begin their latest World Cup bid against Morocco in Al Khor on November 23. They will also play Canada and Belgium in Group F. — AFP



MUSCAT: Germany's defender Nico Schlotterbeck (left) and Oman's midfielder Jameel Al-Yahmadi vie for a header during a friendly football match between Oman and Germany at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex stadium in Muscat on November 16, 2022. — AFP

## Messi, Argentina land in Qatar after 5-0 warm-up win

DOHA: Argentina and superstar Lionel Messi arrived in Qatar for the World Cup early on Thursday, just hours after a 5-0 warm-up victory, while defending champions France have also touched down in Doha. Messi, 35, has a sackful of trophies but the tournament in Qatar is likely to be his final chance to equal the achievement of fellow Argentine great Diego Maradona in leading his country to World Cup glory.

He landed with the Argentina squad in the Qatari capital Doha at 2:30am from Abu Dhabi where they had beaten the United Arab Emirates 5-0 Wednesday in a friendly in which Messi scored. One of the favorites going into this year's World Cup, the South Americans will begin their campaign on Tuesday against Saudi Arabia in Group C, which also includes Mexico and Poland.

The 1978 and 1986 World Cup winners extended their unbeaten run to 36 matches as Messi scored his 91st international goal. Messi was cautious about the team's chances in Qatar, even though they are among the favorites. "We have a very nice group that is very eager, but we think about going little by little. We know that World Cup groups are not easy," the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner said in an interview with CONMEBOL, the South American football federation.

### Champions arrive

France arrived in Doha on Wednesday, seeking to become the first team to retain the World Cup since Brazil in 1962. Ten members of the 2018 title-winning squad are in the squad, including captain Hugo Lloris, Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann. But the defending champions, grouped with Australia, Denmark and Tunisia, are without first-choice midfield



Argentina's Lionel Messi

pair Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante. Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema, who has missed a series of games for Real Madrid this season because of injury, is set for his first World Cup appearance since 2014. The United States return to football's top table after an eight-year absence and Christian Pulisic says this World Cup is an opportunity to change global perceptions of American soccer.

"That's what we're here to do," Pulisic told AFP. "Maybe it hasn't been the top sport or whatever back in the States. "But we want to change the way that the world sees American soccer. That's one of our goals." The build-up to the tournament in Qatar has been dominated by criticisms. Pleas from football's world governing body FIFA for a switch of focus to football have gone unheeded by some countries.

Netherlands coach Louis van Gaal said on Wednesday supporters boycotting the tournament were "right to do that" but hoped his team would do enough to persuade fans at home to follow them from afar. "I hope that we play so fantastic that at the end of the tournament when we play the final they shall look on television and see how good we are." The veteran coach hit out at FIFA earlier this year, calling its decision to award Qatar the World Cup "ridiculous". "I think you have to play in football countries. (They have) more experience with everything," he said on Wednesday. — AFP