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# PM affirms government places resources at citizens' disposal

Envoy: Premier's initiative shows keenness on students' interests in US



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah delivers a televised speech to the 38th annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students - USA Branch (NUKS-USA) on Nov 25, 2022.

KUWAIT/WASHINGTON: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed Friday the country spared no efforts to provide its citizens with all necessary resources. This came in a televised speech the premier delivered to youth participating in the 38th annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students - USA Branch (NUKS-USA).

HH the Prime Minister announced a 50 percent increase in financial allocations to Kuwaitis studying abroad in a manner that embodies the country's belief that Kuwaitis are their country's promising future. Sheikh Ahmad expressed delight at communicating with Kuwaiti students at the confer-

ence, wishing all of them every success.

HH Sheikh Ahmad voiced his support of the students so that they can achieve their desired goals and meet the aspirations of their relatives and the dear homeland. HH the Premier expressed great greetings to the students' parents, who removed obstacles and created an appropriate climate for their children to help them bear responsibilities.

Meanwhile, the initiative by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad on increasing financial allocations of Kuwaitis studying abroad shows keenness of the political leadership on caring for and ensuring stability of Kuwaiti students, said Kuwait's

ambassador to the US. This came in Ambassador Jassem Al-Budaiwi's speech at the NUKS-USA conference held in Los Angeles under the patronage of HH the Prime Minister.

Budaiwi thanked the prime minister for this 50 percent increase, referring to much attention paid by the leadership to male and female students who are "Kuwait's real wealth". Budaiwi expressed great appreciations and greetings to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, wishing them everlasting good health.

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## Kuwait detects cholera case

KUWAIT: The health ministry announced Friday a citizen who had returned recently from a neighboring country which is suffering from a cholera outbreak showed symptoms of cholera infection. In a press statement, the ministry said the infected citizen had been isolated and received treatment at a ministry hospital until his recovery. It added the ministry dealt with those who contacted the case according to the relevant protocols.

The ministry ruled out the possibility of a cholera outbreak in the country, but advised citizens and residents to be cautious and avoid unsafe water and food sources when visiting countries which have reported cholera outbreaks. It encouraged those who show suspected symptoms such as fever and diarrhea within seven days of their arrival from one of the countries where the disease is prevalent to go to the nearest health center to receive the necessary advice and treatment. — KUNA

## Kuwait top investor in Jordan with \$18bn

AMMAN: Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani said on Saturday Kuwait is the top investor in Jordan with an amount of KD 5.5 billion (\$18 billion). During a meeting organized by the Jordanian Businessmen Association under the title 'Development of Jordanian-Kuwaiti economic relations', he hoped that economic cooperation between the two brotherly countries would expand to reach a political cooperation level.

He pointed out that Jordan and Kuwait have signed around 73 joint agreements, most of which

are economic, and they are arranging meetings of the joint committee and the technical committee between Jordan and Kuwait. He praised the investment climate in Jordan and the interest of the political leadership in supporting investors looking for an encouraging climate and a stable investment environment, calling on Jordanian businessmen to take advantage of investment opportunities in Kuwait.

Daihani reviewed the Kuwaiti humanitarian role in supporting Jordanian efforts to absorb the repercussions of the refugee crises in the region, appreciating the role of the Jordanian Businessmen Association in strengthening economic cooperation relations between the two countries and discussing issues of concern to the Kuwaiti and Jordanian private sectors.

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AMMAN: Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani and Head of the Jordanian Businessmen Association Hamdi Al-Tabbaa attend a meeting on Nov 26, 2022. — KUNA

## Khan vows to fight after being shot

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan told tens of thousands of supporters Saturday he would fight with his "last drop of blood" in a first public address since being shot in an assassination attempt earlier this month. The shooting was the latest twist in months of political turmoil that began in April when Khan was ousted by a vote of no confidence in parliament.

Saturday's rally was the climax of a so-called "long march" by Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party to press the government to call a snap election before parliament's term expires in October next year. "I have seen death from up close," said Khan, who hobbled to the stage with a walking frame to speak to supporters from a plush seat behind a panel of bulletproof glass. "I'm more worried about the freedom of Pakistan than my life," he told the crowd. "I will fight for this country until my last drop of blood."

The rally was squeezed onto a motorway in Rawalpindi, a garrison city neighboring the capital Islamabad and home to the headquarters of the country's powerful military.

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RAWALPINDI: Former Prime Minister Imran Khan waves at supporters as he arrives to lead an anti-government rally on Nov 26, 2022. — AFP

## Musk announces gold, gray and blue badges on Twitter

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter's billionaire owner Elon Musk announced Friday that the platform would be launching differently colored badges to distinguish between accounts. "Sorry for the delay, we're tentatively launching Verified on Friday next week," he tweeted. "Gold check for companies, grey check for government, blue for individuals (celebrity or not) and all verified accounts will be manually authenticated before check activates."

In another tweet, Musk said that all verified individual accounts would have the same blue check, but some would eventually be able to display a "secondary tiny logo showing they belong to an org(анизация) if verified as such by that org(анизация)". The Tesla and SpaceX boss' proposal for users to be able to pay to be "verified" and obtain a blue badge on their profiles has caused confusion

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## Qatar grabs political win at World Cup

DOHA: Qatari businessman Youssef Al-Taher gathered 10 friends at his desert oasis to watch the national team's last-gasp bid to stay in the World Cup end in defeat. Senegal's 3-1 win did not matter, he said stoically as the group digested the early exit from a competition Qatar has spent tens of billions of dollars preparing. Qatar was a "winner" just for putting on the 32-nation event which is predicted to bring more than one million fans to the Gulf state, according to the 53-year-old businessman.

"The real victory is to successfully host the World Cup. It is enough to be proud today that the whole world is watching us." Taher invited his friends to his men-only lounge at his farmhouse surrounded by palm trees at Al-Jamiliya, 40 km from Doha. The farm in the desert produces tomatoes, cucumbers and dates.

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AL-JAMILIYA, Qatar: A group of men watch the Qatar 2022 World Cup football tournament match between Qatar and Senegal at Qatari businessman Youssef Al-Taher's home in his farm northwest of Doha on Nov 25, 2022. — AFP



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# KU celebrates 56th anniversary



KUWAIT: File photo shows the inauguration of Kuwait University in November 27, 1966. It is the first research university in Kuwait. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Kuwait University (KU) is celebrating its 56th inauguration anniversary, as it is Kuwait's first public research university, which was established during the reign of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. The issuance of Law No 29 of 1966 regarding the organization of higher education marked the inauguration of Kuwait University with establishing the College of Science, Arts and Education and the College of Girls, having at that time 418 male and female students, and 31 faculty members.

Kuwait University said in a press release on Saturday, that it witnessed an expansion of establishing more colleges, reaching 16 scientific and humanities colleges, with nearly 38,000 students, 1,690 academic staff members and 594 supporting academic staff and language professors. The University emphasized keenness to provide distinguished education and contributing to the development of knowledge, qualifying human resources to achieve development goals, and keeping pace with the modern era through higher education. The establishment and opening of the university campus in Sabah Al-Salem University City project in Al-Shadadiyah contributed to strengthening Kuwait University as a beacon for society, indicated the statement.



جامعة الكويت  
KUWAIT UNIVERSITY



KUWAIT: An archive photo of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah during the inauguration of Kuwait University in 1966.

KU stated that Sabah Al-Salem University City is about 6 million square meters and was designed to accommodate more than 40,000 male and female students. The University City includes three projects supporting the educational process, the first of which is the administrative buildings, the second is the supporting academic buildings, and the third is for students' different activities, providing sports and entertainment services such as sports stadium, tennis dome, centers for sports activities. — KUNA

## Kuwait's MPs join Arab Parliament

CAIRO: Kuwait's National Assembly lawmakers Ahmad Lari and Hamdan Al-Azmi took an oath as new MPs of the Arab Parliament (AP) on Saturday. After taking the oath, the new MP has right to participate in the AP standing committees. Lari joined woman, youth, and

educational and social affairs committee, while Al-Azmi is MP of human rights, and legal and legislative affairs committee. In its plenary session of the third legislative term, the AP discusses developments in Yemen, Libya and Iraq, and rejects Iranian and Turkish interferences in domestic affairs of the Arab countries. The committee also deals with a draft resolution on rejecting the European remarks on interfering in domestic affairs of Kuwait on judicial verdicts. — KUNA



CAIRO: Photo shows the Arab Parliament (AP) during a meeting on Saturday. —KUNA



> Bedoons demand citizenship during a demonstration in Taima in Jahra (2012).

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Local

# Boursa Kuwait renews partnership with Kuwait Red Crescent Society

## The exchange contributes to the 'Basic Education' initiative

KUWAIT: Continuing its obligations towards corporate social responsibility, Boursa Kuwait continued its partnership with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) as a Humanitarian Partner and sponsoring the Society's "Basic Education" initiative, which aims to help underprivileged children gain an education and reduce the burden on their families by paying tuition fees and expenses. Since its inception in 2015, the initiative has supported over 18,000 students as of 2021, including paying all education expenses for orphans.

The KRCS is a voluntary organization that offers aid and assistance to the most vulnerable cases, whether as a result of a social situation, the outbreak of war, or a natural disaster. The Society is self-independent and operates as the humanitarian support arm of the official authorities in the country.

Commenting on the continuing partnership between the two entities, Dr. Hilal Al-Sayer, Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, said, "We are proud of the continuing partnership with Boursa Kuwait, an indication of a strong bond that has grown over the years. We aim to improve the living conditions of individuals and ensure a better future for them through this initiative, through which Boursa Kuwait can solidify its reputation as an example of giving back to the community."

Al-Sayer added, "Boursa Kuwait is a key sponsor of the Society's corporate social responsibility mandate, contributing to several of our humanitarian initiatives over the years through our long-standing strategic partnership. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for their consistent and constant support and sponsorship of our "Basic Education" initiative."

The Kuwait Red Crescent Society strongly believes in the importance of forming and maintaining partnerships to accomplish its goals and implement projects and initiatives that serve civil society and reinforce its sense of social responsibility.



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer



Naser Meshari Al-Sanousi

ability. The KRCS's initiatives with the private sector are distinguished by their superior management and planning, which help provide quality services to those in need.

Boursa Kuwait's Senior Director of Marketing and Communications, Naser Meshari Al-Sanousi, also spoke about the partnership between the exchange and the Society, saying, "Boursa Kuwait is proud to be a Humanitarian Partner of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, as the exchange constantly seeks to create a lasting impact on community. To that end, I am pleased to announce our continued sponsorship of the "Basic Education" initiative for the second year in a row, to empower future generations financially, socially and in terms of their education."

He added, "Boursa Kuwait believes that education plays an essential role in sustainable development, which has made it a key cog in the company's strategy since its establishment. The company is also committed to supporting the community through a series of initiatives that are in line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the company's strategy for Corporate Sustainability.



On behalf of myself, the Chairman and members of the Board of Directors and the Executive Management at Boursa Kuwait, I would like to thank the Kuwait Red Crescent Society for their role and efforts in the community and their continuous pursuit of humanitarian projects and initiatives in Kuwait and abroad."

This initiative forms part of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to create a lasting meaningful impact on the communities where it operates as part of its Corporate Sustainability strategy and is in line with Goal 4 - Quality Education - and Goal 17 - Partnership for the Goals - of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the National Development Plan for the State of Kuwait, "New Kuwait 2035".

Boursa Kuwait's Corporate Sustainability strategy stipulates ensuring initiatives apply and fall in

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

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

## Kuwait positivity volunteer team members meet

KUWAIT: Members of the Kuwait positivity volunteer team met on Thursday to discuss topics of concern to the society to protect the environment and confront problems resulting from climate change and desertification, and attempts to remedy them. The team discussed means to greenify residential neighborhoods and agreed with the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources to adopt means to strengthen relations with governorates and have a practical method to follow projects that must be implemented in Kuwait. An initiative was made by the director of landscaping at PAAAFR Ghanem Al-Sanad to support and help fulfill several programs and offer services that elevate the society in all aspects. He said the biggest obstacle is a lack of budget to combat desertification.



## Minister receives UAE military delegation

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Communications and Information Technology Affairs Mazen Saad Al-Nahedh received a military delegation from the National Defense College in the UAE. Several economists and those working in the IT field in UAE came along with the delegation to have a look at Kuwait's experience in this field. Several economic, commercial and technological matters of mutual interest were discussed. Nahedh said the current ministry's goal is to improve the business and work environment and guarantee availability to basic products and monitor their prices, as well as paying attention to industries, particularly those concerned with food, water and medicine security.



## In Kuwait's desert 'kashta', aroma, night breeze awaken senses

KUWAIT: Cracking of burning wood with billowing sparks, coffee aroma wafting from the fire place, echoes of wild animals' howling from afar, moon light sparkling onto scattered rain droplets and hissing breeze all form picture of the Kuwaiti "kashta" in the desert. Now is the high season for "kashta," an escape from the city hustle and bustle, stressful daily chorus and benzene puffing from vehicles' exhaust pipes.

The citizens, including whole families and youth groups, build their tents far from residential districts to enjoy clean desert air, serenity of the place and sounds of the nature. Much of the soothing comes from the raging fire that creates lights and shadows on the tent. "Shila hab Al-barad w zanet Al-nafsiah," sang the young camper Anwar Salmeen as he pitched the tent, expressing his soothed state of mind amid the place serenity, his companions chanted after him some verses of the poet Abdulaziz bin Jarallah Al-Ghezzi, "el jaw rawaa wa almashaer hayya (the sentiments are awakened) wa al-ghaim ghatta al-daيره," describing the pleasurable atmosphere.

The campers made coffee and tea and roasted chestnuts on the blazes while chatting, narrating delightful stories and cracking jokes, prompting intermittent laughter. And Salmeen affirmed, camping is an opportunity to be relieved of daily stressful routine; a chance to fuel the spirit and ease off.



Tents for sale —KUNA photos

He and his companions scour the uninhabited regions throughout Kuwait to find the proper place for the retreat. Dusting the rugs, Khaled Al-Dosari, chattered, "we choose the best kind of coal and the best type is the Somali - that is available in Al-Shuwaikh at reasonable prices."

Abu Saad Al-Dhafiri, an old Kuwaiti, yearned for the old time camping, where campers used to have meagre items, as compared to nowadays, where many campers choose to bring in too many items for luxury including power generators and refrigerators. He also recalled that in the old time particularly this time of the year, Kuwait used to witness biting cold. At the tent market in Al-Rai, dealers affirmed that the business is now thriving, noting that the current high prices are the result of soaring demand at the peak of the camping season.

Additionally, the seller Fahad Al-Sawagh pointed out that the unprecedented turnout at the mar-



Cooperative society displays coffee pots.

ket was the result of the camping suspension that had lasted for two years due to the coronavirus. Preparations for the camping began two months ago, when companies started making the tents, fabrics of which are imported mainly from Pakistan and Iran. Farid Khan, a merchant, said that the market displays newly made tents that are easy to erect. Price of a piece may fetch as high as KD 260. "Al-Shadadiya tent," is the most favored one because it is quite suitable for Kuwait weather, he added.

Furthermore, the business boom is also attributed to the social media rapid communication and promotion, said Sharif Shamseddine, manager of a tents company. Some customers check the tents on Instagram to choose color and shape of the piece to be bought. Shahin Ghareeb, a citizen, said that he favors the used and old tents because they are sturdier than the new ones. Umm Abdullah Al-Enezi



## Driver killed as car flips

KUWAIT: A driver was killed when his car flipped over on Artal Road. Wafra firemen responded and freed the body and handed it to concerned authorities. In another development, seven persons were injured, two critically, during a car collision on Jahra Road. Soor fire station responded and handed the injured to paramedics. Also, Tahreer firemen rescued a Gulf national whose car was stuck in a tunnel full of water off Sixth Ring Road near Sulaibiya. No injuries were reported.

### Ceiling collapses

Kuwait Fire Force said a ceiling collapsed while concrete was being poured in Omariya, injuring four workers. Farwaniya fire station and search and rescue centers responded and rescued an Arab worker trapped under the rubble with extensive injuries. The other workers, who are Asian, sustained minor injuries. All were handed to paramedics.



Rugs and camping utensils are displayed at a popular market.

noted that the old ones are much cheaper than the new tents. At "Al-Safafir" market, in Sharq, the place is noisy with workers hammering on copper and iron pots and items.

Taha Iqbal, a storekeeper, said the market is attracting a large number of customers to buy braziers, pots, rods, ropes and various metallic and wooden utensils necessary for camping. The dealers are selling at competitive prices, said the citizen Ali Al-Wtayan, who opted to buy a portable gas pit, and his peer, Abdulrahman Al-Mudhi, had his eyes on portable chairs and tables, blankets and mattresses. For his part, Usama Al-Majed, a manager of a cooperative store, affirmed that the camping utensils are available at good prices at the families' items sections of the cooperative stores throughout the country. — KUNA



## News in brief

## GCC condemns campaigns

**RIYADH:** The Gulf Cooperation Council condemns and rejects all 'systematic and malicious' media campaigns directed against its member countries, and attempts to undermine their successes and contributions at regional and global forums and events, the six-nation bloc said. The bloc underlined the "need for a collective response to such campaigns that highlights their positive contributions in all fields," its information ministers said in a statement. GCC media outlets "stand united in facing platforms that disregard religious and moral values, with an emphasis on the preservation of the family, its cohesion and development, as the natural and fundamental unit of society, its progress and prosperity."

## Kuwait crude oil rises

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait crude oil rose \$3.27 in Friday's trading to reach \$84.84 per barrel compared with \$81.57 pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said on Saturday. Brent futures lost \$0.71 settling at \$83.63 pb and the West Texas Intermediate crude fell by \$1.66 to \$76.28 pb.

## Commitment to OPEC+

**RIYADH:** Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdul Aziz Bin Salman and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister and Oil Minister Hayyan Al-Sawad stressed the importance of working collectively within the framework of the (OPEC+) agreement and the commitment of their countries to the group's last decision, which extends to the end of 2023. In a joint statement issued on Friday morning, the two ministers pointed out to the possibility of taking other actions that will guarantee achieving balance and stability in global markets. Both sides discussed issues of mutual concerns in the field of energy, and agreed on completing the important joint projects in gas, petrochemicals, electricity, renewable energy, and strengthening connection for more search, and opportunities. They appreciated the progress made in the electrical interconnection project between the two countries, stressing the importance of speeding up the implementation of the project and increasing the capacity of the interconnection line in the future.

## Kuwait Book Fair remains attractive despite digital information dominance

'Reading books carries special pleasure'



**KUWAIT:** A Kuwaiti photographer, Ali Al-Arbash, was creative in displaying beautiful pictures of the Italian streets taken by his phone lens, to be attached to his exhibition participation in the 45th international Kuwait Book Fair. The pictures show the beauty of the Italian building, its designs and the most prominent landmarks, as Italy is the guest of honor to the exhibition. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Book Fair has attracted a large number of people following a two-year hiatus, manifesting unwavering interest in seeking knowledge from paper pages in spite of the largely dominating digital information means. The restored annual event, a festival for the booklovers (also called bookworms), has been largely facilitated by the unprecedented initiative by Minister of Information Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi who relieved the participating publishing houses of fees' burden.

At the fairground in Mishref, on the southern outskirts of Kuwait City, the parking lots have been teeming with vehicles, and the inner divided halls have been crowded with visitors, inquiring or buying books to satisfy their thirst for reading from paper pages, the conventional way of reading that had been widespread for thousands of years in mankind's history.

Although the digital media has spread widely with a torrent of information, publications and cultural products, the "book has retained its special delight for the booklovers and the (Kuwait) fair has



Saadia Mefreh



Amal Al-Abdullah

maintained its effective role in this respect, amid the presence of a large number of publishing houses," said Dr Mohammad Al-Faili, the renowned Kuwaiti legal expert in remarks to KUNA.

Dr Al-Faili has indicated that like many people nowadays he has been seeking information via the digital means. "However, reading books carries special pleasure and after all, this kind of a festival is

not merely an exhibition," said Dr Al-Faili, interviewed by KUNA at the fairground. Saadia Mefreh, a writer and media consultant, told KUNA she was deeply delighted that the advance censorship was lifted, for the first time.

She also thanked Minister Al-Mutairi, also the Minister of Culture and the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, for relieving the participating publishing houses of paying rents after undergoing difficult times during peak of the coronavirus. The Kuwaiti Book Fair was the first to be organized in the Gulf region and the third in the Arab world, she said. "It is a foundation of the Kuwait culture," Mefreh added. The turnout has been quite high and this is delightful and signals people's thirst for the book, said the composer Abdullah Al-Otaibi. Amal Al-Abdullah, a renowned media personality, shared her peers the joy for resuming the holding of the fair, thanking the minister for his step. The fair's 45th edition began on November 16 with participation of publishers from 29 Arab and foreign countries. It will close on November 26th. — KUNA

## British-Kuwait Friendship Society announces winners

**LONDON:** The British-Kuwait Friendship Society and the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Foundation on Friday held a prize giving ceremony in London for winners of the 24th edition of the contest of the best scholarly work on the Middle East in the English language. The winners of this edition are the Last Great War of Antiquity by James Howard-Johnston (Oxford University Press) and Shari'a Inshallah: Finding God in Somali Legal Politics by Mark Fathi Massoud (Cambridge

University Press), announced Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak in a speech on behalf of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Foundation at the ceremony.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to extend a special thank you to everyone who took the time to submit for this year's book prize, and special gratitude to our panel of judges for their time to assess all the submissions by undergoing a rigorous selection process," Sheikh Mubarak said. He pointed out that the British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize was founded in 1998 under the endowment of his late father Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Foundation.

The book prize was affiliated with the University of Cambridge and the patrons of the prize were His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Her

Excellency Sheikhha Dr Sheikhha Suad Al-Sabah. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak also announced the renewal of the memorandum of understanding for additional three years of the joint scholarship program between Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Foundation and the Mansion House Scholarship Scheme.

He noted that the joint scholarship started in 2019 designed to provide funding for two students each year from the Arab world wishing to study for a one-year Master's degree at an accredited university in the UK or to take a post-graduate course of similar status at a recognized training establishment in the United Kingdom. "We trust this joint scholarship would, in a small way, further promote and cement the close links between the UK and Kuwait, the UK and the Arab world," he affirmed. — KUNA

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## Kuwait Motorsports City hosts exhibition

**KUWAIT:** In an enthusiastic atmosphere for car and racing lovers, Kuwait Motorsports City (KMT) hosted on Friday the Roll Race, organized by SWORD CHAMPIONS. On the fringes of the race, a show is displaying vintage and sports cars. KMT also hosted Kuwait Outdoor Sports exhibition being held between November 23 and 26. — KUNA







Cyberattacks, hackers hit Iran's Fars news agency

## The 'total war' against Al-Shabaab in Somalia



KHERSON: A fisherman sails his boat on the Dnipro River as black smoke rises after an attack on an oil reserve in Kherson amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

# Ukraine battles to restore power as shelling kills 15

## Spurring fears of health crisis and further exodus

KYIV: Russian shelling of the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson killed 15 civilians, officials said, as engineers across the country sought to restore heat, water and power to major cities. Throughout the country, Russian air strikes in recent weeks have brought Ukraine's energy infrastructure to its knees as winter approaches and temperatures near freezing, spurring fears of a health crisis and a further exodus.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said more than six million households in the country were still affected by power cuts, two days after targeted Russian strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. The country's national energy company, Ukrenergo, said late Friday that the grid was still facing a 30 percent deficit, with its technicians working "around the clock" to restore power. But it said it expected to increase coverage over the weekend, boosted by additional nuclear power.

The attack on Kherson, a key southeastern city recently recaptured by Ukrainian forces, marked the deadliest Russian bombardment in recent days. A total of "15 residents were killed and 35 injured, including one child, as a result of enemy shelling", city official Galyna Lugova said. Several "private houses and high-rise buildings" had been damaged, she added. "The Russian invaders opened fire on a residential area with

multiple rocket launchers. A large building caught fire," said Yaroslav Yanushovich, head of the Kherson military administration.

Earlier Friday, the region's governor said patients in the city hospital and others from a psychiatric unit had been evacuated because of "constant Russian shelling". The Kherson city council said it was offering to evacuate civilians to other regions. The attacks on power stations and other infrastructure resources throughout Ukraine are Russia's latest attempt to force Ukrainian capitulation after Moscow's forces failed to topple the government and capture Kyiv in the war's early stages.

### Critical infrastructure

In the capital, where about half of residents were still without power two days after Russian strikes hammered the country's energy grid, engineers worked to restore services. "We have to endure this winter, a winter that everyone will remember," Zelensky said on social media, as UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly visited to announce a new aid package. Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmygal told a government meeting, "Almost all Ukraine's critical infrastructure has been reconnected."

Critical infrastructure includes water utilities, heat generation plants, hospitals and emergency services.

But Shmygal said ordinary consumers continued to face scheduled power cuts across every region of the country. Ukraine's Western allies have denounced the Russian attacks on energy infrastructure as a "war crime". The strikes have come in the wake of a string of military setbacks for Russia on the frontlines. Moscow insists it is targeting only military-linked infrastructure and has blamed Kyiv for the blackouts, saying Ukraine can end the suffering by agreeing to Russian demands.

### Putin meets mothers

Meanwhile, for the first time since he launched the war in February, Russian President Vladimir Putin met the mothers of soldiers fighting in Ukraine, assuring those whose children had been killed that he and Russia's elite "share this pain". "I want you to know I, personally, and the entire leadership of the country share this pain," he told them.

He said that many reports about the conflict could not be trusted, describing them as "fake news, deceit and lies". Russia has introduced legislation that effectively bans public criticism of the war. Kremlin critics accuse authorities of concealing the real number of dead and wounded Russian troops. Anger and concern have built across Russia since the Kremlin announced in

September that hundreds of thousands of well-trained and well-equipped conscripts would be sent to the battlefield to bolster Moscow's struggling campaign.

But chaos ensued, with widespread reports of exempted men-including the elderly and infirm-being dispatched to the front and conscripts dying after receiving nearly no training, forcing the Kremlin to concede "mistakes". Putin's meeting with the soldiers' mothers is a sign the Kremlin takes the growing malaise seriously. Visiting Kyiv on Friday, Britain's foreign minister announced new aid for Ukraine, including ambulances and support for victims of sexual violence by Russian soldiers. "Russia is continuing to try and break Ukrainian resolve through its brutal attacks on civilians, hospitals and energy infrastructure," Cleverly said. "Russia will fail," he said, vowing UK support "will continue for as long as it takes". Meanwhile, the head of Russian mercenary outfit Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, said Friday that a former US Marine general and several British and Finnish fighters were operating with the group in Ukraine. "(Finns) are fighting in a British battalion (as part of Wagner PMC), which is commanded by a US citizen, a former general of the Marine Corps," Prigozhin's press service said he told Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat.—AFP



NOVO-OGARYOVO: Russian President Vladimir Putin participates in a meeting with mothers of Russia's servicemen participating in the military operation in Ukraine, ahead of Mother's Day.— AFP

## Putin tells Russian mothers he shares 'pain' of deaths

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday told a group of mothers whose sons are fighting in Ukraine that he shares the pain of those who have lost loved ones in the conflict. The carefully choreographed meeting at Putin's residence took place as anger simmers in Russia over a chaotic military draft and deaths of soldiers in Ukraine. At least one woman at the meeting wore a black headscarf, apparently marking a recent loss. "I want you to know - I personally and the entire leadership of the country share this pain," Putin told the group ahead of Mother's Day, which is celebrated in Russia on Sunday. "We understand that nothing can replace the loss of a son, a child," Putin said. He offered condolences to one of the women saying her son did not die "in vain" and reiterated his pledge to fulfill Moscow's goals in Ukraine.

Russian authorities have introduced legislation that effectively bans any public criticism of the offensive. Kremlin critics accuse authorities of concealing the real number of dead and wounded Russian troops. Putin told the 17 women that Moscow was fighting the "neo-Nazi regime" in Ukraine and warned that they should be wary of what they read on the internet. "It is clear that life is more complex than what is shown on

our TV screens or even on the internet, nothing can be trusted there," he said.

### 'Answer our questions'

He also denounced what he called attempts by "the enemy" to "devalue (and) compromise" Moscow's tactics in Ukraine. Anger and concern have built across Russia since September, when the Kremlin announced that hundreds of thousands of well-trained and well-equipped men would be conscripted and sent to the battlefield to bolster Moscow's struggling campaign in Ukraine.

But chaos ensued, with widespread reports of exempted men - the elderly or infirm - being dispatched to the front or conscripts dying after receiving nearly no training, forcing the Kremlin to concede "mistakes". The meeting - the first of its kind since Putin launched the offensive on February 24 - is a sign that the Kremlin takes the growing malaise seriously.

Ahead of Putin's meeting, some activists said the get-together would not offer a platform for frank discussion. "The president will meet with some mothers pulled out of his pocket, who will ask the right questions and thank him," said Olga Tsukanova, an activist mother. "I'm not alone. Invite us, Vladimir Vladimirovich, answer our questions!" she told AFP ahead of the meeting. Tsukanova was not invited to meet Putin.

National television broadcast some critical comments from mothers who attended the meeting, however. One woman, whose husband and two sons went to fight in Ukraine, said there were not enough camouflage robes. "The uniform becomes unusable very quickly, the trenches are muddy and damp," she added in televised remarks.—AFP

## 3 die in twin school shootings in Brazil

BRASILIA: At least three people including an adolescent girl were killed and 11 others wounded Friday when a 16-year-old shooter wearing Nazi symbols opened fire on two schools in southeastern Brazil, officials said. Authorities in the city of Aracruz, in Espirito Santo state, said the shooter fired on a group of teachers at his former school, killing two people and leaving nine others wounded. He then left that school—a public primary and secondary school—and went to a nearby private school where he killed an adolescent girl and wounded two other people, officials said.

Authorities have arrested the shooter, said Governor Renato Casagrande, who declared three days of mourning in the state. "He was a student at (the first) school until June, a 16-year-old minor. His family then transferred him to another school. We have information he was undergoing psychiatric treatment," Casagrande told a news conference.

He said some of the survivors' lives remained at risk from their wounds. "We are rooting and praying for them to recover," he said. Security camera footage aired on Brazilian media showed the shooter running into the school dressed in military-style camouflage and brandishing a gun. He then sprinted through the hallways, sending staff fleeing in terror as he began firing shots.

Investigators said he had a swastika on his fatigues and that they were looking into whether he had links to any extremist organizations. Officials said the shooter, a policeman's son, used two handguns in the attack, both registered to his father—one his service firearm, the other a privately registered weapon. Casagrande said the boy appeared to have planned the attack carefully, breaking in through a locked door and skirting the school's security guard.

He then entered the teachers' lounge—the first room he came to—and opened fire, the governor said. "He was looking to shoot people. He opened fire on the first people he came across," he said. Civil police commissioner Joao Francisco Filho told reporters it appeared the suspect had been planning the attack for "two years," and that he did not seem to have a "definite target." Investigators could be seen carrying victims' bodies in coffins and loading them into police trucks outside the school, which was cordoned off with crime scene tape, an AFP photographer said. The city has a population of around 100,000 people.—AFP



This undated image shows confiscated cash, part of items seized in a global effort to crack down on the buying and selling of illegal and potentially lethal drugs on darknet marketplaces.— AFP

## Police bust 'high-risk' crime gang in Europe

THE HAGUE: Police investigating drugs trafficking and money laundering have arrested 44 suspects in 10 countries they think are part of one of Europe's most dangerous crime networks, Europol announced Friday. The raids, across several European countries Tuesday, targeted a crime organization operating in the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the Slovak Republic, said the statement.

"The arrested individuals were suspected of belonging to a high-risk criminal network considered one of the most dangerous in the European Union," Europol added. Police arrested suspects in the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Spain and the United States, said Europol and Eurojust, which coordinates such international operations. "The scale of drugs trafficking alone attributed to this criminal network is massive, with activities reported across three continents," said the joint statement.

Police seized large of drugs including cocaine, hashish, cannabis and methamphetamines and investigators think the crime group had links to drug traffickers outside Europe, it added. "Highly flexible, these criminals would quickly adapt to new drugs trafficking methods to try to evade law enforcement," said the statement. "Drug shipments have been found in vessels and trucks amongst others, often concealed in sophisticated hidden compartments."—AFP



## International

# Cyberattacks, hackers hit Iran's Fars news agency

## More security for UK-based Iran International after threats

TEHRAN: Hackers have disrupted the work of Iran's Fars news agency, one of the main sources of news disseminated by the state during protests over Mahsa Amini's death, the agency said. Iran has been rocked by protests since Amini's death in custody on September 16, after her arrest for an alleged breach of the country's dress code for women. Fars said its website had been disrupted late Friday by a "complex hacking and cyberattack operation".

"Removing possible bugs... may cause problems for some agency services for a few days," it said in a statement posted Saturday on its Telegram channel. "Cyberattacks against Fars news agency are carried out almost daily from different countries, including the occupied territories (Israel)," it added, without elaborating. On October 21, a group called Black Reward said it had obtained documents related to Iran's nuclear program, and demanded the release of all political prisoners and people arrested during the protests.

After its 24-hour ultimatum expired, material on social media said to be released by the group included a short clip from a purported nuclear site in Iran, as well as documents. On November 23, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran acknowledged that one of its subsidiaries had been targeted by "a specific foreign country", while downplaying the importance of the documents in question. Iran on the one side and Israel and the United States on the other have regularly accused each other of cyberattacks.

### More security

The Iran International TV channel said that further security measures have been put in place around its London offices after threats from the regime in Tehran. Concrete barriers have been erected similar to those at key government buildings and tourist spots in the British capital, to prevent vehicle attacks. The barriers were "guaranteed to stop a 7.5 ton truck at 50 miles per hour", a spokesman for the Persian-language channel said. Vehicle access in and around the site would also be controlled and checks carried out, he added.

The threats were an escalation of years of intimidation because of its broadcasting of protests in Iran, the spokesman told AFP. "We're the only channel running 24/7 coverage of the protests," he said. But he added: "We're not the voice of the protests. We're the only means that people in Iran can see them." The spokesman, who asked not to be identified, stressed that Iran International was not an opposition channel and its staff were not activists. "We were set up as a service for people in Iran and the diaspora," he said.

Last week, London's Metropolitan Police confirmed that armed police vehicles had been deployed outside the TV studios. That followed "severe and credible" death threats against two of its UK-based journalists from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. The UK government promptly hauled in Iran's highest-ranking diplomat to the country for a dressing-down. MI5, the UK



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, shows a crowd of Basij volunteers loyal to the Islamic republic, saluting as they listen to a speech by the supreme leader on November 26, 2022. — AFP

domestic intelligence agency, has uncovered at least 10 plots by Iran to kill UK-based individuals deemed to be "enemies of the regime" so far this year, its boss said last week.

The channel employs about 100 staff in London, whose coverage of the protests largely involves sifting through and verifying social media content of

the demonstrations. Iranian staff were "more anxious" than panicked about the threats and more worried about the safety of their families back home, as well as the wider impact of the protests, said the spokesman for the channel. "We all don't know what the hell is going to happen. That's stressful," he said. — AFP

## Gunmen kill 15 in northern Nigeria

KANO: Gunmen have killed 15 people in multiple attacks in northwest Nigeria's Kaduna state, the latest violence in the volatile region, a government official said. Northwest and central Nigeria have been terrorized by criminal gangs known locally as bandits who raid villages, stealing cattle, kidnapping for ransom and burning homes after looting supplies. They launched separate attacks on four villages across three districts, killing 15 people and injuring several others, Samuel Aruwan, Kaduna state internal affairs commissioner said in a statement.

The gunmen raided Rafin Sarki village in Giwa district "with 11 locals confirmed killed" - 10 men and a woman, he added. Cibiya and Karamai villages in Kajuru district were also attacked, leaving two people dead and "several persons were left injured". Aruwan said two more people were killed in Damari village in Birnin Gwari district. "The Government is engaging the security forces on these developments and other fronts," he said.

Kaduna is one of the states worst hit by bandits in northern Nigeria. The conflict is compounded by sometimes deadly clashes between nomadic cattle herders and local farmers over grazing and water rights, which have assumed ethnic and religious dimensions. Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari is under intense pressure to end the violence before he leaves office next year at the end of his eight-year tenure. — AFP

## Village divided: Spat over secret garden splits Montmartre

PARIS: Imagine being a member of Paris' coolest club, housed in a leafy haven tucked away at the top of Montmartre, only to learn that you're about to be kicked out as a richer rival moves in. For 50 years, the walled garden on the ultra-chic Rue Lepic has resonated with the metal clacks of petanque, the French national bowling pastime, defying the gentrification that drew envious eyes. Montmartre in the north of Paris is one of the few elevated areas in the relatively flat French capital and "the butte", as it is known, had for many years a rural feel that captivated artists. Even now, with the area absorbed into the urban sprawl of central Paris, most residents still call it a village.

The garden is maintained by the non-profit organization Lepic-Abbesse Petanque Club (CLAP) and its 257 members, who say nothing less than the neighborhood's soul is at stake as City Hall considers rival commercial projects for the site. "You have job-seekers, pensioner and CEOs, a chef, a teacher. A 16-year-old can play with someone who's 80. Here you find all types, and it's this incredible social fabric that makes us what we are," said Maxime Liogier, the club's communications manager.

The players took over the 765 square meters of playing grounds, a rare remnant of the vegetation that once covered the butte, after the city bought the land from a daughter of a resident painter in 1972. No formal contracts were signed but the city gave its tacit approval, connecting water and electricity for the clubhouse and letting the club reserve entry to members only.

messages, in which he highlighted the importance of their keenness on education and benefiting from their presence in the US, saying it "provides the best educational institutions and possesses the highest capacities for scientific research and studies". He advised Kuwaiti students to write down all new information and knowledge, urging them to cooperate with one another. He also appealed to students to follow American instructions and abide by Kuwait's civilized image. The ambassador further stressed the importance of this conference for embassies and consulates as well as libraries in Washington and Los Angeles. — KUNA

Kuwait is one of the most prominent countries investing in Jordan, in addition to being one of the most important trade partners, which amounted to nearly \$18 billion. He described the Jordanian-Kuwaiti economic relations as deep and rooted in the agreements of trade and investment, preventing double taxation and protecting mutual investments, which have brought the two countries together since 2001. — KUNA

Qatar trailing by a goal, Taher and his friends joined farm workers from his estate to perform afternoon prayers in a mosque adjoining his home. They cheered when Mohammed Muntari headed Qatar's first World Cup goal. Their hearts sank when Senegal made it 3-1. After losing to Ecuador in their opening game, it meant there was no hope of the Asian champions reaching the second round.

Taher's brother Nasir Al-Taher, a diplomat, found the right words. "We are not waiting for a sporting victory, we have already achieved a political, social and economic victory," said the 63-year-old. The World Cup, he said, has "put Qatar on the world map". Taher said "criticism is something that motivates us to move forward. On the contrary, it is natural and healthy to take criticism and then adjust course".

Jassem supported the government's position that "everyone is welcome" but Qatar's culture must be respected. "There are red lines," he said. Jassem acknowledged, however, that preparing for the World Cup has changed the face of Qatar. With the construction of a new metro system, hotels, major roads, stadiums and office skyscrapers, "as a Qatari, I am surprised to see something new every day. The World Cup has developed our country's capabilities," he added. — AFP



MONTMARTRE: A 2CV (deux-chevaux) car drives past tourists in front of the Sacre-Coeur Basilica in Montmartre Paris' district. — AFP

The status quo prevailed until a few months ago, when the luxury boutique hotel next door filed a plan to turn the site into a for-profit affair. What better setting for lush wedding receptions or cocktail parties? Under a 2017 law, the city had to publish the proposal for use of public land and invite competing offers that are due by November 28. The move caught the CLAP off guard, especially since it had been trying to regularise its situation with local officials. "Two months isn't a lot of time for us to come up with a project!" Liogier said.

An online petition to save the club has garnered around 4,300 signatures, though members seem to accept that their days of exclusive access are numbered. "We want to keep the site in its current state, while opening it up as much as possible to the neigh-

borhood," Liogier said.

To that end, the club held an open house on Saturday, with members suggesting that schools would soon be invited so children could learn an activity more often associated with pensioners enjoying a game between glasses of beer or pastis. "When a unique place like this is in danger, it breaks your heart," French tennis great and neighbour Yannick Noah told AFP. "It's good to have commercial projects but maybe there's something more important - this bond between people." But not everyone will be sad to see the club go. Alain Coquard, the influential president of the "Republic of Montmartre" preservation society, calls the CLAP an unaccountable clique that claims dominion over a "magical site" that should be open to everyone. — AFP

## PM affirms government...

Continued from Page 1

The ambassador also lauded efforts made by the union to prepare for this conference, which has become a landmark in the history of Kuwaiti students in the United States.

Budaiwi addressed the Kuwaiti students with two

## Kuwait top investor in Jordan...

Continued from Page 1

Head of the Jordanian Businessmen Association Hamdi Al-Tabbaa said during the meeting that

## Qatar grabs political win...

Continued from Page 1

A large Qatar flag hung on the spacious building, surrounded by smaller flags for Brazil, France, Saudi Arabia and other World Cup nations. Inside, comfortable seats were lined up in rows in front of a giant screen.

But while in Europe armchair fans might have beer and pies, Taher and his friends ate dates and sipped Arabic coffee and tea. "Qatar is taking part for the first time and we are proud whether it wins or not," said Taher, dressed in a traditional Arab white robe. Sports historian Sultan Al-Jassem, said "Qatar has become the focus of the world's attention". "In the past, half of the world did not know where Qatar is. Now Qatar has become the most famous country in the world to host this tournament," said the 59-year-old.

The group shouted "haram!" (disgrace), when the referee turned down a first half penalty. At half-time, with

## Khan vows to fight after...

Continued from Page 1

Saghir Ahmed, a 32-year-old tailor, was among thousands arriving in the long build-up to Khan's speech atop a platform draped with banners depicting a clenched fist breaking shackles. Having shut his shop to attend, Ahmed said Pakistan's dire economic situation - with galloping inflation and a nosediving rupee - has made life "unbearable". "We hope Khan will introduce some reforms and the situation will improve," he told AFP.

Khan attracts cultish devotion from supporters, but on Saturday made his speech hundreds of meters from the bulk of the crowd of around 25,000 to 30,000, separated by coils of barbed wire and a buffer of police officers. In the Nov 3 assassination attempt, a gunman opened fire from close range as Khan's open-top container truck made its way through a crowded street. Buildings overlooking the site of the rally were searched overnight, a police official told AFP, while snipers were perched on rooftops surveying the mostly male supporters whipping red and green flags back and forth.

Khan himself was surrounded by a crush of bodyguards at all times, while mobile phone signals were jammed in the vicinity. Authorities threw a ring of steel around Islamabad to prevent his supporters from marching on government buildings, with thousands of

security personnel deployed and roads blocked by shipping containers. Khan-led protests in May spiraled into 24 hours of chaos, with the capital blockaded and running clashes across Pakistan between police and protesters. Khan told Saturday's rally that he would not be calling on supporters to enter the capital.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah - who Khan accuses of being involved in the assassination plot - issued a "red alert" Friday, warning of security threats to the rally. He listed Pakistan's Taliban and Al-Qaeda among the extremist groups that could harm Khan. The government says the assassination attempt was the work of a lone wolf now in custody, with police leaking a "confession" video by the junk-shop owner saying he acted because Khan was against Islam.

But Khan, a former international cricket player with a playboy reputation before he married, said he has long warned that the government would blame a religious fanatic for any attempt to kill him. Without offering evidence, Khan has named Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, interior minister Sanaullah, and a senior military officer of being the architects of the assassination attempt - charges they have all dismissed as lies.

Saturday's rally took place two days after the government named a former spymaster as the next military chief. General Syed Asim Munir's appointment ended months of speculation over a position long considered the real power in the nuclear-armed Islamic nation of 220 million people. Munir served as chief of the Inter-Services Intelligence agency under Khan, but his stint ended after just eight months following a reported falling out. — AFP

ating world leaders, celebrities or companies.

Responding to the backlash, Musk initially postponed the launch date to Nov 29, before delaying it once more. It now appears the feature will launch on Dec 2. Musk has said that he wants to charge users for subscriptions to the social media platform to diversify its income stream. Twitter currently depends on advertising for 90 percent of its revenue.

Several major brands have withdrawn from advertising on the platform since Musk bought it, fearing that his promised relaxation of content moderation could open their companies up to being associated with objectionable content. According to the NGO Media Matters, half of Twitter's top 100 advertisers have announced that they are suspending or "have apparently suspended" their spending on the social network. — AFP

## Musk announces gold, gray and...

Continued from Page 1

since he acquired the social media giant last month. Musk proposed a subscription fee of \$8 a month to allow users to obtain the blue check - which was previously free but reserved for organizations and public figures in an attempt to avoid impersonation and misinformation. The first rollout of Musk's subscription plan in early November quickly went south, with many accounts paying for the blue check and then imperson-



## International

# Deadly Xinjiang fire stirs anger at China's zero-COVID-19 policy

## Beijing fights growing public fatigue over hardline approach

BEIJING: A deadly fire in China's northwest Xinjiang region has spurred an outpouring of anger at the country's zero-COVID policy, as Beijing fights growing public fatigue over its hardline approach to containing the coronavirus. Ten people were killed and nine injured when the blaze ripped through a residential building in the regional capital Urumqi on Thursday night, according to state news agency Xinhua.

Online posts circulating on both Chinese and overseas social media platforms since Friday have claimed that lengthy COVID lockdowns in the city hampered rescue attempts. Some videos appeared to show crowds of people taking to the streets of Urumqi to protest against the measures.

The action comes against a backdrop of mounting public frustration over the government's zero-tolerance approach to COVID and follows sporadic protests in other cities. China is the last major economy wedded to a zero-COVID strategy, with authorities wielding snap lockdowns, lengthy quarantines and mass testing to snuff out new outbreaks as they emerge. Footage partially verified by AFP shows hundreds of people massing outside the Urumqi city government offices during the night, chanting: "Lift lockdowns!"

In another clip, dozens of people are seen marching through a neighborhood in the east of the city, shouting the same slogan before facing off with a line of hazmat-clad officials and angrily rebuking security personnel. AFP journalists were able to verify the videos by



BEIJING: Workers wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) ride on a tricycle along a street in Beijing on November 26, 2022. — AFP

geolocating local landmarks, but were unable to specify when exactly the protests occurred. A wave of anger simmered on the Weibo social media platform on Friday amid claims that parked electric vehicles left without power during lengthy lockdowns blocked fire engines from entering a narrow road to the burning building.

"I'm also the one throwing myself off the roof, trapped in an overturned (quarantine) bus, breaking

out of isolation at the Foxconn factory," read one comment referencing several recent incidents blamed on zero-COVID strictures. Chinese authorities censor online content deemed politically sensitive and appeared to have scrubbed many posts and hashtags relating to the fire by Saturday morning. Urumqi police said in a Friday post on Weibo that they had detained a woman surnamed Su for "spreading online rumors" relating to the number of casualties from the blaze.

### Rare apology

An initial investigation showed the blaze to have been caused by a board of electric sockets in the family bedroom of one of the apartments, according to state broadcaster CCTV. Rescue attempts were complicated by "a lack of parking spaces and a large number of private vehicles parked on both sides" of a narrow road to the building, city fire and rescue chief Li Wensheng told reporters late Friday, CCTV said.

Urumqi mayor Maimaitiming Kade offered a rare formal apology for the blaze at the briefing, according to the broadcaster. But officials also pushed back against some of the online allegations, denying that residents' doors had been clamped shut with iron wiring. COVID controls have confined some communities in Urumqi - a city of four million people - to their homes for weeks on end.

But in the wake of the protests, officials on Saturday said the city "had basically reduced social transmissions to zero" and would "restore the normal order of life for residents in low-risk areas in a staged and orderly manner". Pandemic fatigue has been growing in China, with violent protests erupting at a vast COVID-hit factory in the central city of Zhengzhou in recent days due to a dispute over pay and labor conditions. China recorded 34,909 new domestic infections on Saturday, the vast majority of which were asymptomatic, according to the National Health Commission. — AFP

## Congo war leaves rape victims, the injured in its wake

GOMA: In the chaotic displacement camps near the eastern DR Congo city of Goma, war victims recount brutal stories of rape and brushes with death in their flight from advancing rebels. M23 rebels have surged across eastern Democratic Republic of Congo's North Kivu province, winning a string of victories against the army. The offensive has seen the mostly Congolese Tutsi group conquer swaths of territory and come within just 20 kilometers of eastern DRC's main city Goma.

Fighting has displaced at least 262,000 people since March, according to the UN's humanitarian agency OCHA, with many of them gathering in squalid camps near Goma. AFP has changed the names of people cited in the article to protect their safety. In one camp for the displaced in Kanyaruchinya, Furaha described in tears how rebels kidnapped her 15-year-old daughter in May, before releasing her two days later. "She refused the advances of the militiamen," the 45-year-old mother said, inside a makeshift hut of wooden sticks and tarpaulin.

Fighters came to her home in the dead of night and snatched her daughter, then raped her, she said. Just a few days later, Furaha too was sexually assaulted, she said. Men in military uniform attacked her and a friend while they were harvesting potatoes in the village of Nyesisi, north of Goma. "Three men raped me, and six raped my friend," she said. AFP was unable to independently confirm the account, and the identity of the attackers is not clear.

The M23 took up arms in late 2021 after years of dormancy, claiming the DRC had failed to honor a pledge to integrate its fighters into the army, among other grievances. After four months of relative calm, the conflict erupted again on October 20 and the

rebels made a push towards Goma. The fighting has cratered relations between the DRC and Rwanda, with Kinshasa accusing its smaller neighbor of backing the M23 - something UN experts and US officials have also said. Kigali denies the charges.

### 'Point-blank range'

Some 70,000 people live in the Kanyaruchinya camp, in ramshackle tents and makeshift dwellings built on top of mud. Another woman, Mwiza, who is also from Nyesisi, told AFP that two men in "Rwandan army uniform" had raped her in June. "I ran away to go to the hospital," she said, her head bowed while she fiddled with rosary beads.

The doctors advised her not tell her husband about what happened, Mwiza said, "so that he wouldn't chase me away". Didier Buindo, a doctor in the

camp, said he'd treated about ten rape victims in November alone. Sexual violence is also occurring in the displacement camps, according to the doctor, who pointed to a case in another camp where two girls aged five and 16 had been raped. War-wounded also live in the displacement camps, a testament to the brutality of the conflict.

Augustin, 32, is still limping after being shot in the leg in his field north of Goma, for example. He received surgery to remove the bullet. Mutoni, 22, also has a scar on her face from where she was grazed by a bullet in August. "An M23 fighter shot me at point-blank range," said the woman, who fled her village to seek refuge in the displacement camps. Mutoni survived the attack. But her young niece, whom she was cradling in her arms, was killed instantly by the same bullet. — AFP



GOMA: War-displaced people flee towards the city of Goma, eastern Republic of Congo. Thousands of displaced people began to flee after soldiers retreated to Kanyarushinya, an informal camp of over 40,000 people in the northern district of Goma. — AFP

which was dismantled by Pretoria in 1993. He was also arrested and accused of leading a coup bid in Sao Tome in 2009.

But a group of accomplices who waited aboard vans outside the barracks had not been caught, Trovoada added. The prime minister announced an inquiry was under way and said the army was "obliged to clarify the situation if there are other ramifications within the armed forces". A former Portuguese colony in the Gulf of Guinea, the nation of some 215,000 people is desperately poor and depends on international aid, but is also praised for its political stability and parliamentary democracy.

Neves lost his position on November 11 when the new chamber was installed following elections in September, won with an absolute majority by Trovoada's centre-right Independent Democratic Action (ADI) party. Neves also failed in an attempt to be elected president, losing to the ADI's Carlos Vila Nova in July last year. The ADI is one of two major parties that have vied to run the nation since independence in 1975, along with the Movement for the Liberation of Sao Tome and Principe-Social Democratic Party (MLSTP-PSD). The ADI's electoral triumph saw ex-prime minister Trovoada return to the top job for a third time. — AFP



A general view of the Presidency of Sao Tome and Principe in Sao Tome. — AFP

## Army foils coup bid in Sao Tome

LIBREVILLE: The military has foiled a coup attempt in Sao Tome and Principe, the prime minister of the island nation off the western coast of Africa said in a video message confirmed by AFP on Friday. Four men, including the former president of the outgoing National Assembly Delfim Neves, tried to attack army headquarters overnight, Prime Minister Patrice Trovoada said in a video message confirmed by the justice minister. He said Neves was one of several people arrested. A resident speaking to AFP anonymously by phone said she had heard "automatic and heavy weapons fire, as well as explosions, for two hours inside the army headquarters" in the nation's capital.

In the video message, authenticated and sent to AFP by the press office of Sao Tome's prime minister, Trovoada is seen sitting at a desk saying he wants to "reassure" the population and "the international community". "There was an attempted coup d'etat which began around 00:40 am and... ended shortly after 6 am," he said, adding that "armed forces were attacked in a barracks." "The situation in the barracks is under control, but we must be sure that the country is completely under control," Trovoada said.

### Soldier taken hostage

He said a soldier had been "taken hostage" and wounded but "would be able to resume his activities in a few days". Military personnel were deployed overnight to secure the homes of members of the government and the president, according to the resident who spoke to AFP. She added that the city was now calm: "People are going about their normal business but schools have asked parents not to send their children."

Trovoada said: "The operation was ordered by certain personalities from the country in complicity with certain others from within the army." "The four attackers have been arrested and have denounced certain others, including Delfim Neves and Arlecio Costa." Costa is a former Santomean mercenary connected with South Africa's Buffalo Battalion security group,

## Taleban's treatment of women could be crime against humanity: UN

GENEVA: Taleban restrictions on the freedoms of women and girls could amount to a crime against humanity, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan said. Richard Bennett and other UN rights experts said the Taleban's targeting of women and girls deepen "flagrant violations of their human rights and freedoms that are already the most draconian globally and may amount to gender persecution - a crime against humanity". Most women who work for the government have lost their jobs - or are being paid a pittance to stay at home - since the Taleban returned to power in August 2021. Afghan women have also been barred from travelling without a male relative and must cover up with a burqa or hijab when outside the home. This month the Taleban barred women from entering parks, funfairs, gyms and public baths.

Schools for teenage girls have also been shuttered across most of the country. "In recent months, violations of women and girls' fundamental rights and freedoms in Afghanistan, already the most severe and unacceptable in the world, have sharply increased," the UN experts said in a statement. "Confining women to their homes is tantamount to imprisonment and is likely leading to increased levels of domestic violence and mental health challenges."

Women human rights defenders peacefully protesting the restrictions have for months been increasingly targeted, beaten, and arrested, they added. Discriminatory Taleban measures "should be investigated as gender persecution with a view to prosecutions under international law", the experts said.

UN experts do not speak for the United Nations but are mandated to report their findings to the global body. They urged the Taleban to respect women's fundamental rights and the international community to demand the restoration of women's freedoms and rights. The UN Human Rights Office said separately it was "appalled" by the flogging of 11 men and three women in Afghanistan on Wednesday and called for "this abhorrent form of punishment to cease immediately". — AFP

## The 'total war' against Al-Shabaab in Somalia

NAIROBI: Somalia's government has declared "all-out war" against the militant group Al-Shabaab and adopted a multi-pronged counterterrorism effort which-despite some early headline-grabbing military gains-promises to be long and difficult. The dogged Al-Qaeda affiliate was driven from Somalia's major cities a decade ago but retains swathes of countryside, where a coalition of armed groups have joined forces against the insurgents in recent months.

### Who is fighting?

Two clans in drought-afflicted central Somalia, sick of living under Al-Shabaab rule, sparked a revolt against the group in July that quickly spread across the regions of Hirshabelle and Galmudug. In September, the Somali National Army and US-trained "lightning" commandos joined the fray in support of these clan militias, known as "macawisley" after the traditional sarongs worn by their fighters. "The government wants to seize the current momentum and encourage these types of uprisings across Al-Shabaab-held areas in Somalia," said Omar Mahmood, a researcher at the International Crisis Group think tank.

Though it isn't clear how many combatants are involved in this broad offensive, the fighting has reached an intensity not seen in some years, with unconfirmed reports of hundreds killed in skirmishes. Sources in Somalia suggest the fighting could have involved 2,000 to 3,000 "macawisley". The jihadists are believed to number 5,000 to 8,000 nationwide. Supported by US drone strikes and artillery and logistics from the African Union Transitional Force, this combined effort has chased Al-Shabaab from the strategic provinces of Hiran and Middle Shabelle.

### What's the strategy?

In July, the country's newly elected president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud outlined his administration's plan for the Islamists: hit them militarily, choke off their finances, and counter their ideology. "The previous policies were militaristic policies... attacking, destroying. But Shabaab's problem is more than a military" one, he said. As a first step he named Mukhtar Robow-one of Al-Shabaab's founders, who left the movement in 2017 - religious affairs minister to challenge the militant's violent expression of Islam. In October, the government threatened to revoke the business licenses of traders who paid "taxes" to Al-Shabaab and contributed to the millions they raise through extortion. Somalia's closest foreign ally the United States announced \$10 million for information that disrupted cash flows to Al-Shabaab. Washington recommitted troops to Somalia this year, reversing a decision under former US president Donald Trump. "The government continues to try and build confidence among the public for them to stand up against the group. We're yet to measure the success of those declarations," said Samira Gaid of the Hiraal Institute, a Somalia-based security think tank.

### Has Al-Shabaab responded?

The militants may have ceded some territory but are playing a long game, said Mahmood. "Even if they lose in the short term, they will try to find ways to undermine government progress so that they can return." The jihadists have returned to some areas abandoned in the face of the offensive, and escalated a campaign of bombing. On October 29, Somalia witnessed its deadliest attack since 2017, with a double car bombing in the capital Mogadishu leaving 121 dead and 333 injured. Gaid said the clan uprising was a "huge threat" to Al-Shabaab and they were adapting accordingly. "They are responding heavily to try and push it back and to dissuade other clans to join the fight," she said. — AFP



## Business

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2022

## Inflation clouds 'Black Friday' start of US holiday shopping

## Oversupply means deep discounts in many categories

**NEW YORK:** US retailers unveiled a trove of fresh promotions Friday, as they try to coax sales from reticent shoppers whose holiday cheer has been tempered by inflation and worries over a softening economy. "Black Friday", the unofficial start of the US holiday shopping season, announced itself with the annual day-after-Thanksgiving deluge of online deals and early store openings.

Traffic was steady at Macy's flagship store in midtown Manhattan, where crowds braved drizzly, chilly weather to survey the mammoth department store and take in holiday windows that feature a Santa surrounded by disco balls and fox family of stuffed animals clad in plaid. But industry experts have been cautious about this year's prospects, in light of price pressures that have exacerbated concerns about an oversupply of goods.

A year ago, retailers faced product shortfalls in the wake of shipping backlogs and factory closures related to COVID-19. To avert a repeat, the industry front-loaded holiday imports this year, leaving it vulnerable to oversupply at a time when consumers are cutting back. "Today's problem is having too much stuff," said Neil Saunders, managing director for consultancy GlobalData Retail.

Saunders said retailers have made progress in reducing excess inventories, but oversupply will mean deep discounts in many categories, including electronics and apparel. "This is a holiday season where retailers are going to have to work very hard for very small gains," he said.

The dynamic has created opportunities for savvy shoppers like Carla Forbes, who began scouring for holiday discounts weeks ago. She nabbed a jacket Friday at Macy's for \$79, down from an original price of \$225. While promotions on watches and jewelry have got "better," she noted that such deals are not available for staples like food, for which prices have soared. "You just have to buy it if you want (it)," Forbes said.

## Seoul launches self-driving bus experiment

**SEOUL:** South Korea's capital launched its first self-driving bus route on Friday, part of an experiment that engineers said aims to make people feel more comfortable with driverless vehicles on the roads. The new vehicle does not look like a regular bus and has rounded edges as well as large windows that make it appear more like a toy than a technological breakthrough.

This design is intentional, said Jeong Seong-gyun, head of autonomous driving at 42 Dot, the start-up responsible for the self-driving technology that is now owned by auto giant Hyundai. "This is the future," he told AFP, adding that the bus

**Diminishing savings**  
Leading forecasts from Deloitte and the National Retail Federation project a single-digit percentage rise in sales, but this is unlikely to exceed the inflation rate. Adobe expects an overall holiday sales increase of 2.5 percent, less than a third of last year's level. Besides inflation, Adobe cited higher Federal Reserve interest rates and an uptick in brick-and-mortar shopping as factors.

Consumers spent \$7.28 billion up through 6:00 pm Eastern time (2300 GMT) for Black Friday, according to Adobe. The company anticipates that when the final tally is in, consumers will spend between \$9 billion and \$9.2 billion for the day, setting a new record for online sales on Black Friday. Countries like Britain and France have been marking Black Friday too, but with soaring inflation, merchants there face a similar dilemma. "The worry is that it could turn out to be more of a Bleak Friday," said Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Susannah Streeter.

Anne Campbell, who was visiting New York from Scotland, said the mood felt very different from home, where worries about energy security and a weakening economy dominated. "Things are very tight in the UK for a lot of people," she said, contrasting this with spending in the US. US shoppers have remained resilient throughout the pandemic, often spending more than expected even when consumer sentiment surveys suggested gloominess.

Part of the reason has been the unusually robust state of savings, with many households banking government pandemic aid payments at a time of reduced consumption due to virus restrictions. But that cushion is starting to whittle away. After hitting \$2.5 trillion in excess savings in mid-2021, the benchmark fell to \$1.7 trillion in the second quarter, according to Moody's. Accompanying this drop has been a rise in credit card debt visible in Fed data

required "a considerable new type of design". The bus looks a bit "like Lego" and is made of composite parts to help keep costs down and make it easy to replicate, he said. It uses cameras and radar to navigate the way instead of expensive sensors, Seong-gyun added.

The company's goal was to make the technology low-cost, safe and easily transferable to many types of vehicles in the future, for example, delivery trucks. For now-with a safety driver monitoring closely - the bus will drive itself around a small 3.4-km circuit in downtown Seoul that takes around 20 minutes. The public can board at two designated stops after booking a free seat through an app.

"I feel like I've just hopped into a time machine to visit the future," said Kim Yi hae-ran, 68, after her 20-minute ride during the launch of the bus Friday. "I thought it might make me dizzy from a sudden acceleration but I didn't feel any of it." The ride felt "very smooth and safe", which she said made her feel proud of the technological progress the South Korean company has made. — AFP

## Vehicle pollution zone to cover all of London

**LONDON:** Older and more heavily polluting vehicles will have to pay to enter the entire metropolitan area of London from next August, the British capital's mayor said Friday. Sadiq Khan said the ultra-low emission zone (ULEZ) would be expanded beyond its current confines from Aug 29, to encompass the entire nine million people of Greater London. Announcing a parallel expansion of bus services in outer London, he argued that air pollution from older and heavier vehicles was making Londoners "sick from cradle to the grave".

The ULEZ had already proven "transformational", the mayor said, and its extension would mean



**EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey:** Customers visit the American Mall during Black Friday on Nov 25, 2022. — AFP

and anecdotally described by chains that report more purchases made with food stamps.

## Mixed picture

Recent earnings reports from retailers paint a mixed picture on consumer health. Target stood on the downcast side, pointing to a sharp decline in shopping activity in late October, potentially portending a weak holiday season. "We've had a consumer who has been dealing with very stubborn inflation for quarter after quarter now," Chief Executive Brian Cornell told a conference call with

analysts. He added that customers are "shopping very carefully on a budget".

But Lowe's, another US chain specializing in home-improvement, described the same late-October period as "strong". Friday's crowds in New York were more robust compared with a year ago, said shopper Marvin Thomas, who also ventured out for Black Friday in 2021. Inflation is a "big problem," he told AFP, catching his breath outdoors after finding a deal on a hat at Foot Locker. "I'm not going to deny that it has affected me, but you gotta do what you gotta do." — AFP



**SEOUL:** This photo taken in Seoul on Nov 23, 2022 shows a bus with a blue-colored logo, which indicates that autonomous driving is taking place, as it approaches a stop on the country's first self-driving bus route run by 42 Dot. — AFP

"five million more people will be able to breathe cleaner air and live healthier lives". But the plan has prompted a fierce backlash from political opponents and some residents in the capital, who point to a consultation held indicating that a majority of Londoners opposed extending the zone.

The two-month outreach exercise - held earlier this year by Transport for London (TfL), which runs the capital's various transport systems - heard from 57,913 people, including nearly 12,000 campaigners on either side of the issue. Although it found 55 percent of respondents had "some concern" about their local air quality, the consultation also recorded 59 percent as opposed to the ULEZ being expanded at all.

That rose to 70 percent in the outer London areas set to be part of the enlargement. "Sadiq Khan has broken his promise to listen to Londoners," the Conservative grouping in London's devolved lawmaking assembly said on Twitter. "He must U-TURN on the ULEZ expansion." — AFP

## Adani defends media bid after freedom fears

**MUMBAI:** Indian tycoon Gautam Adani said Friday that media should have the "courage" to support the government when warranted, after his hostile takeover bid for one of the country's top broadcasters sparked press freedom fears. Adani, 60, is the world's third-richest person, with an estimated net worth of \$134 billion and interests ranging from Australian coal mines to India's busiest ports.

He is also seen as a close acolyte of Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi, often publicly supporting his policies. A company from his Adani Group revealed in August that it had indirectly bought 29 percent of NDTV, against the wishes of the broadcaster's management, and is moving to buy a majority stake next month. In a wide-ranging interview with the Financial Times, Adani said his foray into media was a "responsibility" rather than a business opportunity.

He added that it was time for India to have a global news conglomerate on par with Al Jazeera and said the channel should support the government when appropriate. "Independence means if government has done something wrong, you say it's wrong," Adani told the British broadsheet. "But at the same time, you should have courage when the government is doing the right thing every day. You have to also say that."

NDTV's two channels, one in Hindi and one in English, stand out among India's myriad rolling news broadcasters for inviting on critics of the government as well as their hard-hitting reporting. It has already been hit by a slew of legal cases that its owners said were a result of its reporting. Under Modi, India has slipped 10 places in the Reporters Without Borders global press freedom ranking and is now 150 out of 180 surveyed countries. Critical reporters often find themselves behind bars and hounded on social media by supporters of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Self-made billionaire Adani, 60, this year overtook fellow Indian Mukesh Ambani to become Asia's richest man. Like Modi, Adani hails from western Gujarat state, and his conglomerate has expanded aggressively in recent years, including into new areas like airports and renewable energy. But its growth into capital-intensive businesses has raised alarm, with analysts from Fitch Group's CreditSights warning in August that the group was "deeply overleveraged". — AFP



**Gautam Adani**

## US bans gear from Huawei and ZTE over security risk

**WASHINGTON:** US authorities announced a ban Friday on the import or sale of communications equipment deemed "an unacceptable risk to national security" - including gear from Chinese giants Huawei Technologies and ZTE. Both firms have been on a roster of companies listed as a threat by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and the new rules bar future authorizations of their equipment. The move is the latest in a series of actions to limit the access of Chinese telecom firms to US networks, and comes during a long-running standoff between the world's two biggest economies.

US officials have shown growing wariness in recent years of Chinese telecommunications companies and technology. "The FCC is committed to protecting our national security by ensuring that untrustworthy communications equipment is not authorized for use within our borders," said chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel in a statement. She added that the new rules are a part of ongoing work to guard against security threats. A Huawei spokesperson offered no comment on the ban when contacted by AFP.

The order also affects other companies, including video surveillance equipment firms Hangzhou Hikvision and Dahua Technology. The FCC said Friday that it was also seeking comment on future action relating to existing authorizations. Previously, Washington had banned Huawei from supplying US government systems and strongly discouraged the use of its equipment in the private sector, with fears that Huawei equipment could be compromised by Chinese intelligence. — AFP



**LONDON:** Shoppers are seen in central London on Nov 25, 2022. — AFP



Business

# Twitter aims to diversify beyond advertising, but can it be done?

## Social media sites testing two alternate solutions in particular

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Is it a pipe dream or a possibility? Elon Musk wants to meaningfully diversify Twitter's revenue stream beyond advertising, but no major social network has managed so far to go without ads altogether. Something of a gold standard, social media ads can be fine-tuned and tailored to individual users on a mass scale, and have been particularly lucrative for Meta's Facebook and Instagram, as well as Google.

"Facebook pretty much set the standard for having an ad model for social networks," said Jasmine Enberg, an analyst at Insider Intelligence. "But that doesn't necessarily have to be the way that social platforms monetize." Social networks are facing budget cuts from inflation-afflicted advertisers and increased regulations on the use of lucrative personal data, so it makes sense for them "to be exploring new, non-ad monetization techniques," she said.

The issue is delicate for Twitter, whose revenue is 90 percent dependent on advertising. Advertisers, on the other hand, do not necessarily need Twitter and can turn to other social networks. The advertising situation at Twitter has been particularly dire since Musk took over the company in late October. In recent weeks, half of Twitter's 100 top advertisers have announced they are suspending or have otherwise "seemingly stopped advertising on Twitter", an analysis conducted by nonprofit watchdog group Media Matters found.

They fear being associated with toxic content as

Musk, who describes himself as a "free speech absolutist," advocates for laxer moderation. "Musk didn't understand that Twitter itself was a brand, had cachet," said Sarah Roberts, an information studies expert at University of California, Los Angeles. "Now companies don't even want to be associated with it. It's not even that they worry about the content. Twitter is a tainted brand, a brand non grata companies don't want to be associated with," she added.

### Alternate solutions

Social media sites are testing two alternate solutions in particular: Charging everyday users and charging content creators. The forum platform Reddit has deployed a hybrid model, making money via advertising, paid subscriptions and digital coins that allow users access to special privileges. That said, "It's always hard to charge for something that used to be free," said Carolina Milanese of research firm Creative Strategies. "Unless you give something different or create a different product, you can't go from not charging to charging," she said.

While Twitter has been offering a paid subscription with additional features since last year, Musk aimed to raise the price to \$8 a month and include account verification in the plan's perks. A partial launch was chaotic, however, and prompted the proliferation of so many fake accounts that the rollout of so-called Twitter Blue has now been paused.

giant said it wanted to draw "attention to one key area of retained EU legislation that we believe may be affected".

The California-based company, which has around 4,000 full-time staff in Britain, noted 2002 electronic commerce regulations based on an EU directive limit the liability of online platforms "that act as a mere conduit". "This framework... is critical to maintaining an online environment that enables a thriving and diverse technology sector to flourish in the UK," Meta said.

It warned that without it, "platforms and websites are less likely to want to operate in the UK and may pull back from making the UK a hub for innovative new products and services in the way the government envisages". Meta argued the provisions should be "either explicitly maintained elsewhere or recommend that the E-Commerce Regs are removed from scope of the Revocation Bill".

The draft legislation is currently working its way through parliament. It has provoked a backlash in Britain, with many public and private interest groups



Musk has now tweeted that this feature called Verified will be launched next week. "Figuring out a way to charge users for premium features and make money off of users is not a bad idea," Enberg said. But she said the benefits Twitter offered may not have been enticing enough, and that the verification aspect should be more of a security feature than a monetizable feature.

Finally, because paid subscribers - arguably the most active on the network - would see 50 percent less advertising than non-paying users, the plan would "dilute the quality and the size of the addressable

and organizations accusing the government of moving too far, too fast. Trade unions are among those opposed to the bill, with one leading organization warning in another letter to the committee published Friday that it "poses a significant threat to workers' rights and should be opposed by MPs".

"It is striking that ministers have yet to explain which laws they intend to retain, to amend or allow to expire," the Trades Union Congress said. "Indeed, there even remains uncertainty about whether government knows which laws are affected," it added, arguing "the ultimate goal is deregulation".

Meanwhile TheCityUK, one of London's leading financial lobby groups, said it has "a number of reservations about the appropriateness of this Bill in current circumstances". The organization cited "the overall need for it, opportunity costs, the risk of worsening the relationship with the EU, and the potential for increased burdens on business". "At a minimum, a far longer sunset period for implementation should be allowed," it added. — AFP

## Meta calls for UK rethink over plans to scrap EU laws

**LONDON:** Facebook owner Meta is urging UK lawmakers considering legislation to scrap all retained European Union laws by 2024 to maintain some e-commerce rules to keep Britain globally competitive. The UK government introduced legislation in September to amend, repeal or replace all EU laws automatically retained after Brexit by the end of next year.

"The Brexit Freedoms Bill will enable the UK government to remove years of burdensome EU regulation in favor of a more agile, home-grown regulatory approach that benefits people and businesses across the UK," it said at the time. In a newly disclosed letter to a committee of MPs scrutinizing the bill, the US tech

## Trudeau defends emergency powers use against truckers

**OTTAWA:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau testified at a public inquiry on Friday to defend his use of emergency powers to dislodge noisy trucker-led protesters that jammed the capital earlier this year, citing what he called threats of serious violence. His testimony at the Public Order Emergency Commission wrapped up six weeks of hearings on the rarely used powers, which were invoked in February after weeks of protests that brought Ottawa to a standstill and disrupted trade. Critics have said Trudeau's use of those powers was excessive.

Trudeau told the inquiry that protesters had rammed vehicles into police cruisers and used children as shields. He said police were concerned they might be hoarding weapons while Canada's spy agency warned of "the presence of people promoting ideologically-motivated violent extremism" that risked triggering lone wolf attacks. Tensions rose further when counter-protests popped up, with "grandmothers standing in residential streets against massive trucks," Trudeau said, raising concerns about Canadians taking matters into their own hands.

"We were seeing things escalate," he said, adding that advice and "my own inclination was that... we needed to do something to keep Canadians safe." Invoking the Emergencies Act, he concluded, "was the right thing to do. And we did it." The self-styled "Freedom Convoy" of truckers rolled into the capital on Jan 29 from across Canada to express anger at COVID vaccine mandates.

As solidarity rallies popped up - blocking trade corridors including a bridge to Detroit that is the busiest international crossing in North America - their demands expanded to a broader rejection of pandemic restrictions and an anti-establishment agenda. The use of extraordinary powers of the act to remove the protests and blockades was criticized as overreach by political opponents and civil liberties groups.

The commission has been mandated to assess the "appropriateness and effectiveness of the measures" taken by the government to deal with the protests. It is not, however, empowered to level sanctions. Led by former judge Paul Rouleau, the commission has heard from officials, protest leaders and Ottawa residents impacted by the big rigs' incessant honking and diesel fumes.



**OTTAWA:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau testifies before the Public Order Emergency Commission public inquiry on Nov 25, 2022. — AFP

### Tinder box versus bouncy castles

"It was a tinder box waiting to explode. It was not a family festival," former Ottawa police chief Peter Sloly testified. He resigned during the crisis over what the commission heard was a disorganized police response, including intelligence failures and leaks - both now under investigation. Convoy organizers have painted a much different picture, calling their actions legitimate pushback against "evil" policies and describing a festive atmosphere in front of Parliament with hot tubs, bouncy castles and barbecues.

"We weren't there to disrupt the city residents," trucker Brigitte Belton told the inquiry. "We were there to be heard." The commission heard evidence of incendiary comments and extremist elements of the protest that included calls for a coup and the spread of conspiracy theories. Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland testified on Thursday that the protests risked damaging investor confidence and "doing long-term and possibly irreparable harm to our trading relationship with the United States".

Text messages between officials, and readouts of calls with bankers and the White House in Washington showed frustrations rising as Ottawa and the provinces struggled to bring the protest movement to heel. One banker related to Freeland an investor's description of Canada amid the chaos as a "banana republic" while a provincial premier accused the feds of stoking protest anger by "calling them all Nazis". — AFP

percent growth previously calculated by federal statistics agency Destatis.

Analysts had forecast a contraction in the third quarter as the fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine takes a toll on European economies. "Overall, the German economy remains robust," Destatis said in a statement. Gross domestic product grew "despite difficult general conditions in the global economy such as the continuing Covid-19 pandemic, delivery bottlenecks, continuing price rises and the war in Ukraine," it said.

A separate survey on Friday showed that German consumer confidence has edged up again following a long period of decline, the latest indi-

## Ottawa rolls out CAN\$1.6bn plan on climate change

**OTTAWA:** The Canadian government on Thursday unveiled a CAN\$1.6 billion (US\$1.2 billion) plan to help the country deal with the looming dangers of a warming world, such as floods, wildfires and extreme heat. The so-called climate adaptation strategy will fund programs to help Canadians shield themselves from heat waves, protect coastlines from rising seas and safeguard infrastructure, including in the far north, which is facing the thaw of permafrost, officials said.

"Climate change is hitting all communities right across Canada," Emergency Preparedness Minister Bill Blair told a news conference from Prince Edward Island, a province hit hard by Hurricane Fiona in September. The storm - said to be the costliest to hit Canada's Atlantic coast - was just a taste of what's to come, according to the government, which forecasts annual costs of natural disasters in Canada to rise to Can\$15.4 billion by 2030.

"We are seeing in the last few years, not just in Canada but around the world, an increase in the frequency and severity of climate related events," said Blair, citing extreme weather events that killed hundreds and devastated communities across the country. The adaptation strategy, which the government presented as a work-in-progress, was hailed as a "great step forward" by Greenpeace, while the Insurance Bureau of Canada, which represents home, car and business insurers, called it "ambitious".

Its goals also include making Canadians more aware of the risks of natural disasters in their communities, establishing 15 new urban national parks, conserving 30 percent of Canada's lands and waters to stem biodiversity loss, and preventing all future deaths from extreme heat. Adaptation measures, according to a government statement, could result in up to Can\$15 in savings for every dollar spent.

New construction standards in fire and flood zones alone would save an estimated Can\$4.7 billion a year, the government said, while noting that urban forests in Toronto - Canada's largest city - have lowered cooling costs, improved air quality and reduced strains on stormwater sewers. The new funding builds on more than Can\$8 billion already committed by Ottawa for adaptation and disaster relief since 2009. — AFP

cation that concerns are easing about the severity of an approaching downturn. Pollster GfK's forward-looking barometer registered minus 40.2 points for December, an increase of 1.7 points from November.

Germany was heavily reliant on Russian gas before the war, and Moscow's move to cut off flows through the crucial Nord Stream 1 pipeline has fueled fears of energy shortages and skyrocketing heating bills this winter. Record-high inflation of 10 percent in September has added to the pain, as consumers and businesses see their purchasing power eroded. The German government expects the economy to shrink by 0.4 percent in 2023. — AFP

audience for advertisers". Some newer platforms are trying to do without advertising altogether, with no guarantee of long-term viability.

For example, on Discord, a live-discussion social network, subscribers have access to more emoticons. And the fledgling photo-sharing app BeReal is hoping to not have to sell ads by making money through in-app purchases instead, the Financial Times reported.

### 'Big-name influencers

Twitter had some 230 million daily active users as of June, and Musk continues to congratulate himself on growing that number since taking over. But increased users do not necessarily translate into dollars. Snapchat, which also launched a paid version in June, has gained more and more users, but not necessarily money. Most users do not pay anything and advertisers have cut spending on this app.

Faced with this reality, platforms are competing for content creators to attract and retain audiences - and either taking commission or making them pay for the promotion of their messages and videos. This represents "a really big opportunity" for Twitter, Enberg said. Twitter "does have a lot of celebrities and big-name influencers, politicians and journalists" with whom it could form a mutually financially beneficial relationship, she said. Milanese added that while the network already offers some promotional tools, they are "quite expensive, and not very effective". — AFP

## Musk announces 'amnesty' for Twitter accounts

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Elon Musk said Thursday many previously suspended Twitter accounts would be allowed back on the platform after a landslide of users responding to an informal poll by the new owner voted in favor of the move. The announcement comes as Musk faces pushback that his criteria for content moderation is subject to his personal whim, with reinstatements decided for certain accounts and not others. "The people have spoken. Amnesty begins next week," Musk tweeted, responding to the poll.

"Vox Populi, Vox Dei," he added, repeating a Latin adage meaning "The voice of the people is the voice of God," that he has used when talking about other Twitter polls. Of 3.16 million respondents to Musk's Wednesday poll question, 72.4 percent said Twitter should allow suspended accounts back on Twitter as long as they have not broken laws or engaged in "egregious spam," Musk posted.

It was the same type of "yes/no" informal poll of Twitter users that Musk devised to decide in favor of reinstating former president Donald Trump on the platform. Trump's Twitter account was reinstated Saturday after a narrow majority of respondents supported the move. Polls on Twitter are open to all users and are unscientific and potentially targeted by fake accounts and bots.

Moreover, while Musk has 118 million followers, many of Twitter's 450 million monthly active users might never have seen the poll question. A blanket amnesty for suspended accounts could potentially alarm government authorities that are keeping a close look at Musk's handling of hateful speech since he bought the influential platform for \$44 billion.

It could also spook Apple and Google, tech titans that have the power to ban Twitter from their mobile app stores over content concerns. Trump was banned from the platform early last year for his role in the January 6 attack on the US Capitol by a mob of his supporters seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 election.

### 'No mercy'

Musk's reinstatement of Trump followed that of other banned accounts including a conservative parody site and a psychologist who had violated Twitter's rules on language identifying transgender people. The CEO of Tesla and SpaceX has said that conspiracy theorist Alex Jones will not be returning to Twitter and will remain banned from the platform. Musk on Sunday said he had "no mercy for anyone who would use the deaths of children for gain, politics or fame" due to his own experience with the death of his first child.

Jones has been ordered to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in damages for his lies about the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting that killed 26 people, mostly children. Musk, who closed his buyout of Twitter in late October, did not make clear whether the bans to be lifted by the poll were permanent suspensions or temporary ones. The future of content moderation on Twitter has become an urgent concern, with major advertisers keeping away from the site after a failed relaunch earlier this month saw a proliferation of fake accounts, causing embarrassment.

Meanwhile the teams in charge of keeping nefarious activity off the site have been gutted, victims of Musk-led layoffs that saw half of total employees leave the company. John Wihbey, a media professor at Northeastern University, speculated that all the chaos might be because Musk is seeking to "buy himself time." "Regulators are certainly going to come after him, both in Europe and maybe the United States... and therefore a lot of what he's doing is trying to frame those fights," Wihbey said. — AFP



## Business

# Global summit on wildlife approves shark protections

## Move could drastically reduce lucrative and cruel shark fin trade

PANAMA CITY: Delegates at a global summit on trade in endangered species on Friday approved a plan to protect 54 more shark species, a move that could drastically reduce the lucrative and cruel shark fin trade. Members of the requiem shark and the hammerhead shark families will now have their trade tightly controlled under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

The binding resolutions were adopted by consensus on the final day of the two-week meeting by delegates from 183 countries and the European Union, which takes place every two or three years. "Proposal 37 approved," said Panamanian delegate and head of the plenary Shirley Binder of the requiem shark proposal, after Japan failed in getting the blue shark removed from the measure. The proposal regarding the hammerhead shark passed without debate.

Binder earlier told AFP the "historic decision" would mean up to 90 percent of sharks in the market would now be protected. Insatiable appetite in Asia for shark fins, which make their way onto dinner tables in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan, has spurred their trade. Despite being described as almost tasteless and gelatinous, shark fin soup is viewed as a delicacy and is enjoyed by the very wealthy, often at weddings and expensive banquets.

Shark fins, representing a market of about \$500 million per year, can sell for about \$1,000 a kilogram. "This will be remembered as the day we turned the tide to prevent the extinction of the world's sharks and rays," said Luke Warwick, director of shark protection for the NGO Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). The shark species will now be listed on what is known as CITES Appendix II, which is for species that may not yet be threatened with extinction but may become so unless trade in them is closely controlled. "The crucial next step will be to implement these listings, and ensure they result in stronger fisheries management and



(Left) In this file photo taken on Jan 21, 2018, a baby hammerhead shark swims after being released by the Galapagos National Park research team where a shark nursery was discovered along the coast of Santa Cruz Island in Galapagos, Ecuador. (Right) This photo taken on Nov 17, 2022 shows shark fins laid out on a tarp outside a shop in Hong Kong. — AFP photos

trade measures as soon as possible," Warwick said.

### From villain to darling

Sharks have long been seen as the villain of the seas they have occupied for more than 400 million years, drawing horror with their depiction in films such as "Jaws" and occasional attacks on humans. However, these ancient predators have undergone an image makeover in recent years as conservationists have highlighted the crucial role they play in regulating the ocean ecosystem.

Joaquin de la Torre of the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), told AFP that more than 100 million sharks are killed every year. "Sharks and

rays are the most threatened species, more even than elephants and big cats." With many shark species taking more than 10 years to reach sexual maturity, and having a low fertility rate, the constant hunting of the species has decimated their numbers.

In many parts of the world, fishermen lop the shark's fins off at sea, tossing the shark back into the ocean for a cruel death by suffocation or blood loss. The efforts by conservationists led to a turning point in 2013, when CITES imposed the first trade restrictions on some shark species.

### Ongoing over-exploitation

Delegates have been considering 52 proposals to

change the protection levels of more than 600 species. They also approved new protections for the guitarfish ray, crocodiles, frogs, and some turtle species. "Many of the proposals adopted here reflect there is ongoing over-exploitation and unsustainable trade, and escalating illegal trade, and some are due to complex interactions of other threats reducing species populations in the wild, including climate change, disease, infrastructure development, and habitat loss," said Susan Liberman of WCS. CITES, which came into force in 1975, has set international trade rules for more than 36,000 wild species. Its signatories include 183 countries and the European Union. —AFP

## Union 'skeptical' of reforms to London fire service

LONDON: The union representing UK firefighters said Saturday it was "skeptical" London Fire Brigade (LFB) leaders would implement reforms after an independent review concluded the service was institutionally misogynistic and racist. The LFB has promised a "zero tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and bullying" and accepted around two dozen recommendations from the damning review led by former senior prosecutor Nazir Afzal.

He discovered dozens of examples of racism, bullying and misogyny, including a female firefighter's helmet being filled with urine and a black employee finding a noose above his locker. In its response the Fire Brigades Union, the trade union for firefighters and other staff, noted it had "raised concerns about many of the issues contained within this report historically".

Gareth Cook, its regional organizer for London, said the union was "committed to working to address these serious concerns" but that "we remain skeptical about the changes senior leaders will implement with regards to their own behaviors". "We aim to improve the working conditions of our members and protect them from discrimination and unfair or illegal treatment by representing them in the workplace," he said.

London Fire Commissioner Andy Roe apologized late Friday "for the harm that has been caused" after the report's contents were leaked by The Sunday Times. The service's response includes launching an external complaints system, and piloting the use of bodycams for when staff meet the public on home fire safety visits.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan called the review "a watershed moment" and the findings "abhorrent". He demanded "significant and necessary changes to root out all those found to be responsible for sexism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, bullying or harassment - and to support members of staff to speak out". The report has echoes of the 1999 Macpherson inquiry into London's Metropolitan Police, following the racist murder of teenager Stephen Lawrence. That report condemned the force for "institutional racism". A quarter century on, the Met is still grappling with problems of racial and gender biases, amid a recent slew of allegations of sexual misconduct and discrimination.

Afzal said on Saturday staff working in other public bodies - including other police forces, the National Health Service (NHS) and the BBC - had come forward in the last 24 hours with "serious concerns" about their treatment. He called for an expanded probe into sexism and racism across public bodies. "There needs to be a national inquiry, particularly in relation to misogyny because this is a subject that hasn't had the attention that it deserves," Afzal added.

Roe asked Afzal, who has prosecuted grooming gangs and celebrity sexual abusers, to conduct the organization-wide independent culture review following the death by suicide of trainee firefighter Jaden Matthew Francois-Esprit. The 21-year-old took his own life in Aug 2020 and a subsequent internal investigation unearthed "some tough questions for the Brigade regarding its culture", said the LFB. —AFP

## Winter brings more misery to devastated Ukrainian village

KAMYANKA, Ukraine: As the temperatures plunge in eastern Ukraine, Sergiy Khmil says he has little choice but to use the stacks of ammunition boxes left by the retreating Russian forces as firewood this winter. Without the wood, Khmil says he will probably freeze amid the ruins of his destroyed village of Kamyanka. "The most difficult thing is to get enough chopped wood," Khmil explains. "There's a huge queue to get the donated wood from volunteers."

With his home largely destroyed by shelling, Khmil is still hard at work converting his summer kitchen into impromptu winter lodging - now filled with blankets, ammunition crates and a furnace pieced together from Russian shell casings. "I need to cover the walls with another layer of insulation," Khmil adds, while scanning the modest room that he hopes will see him through the winter.

In March, the village was shelled and strafed by helicopters before infantry and tanks stormed the area as Russian forces advanced south from Izyum during the early days of the invasion. After occupying the area, the Russians settled in - commandeering buildings, looting homes, stealing booze and driving drunk, according to residents. "They started to break into garages and houses and partying drunk overnight," says resident Volodymyr Tsybulya, 53, during a break from repairing the roof of his sister's home. "They used to throw grenades for fun. I came to my place and found my bathroom destroyed by a grenade."

And on it went for months, until a lighting offensive by Ukrainian forces in September crushed the Russian's northeastern flank, routing its troops and sending them further east in disarray. In the retreating army's wake, a trail of destroyed villages was left in ruin, including Kamyanka on the outskirts of Izyum. In the weeks since retaking control of the area, Ukrainian officials have scrambled to



KAMYANKA, Ukraine: A dog stands next to a destroyed building in this village of Kharkiv region on Nov 25, 2022, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

pick up the pieces, while uncovering mass graves and taking stock of the damage to the formerly occupied territories.

### 'War is chasing us'

Izyum deputy mayor Mykhaylo Ishyuk says the situation is stark at the onset of winter, with nearly 30 to 40 percent of the roofs in the city destroyed from the fighting. A lack of building materials and construction equipment, and a labour shortage has made the much-needed repairs all the more unlikely as the cold sets in. Temperatures are forecast to drop below freezing in the coming days.

The situation in Kamyanka is even worse, he admits. Nearly all the roofs on the 550 homes and buildings in the village have been damaged or outright destroyed. "We're watching the situation carefully," he adds. He points to the increase in power cuts following waves of Russian attacks on infrastructure sites across Ukraine that have left

Izyum and surrounding areas with less and less electricity and heating.

In Kamyanka, Lyubov Perepelytsya drifts between recounting the horrors experienced during the Russian occupation and sharing her fears about the coming winter. "They looted literally everything. It's such vile behavior," the 65-year-old resident says through tears as she describes the destruction of her home and the looting of her valuables. "How could you treat people in such a bad manner?"

Most of the village's 1,200 population have left the area but Perepelytsya and her ailing husband will join a few dozen others who are planning to hunker down for the winter in Kamyanka, come what may. "I have cried a river. This is our sixth place (during the war). It looks like the war is chasing us everywhere we go," says Perepelytsya. "I just don't know how we can make it through this. I don't know." —AFP

## Credit Suisse shares fall to historic low

ZURICH: Credit Suisse shares tumbled to a historic low Friday, after the second-biggest lender in Switzerland announced details of a bid to raise capital amid concerns over customers withdrawing funds. The embattled bank has been shaken by a series of scandals and last month launched a radical overhaul aimed at turning around its fortunes. The lender's stocks fell around 6.56 percent by the close of trading to reach 3.318 Swiss francs per share.

Since the start of the year, the Zurich-based bank's shares have lost 60 percent of their value and more than 73 percent since the bankruptcy of British financial firm Greensill in March 2021. On Thursday, after the Swiss stock exchange closed, the bank unveiled the details of its rights issue to raise around four billion Swiss francs (\$4.2 billion). The Saudi

National Bank has agreed to take a 9.9 percent stake in the two-part capital increase, which will raise four billion Swiss francs for Credit Suisse to finance its restructuring projects.

But the bank's stocks tumbled Wednesday before an extraordinary general meeting as the lender issued another profit warning, predicting a fourth-quarter pre-tax loss of up to \$1.6 billion. Credit Suisse has already suffered losses in the previous three quarters. But investors were worried in particular about the outflows, including in its wealth management division, one of the areas that it has said it seeks to refocus its efforts.

Andreas Venditti, an analyst at Swiss investment managers Vontobel, said "we were stunned" by the "massive" withdrawals of capital. They represent around 10 percent of assets under management in the third quarter, he said, or around "63 billion Swiss francs (\$66 billion) within just six weeks", he said in a note. "The bank urgently needs to halt net outflows," he said, warning that "the situation is likely to remain difficult for some time." —AFP

## BMW to build electric battery plant in Hungary

FRANKFURT: German automaker BMW said Friday it plans to invest more than two billion euros (\$2.1 billion) at its under-construction Hungarian factory, and is building an electric battery assembly plant on site. The plans for the plant are part of a shift towards electrification at BMW and in the German car industry as a whole. The firm announced plans in 2018 to build the factory close to the eastern town of Debrecen, joining fellow German automakers in manufacturing cars in lower-wage central Europe.

Construction began six months ago, and BMW announced Friday it would also build the battery plant there as it accelerates its shift towards electric vehicles. This will create more than 500 additional jobs, and take investment in the plant to over two billion euros, the company said. It is due to start pro-

ducing batteries and vehicles by 2025, BMW said.

All batteries for electric cars produced at the Debrecen plant will be assembled on site, which was about "ensuring short distances for logistics", said Markus Fallboehmer, senior vice president of battery production at the automaker. "The close link between battery assembly and vehicle production is part of our strategy," he said.

BMW has said the plant would have an annual capacity of 150,000 units, producing both conventional and electric vehicles. The German luxury brand is aiming to have two million electric vehicles on the road by 2025, promising 13 new electric models and a revamp of its Mini series. Last month, the automaker said it will invest \$1.7 billion in the production of electric vehicles in the United States. —AFP



# French-Lebanese architect seeks pro-climate construction transformation

**L**ina Ghotmeh has pegged her career on sustainable construction. The French-Lebanese architect wants to see her industry transformed by drastically reducing the use of concrete—a major CO2 contributor—using more local materials and reusing existing buildings and materials. “We need to change our value system,” the 42-year-old told AFP last month. The aim is to reduce the carbon footprint of the construction industry and create buildings that can better resist the impacts of climate change. But it’s not an easy battle.

The industry accounts for almost 40 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the United Nations. Ghotmeh, who designed the Estonian National Museum and taught at Yale University, doesn’t advocate for fewer buildings—she knows that’s an unrealistic goal in a world with a growing population. “That would be like saying ‘stop eating,’” she said.



Franco-Lebanese architect Lina Ghotmeh poses during a studio session in Paris.

more, according to the French Agency for Ecological Transition (Ademe). And where new constructions are needed, local materials and design should be used in a way that incorporates natural surroundings and saves energy.

Ghotmeh used more than 500,000 bricks made from local dirt for a new Hermes building in France, expected to open early next year. The bricks also



A detail of the Stone Garden Apartment Building by Lebanese architect Lina Ghotmeh.

Ghotmeh said, choosing reusable organic or natural materials like wood, hemp, linen or stone. This shouldn’t stymie the design process either, she insists. “In Canada, we build wooden towers, in Japan too. It’s a material that is quite capable of being used for tall buildings,” added Ghotmeh, who will build a wooden tower in Paris in 2023. Another key approach is to build lighter, using less material and fewer toxins.

And then there’s concrete, the main material in so many modern buildings and perhaps the most challenging to move away from. “We must drastically reduce the use of concrete”, she said, insisting it should only be used for essential purposes, such as foundations and building in earthquake-prone areas.

Some 14 billion cubic meters of concrete are used every year, according to the Global Cement and Concrete Association. It emits more CO2 than the aviation industry, largely because of the intense heat required to make it. Alternatives to concrete already exist, such as stone, or making cement—a component of concrete—from calcium carbonate. There are also pushes for low-carbon cement made from iron and steel industry waste.

## Beirut inspiration

Building more sustainably often comes with a higher price tag—it costs more to double or triple glaze windows and properly insulate a house—but the long-term payoff is lower energy costs. For Ghotmeh, it’s an imperative investment in our future. It was her birthplace of Beirut that inspired her to become an architect, spurring a desire to rebuild the so-called “collapsed city” ravaged by war. In 2020, she completed the



This photograph shows the Stone Garden Apartment Building by Lebanese architect Lina Ghotmeh.



The Stone Garden Apartment Building by Lebanese architect Lina Ghotmeh. —AFP photos



The Stone Garden Apartment Building by Lebanese architect Lina Ghotmeh.

## ‘Don’t demolish’

Instead, we should “keep what already exists, don’t demolish,” but refurbish and retrofit old buildings in a sustainable way where possible. Building a new detached house consumes 40 times more resources than renovating an existing property, and for a new apartment complex that rises to 80 times

regulate the building’s temperature and reduce energy needs. The building will produce as much energy as it consumes, by being made energy efficient and using geothermal power.

## ‘Circular thinking’

Architects must, early in the project process, “think in a circular way,”

“Stone Garden” apartment tower in the city, built with concrete covered with a combed coating, a technique often used by local craftsmen. She used concrete in the construction because of earthquake risks.

The building was strong enough to survive the port explosion in 2020 that destroyed a large part of the city. And the city continues to inspire her today, even when it comes to climate sustain-

ability. “Since there is practically only an hour of electricity per day, all the buildings have solar panels now. There is a kind of energy independence which is beginning to take place, by force,” she said. “Does it take a catastrophe like the one in Lebanon to make this transition?” — AFP

## Michael Jackson’s ‘Thriller’ revolution turns 40

**M**ixing rock, pop and RnB like never before, Michael Jackson’s “Thriller”, 40 years old next week, became the most successful album of all time and defined a coming era with its audiovisual ambition. “Thriller” has sold more than 100 million copies worldwide since its release on November 30, 1982. It consecrated Jackson as the “King of Pop” and remains a musical lodestone.

Even renewed allegations of paedophilia in the 2019 documentary “Leaving Neverland” failed to dent his popularity, and Jackson’s reach has continued to grow, with his music currently ranked 60th in the world on Spotify with 36.7 million monthly streams. His influ-



This file photo shows boxes of Michael Jackson album “Thriller” in Los Angeles.—AFP

view of this producer from the jazz world—music that sold peanuts in the eyes of the industry,” said Olivier Cachin, author of two books on Jackson. But the collaboration saw sparks fly—literally on one occasion. “When we were finishing ‘Beat It’... we were working five nights and five days, with no sleep. And at one point, the speakers overloaded and caught on fire!” Jones recalled to Rolling Stone.

## Threatening MTV

“Thriller” was the moment when Jackson started to pull in influences from across pop culture, with Eddie Van Halen’s hard rock solo on “Beat It”, and pop ballad “The Girl is Mine” with Paul McCartney. There were pioneering rap rhythms on “Wanna Be Startin’ Somethin’” and a sample from “Soul Makossa” by saxophonist Manu Dibango (who got a large pay-out after Jackson’s team failed to secure authorisation).

Initially, the record failed to break on to the newly established MTV channel, which refused to show the video for megahit single “Billie Jean” on the grounds that black music did not “fit” with its white-dominated rock programming. The boss of Jackson’s parent label at CBS, Walter Yetnikoff, “threatened to publicly denounce MTV as huge racists and block their access to videos of rock artists in its catalogue”, said Cachin.

Yetnikoff won that battle but then found himself clashing with Jackson over his plans for a \$1 million video for the album’s last single, the title track “Thriller”. Jackson wanted to work with director John Landis, having loved his movie “An American Werewolf in London”, while Yetnikoff thought the plan was pointless when the album was already at number one. “But Michael had a vision, and he was stubborn,” said Cachin. The resulting 14-minute mini-film was premiered at a Hollywood cinema before a star-packed crowd and helped re-energize sales of the album. Not only did it see Jackson turn into a werewolf and bring the living dead out of their graves, but it launched a whole new branch of the music business—extravagant and ambitious videos that came to define the next two decades of pop culture. — AFP

ence is still all over the charts, not least in the form of The Weeknd, whose music has channelled Jackson, from an early cover of “Dirty Diana” (2010’s “DD”) through to his recent chart-topping album “Dawn FM”.

“Michael is somebody that I admire. He’s not like a real person, you know? When I started making music, that’s all I wanted to aspire to, just like every other musician,” the Canadian singer-songwriter told GQ magazine recently. Much of the magic on “Thriller” is thanks to producer Quincy Jones, who had worked with Jackson on 1979’s “Off The Wall”.

“The record company didn’t want Quincy for ‘Off The Wall’. They took a dim

## Kanye West hints at another presidential run

**T**he rapper and fashion designer Kanye West has suggested he will run for president and wants Donald Trump to be his running mate. Trump, for his part, brushed aside a recent meeting with West as of no significance. The artist, who goes by the name Ye, posted Thursday a swirling symbol on his Twitter



In this file photo singer Kanye West and President-elect Donald Trump arrive to speak with the press after their meetings at Trump Tower in New York.

account with “Ye” and the number 24, apparently representing 2024, the year of the next US presidential election. Then the rapper posted a video of himself speaking about a meeting this week with the former president in Florida. “I think the thing that Trump was most perturbed about (was) me asking him to be my vice president,” West said.

“Trump started basically screaming at me at the table, telling me I’m going to lose,” West said. “I’m like, hold on Trump, you’re talking to Ye.” Trump, who tried to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election he lost to Joe Biden, announced last week that he would run

again in 2024. Trump posted on Friday on his Truth Social platform about his meeting with West, saying the two discussed politics “to a lesser extent” than business, and that West had asked Trump “for advice concerning some of his difficulties.” The two “got along great,” Trump said, adding that he told the rapper “he should definitely not run for President” because “any voters you may have should vote for TRUMP.”

In an earlier post on Truth Social, Trump said a meal the two shared Tuesday night at Mar-a-Lago was “quick and uneventful.” Trump said the rapper called ahead to arrange the dinner, then “unexpectedly showed up with three of his friends, whom I knew nothing about.” The group ate on the back patio of Mar-a-Lago, then West and his friends “left for the airport,” Trump said. West had posted after the dinner on Tuesday that he had posed the question to Trump about joining his presidential ticket.

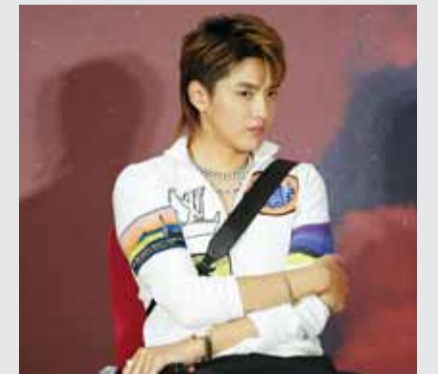
“What you guys think his response was when I asked him to be my running mate in 2024?” West asked. It was not clear whether the rapper was serious about his intentions—or if he sought publicity after a spate of PR moves that put him in a negative light. West is a veteran at garnering publicity—and dabbling in politics. He ran for president in 2020, but got fewer than 70,000 votes, coming in seventh place. Last month, German sportswear giant Adidas severed its lucrative tie-up with West after the star made anti-Semitic statements.

Adidas later said the termination of ties with West had forced it to slash its forecast of net income for 2022 by half. West had helped Adidas develop its successful “Yeezy” line of clothing. Paris fashion house Balenciaga and US clothing retailer Gap have also ended ties with West, who appeared at a Paris fashion show last month wearing a shirt with the slogan “White Lives Matter,” a rebuke to the Black Lives Matter racial equality movement. — AFP



## Chinese-Canadian pop star Kris Wu jailed for rape

**C**hinese-Canadian ex-pop star Kris Wu has been jailed for 13 years after being found guilty of rape, a Chinese court said Friday, following a scandal that drew widespread condemnation. Wu was sentenced to “11 years and six months of imprisonment for rape”, the court in Beijing’s Chaoyang district said, adding he “was also sentenced to imprisonment of one year and ten months for the crime of gathering people to commit adultery”. He will serve a 13-year term before being deported, the court said.



This photo shows Chinese-Canadian ex-pop star Kris Wu, also known as Wu Yifan in Chinese, attending an event in Beijing. — AFP

Wu originally shot to fame as a member of the K-pop boyband EXO, before leaving in 2014 to launch a successful solo career as a singer, actor, model and variety show judge. Nineteen-year-old student Du Meizhu last year accused Wu of date-raping her when she was 17, resulting in a barrage of public criticism and luxury brands dropping deals with him.

More alleged victims spoke out online in the wake of those claims, accusing Wu’s staff of predatory behavior including inviting them to boozy karaoke parties. The saga has evoked China’s #MeToo movement, which saw a wave of women come forward in 2018 voicing experiences of sexual harassment — sometimes involving powerful public figures. — AFP



## Lifestyle | Features

## ELIZABETH TAYLOR'S 'LUCKY CHARM' OSCAR DRESS FOUND IN SUITCASE IN LONDON

A "lucky charm" Christian Dior dress worn by Elizabeth Taylor on the night she won best actress at the 1961 Oscars is to be sold at auction next month, after being stored in a suitcase in London for over 50 years. It had been assumed the floral print gown with a crimson silk bloom at the waist was already in the Christian Dior archive in Paris. In fact, the gown-along with 11 other garments owned by the star-had been carefully stored in a large plastic suitcase in her former personal assistant's spare room since 1971.

Taylor, accompanied by fourth husband Eddie Fisher, wore the dress designed by Marc Bohan for Dior to the 33rd Academy Awards. Her relationship with Fisher, whom she was accused of stealing from actor Debbie Reynolds, was considered a scandal and had sparked a storm of negative publicity. The outcry had left Taylor convinced she would not win, said Kerry Taylor, whose specialist vintage fashion auction house is selling the dress. "She had been the bridesmaid and never the bride at the Oscars and on this occasion she really didn't expect to win having been passed over before and having had all the negative press over



An employee poses with a Christian Dior dress worn by actress Elizabeth Taylor, and recently discovered with other dresses in a suitcase, ahead of their sale at Kerry Taylor Auctions, in London.—AFP photos

Eddie Fisher," she told AFP.

After her Oscar triumph, the star came to regard the dress as "something of a lucky charm" and took it with her all over the world. "Elizabeth Taylor was still taking this dress from place to place with her after 10 years. She didn't wear it on other occasions, she just liked to have it with her," Taylor said.

#### 'Just second hand dresses'

The garments in the suitcase were among a large number gifted to former employee Anne Sanz, whose husband Gaston worked as Taylor's chauffeur and bodyguard. The couple travelled the world with the actor and her fellow Hollywood star husband Richard Burton at the height of their fame in the

1960s and 70s. But despite the Dior dress's sentimental value, by 1971 Taylor's travel wardrobe was sometimes running to 40 huge suitcases and she was happy to let it go.

The actor opened up her wardrobe at London's Dorchester Hotel one day in 1971, telling Sanz "take whatever you like!" Taylor had also given Sanz a

white cocktail dress and matching bolero for her wedding. Other items due to be sold include Tiziani haute couture by Karl Lagerfeld and a "black widow" robe Taylor wore in the 1967 film "Boom", also by Lagerfeld.

Taylor and Burton were godparents to the Sanz's daughter Elizabeth but Anne and Gaston quit after their star employers' second separation, torn over who to continue working for. Over the years, Sanz wore a couple of the dresses and gave others away to friends and family, never regarding them as particularly significant or valuable.

"Anne obviously wore the white matelasse dress for her wedding and there was one other dress that she wore—a yellow and blue dress with matching coat," Kerry Taylor said. "But in a sense these were just second hand dresses that belonged to Liz Taylor. So what? This was before celebrity mentality became the thing," she added. The auction at which the Dior Oscar dress is expected to fetch between £40,000-60,000 (\$48,000-\$73,000) will take place in London on December 6.—AFP



Squid Game actor O Yeong-su

## 'Squid Game' star indicted over sexual misconduct

"Squid Game" actor O Yeong-su has been indicted on charges of sexual misconduct, South Korea's prosecutor told AFP Friday. The 78-year-old in January became the first South Korean to win a Golden Globe Award for best supporting actor in a series for his performance as a seemingly vulnerable old man in the mega-hit Netflix dystopian thriller. According to local reports, the South Korean prosecution indicted him without detention on Thursday for allegedly improperly touching a woman's body in 2017.

Everything reported by local media on O "is not factually incorrect," an official

from the Suwon District Prosecutor's Office told AFP, without giving further details. Following the news, local reports said Seoul's culture ministry decided to stop airing a government commercial about its regulatory innovation-featuring O. "Squid Game"-which imagines a macabre world in which marginalized people are pitted against one another in traditional children's games that turn deadly-became Netflix's most popular series launch ever, drawing 111 million fans in less than four weeks after debuting in 2021.

It is still one of the most popular shows on the platform. The show's success has amplified South Korea's increasingly outsized influence on global popular culture, following global fame won by the likes of K-pop band BTS and the Oscar-winning film "Parasite". Multiple figures in South Korea's film industry—including late filmmaker Kim Ki-duk and actors Cho Jae-hyun and Oh Dal-su—have faced sexual assault allegations.—AFP



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz (first center left) and the President of the Umbrella organization of German forest owners (AGDW) Andreas Bitter (third center left) stand in front of the new Christmas tree, after it was delivered at the Chancellery, as young chorister (right) sing in Berlin, Germany.—AFP photos

## Germany's Scholz dims lights on Christmas tree amid energy squeeze

The Christmas tree outside Chancellor Olaf Scholz's office in Berlin will not be lit as long this year, a government spokesman said Thursday, as Germany seeks to save energy through the winter. The lights on the tree will only shine for four hours each evening from four o'clock to eight, instead of burning constantly as they did last year, the spokesman told AFP. The fir, plucked from the forests of nearby Brandenburg, is decorated with 4,920 low-energy LED lights, which will consume 287 watt-hours. A children's choir on Thursday sang the classic carol "O Tannenbaum" (O Christmas Tree) at the foot of the tree in Scholz's presence. Last year, the tree was put up while conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel

was still in office. The erstwhile German leader stepped down on December 8 to make way for Social Democrat Scholz, and his coalition partners, the Greens and the liberal FDP. A few hundred meters from the chancellery, the Christmas tree in front of the Brandenburg Gate will also only be lit for six hours a day instead, as opposed to 24.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24 upturned global energy markets, sending prices soaring and confronting Europe with the possibility of shortages over the winter. To avoid acute problems around the turn of the year Germany has set about tapping new sources of natural gas and encouraging energy saving measures. Floodlights that illuminate some 200 public monuments and buildings in Berlin—including its red-brick city hall, State Opera House and Charlottenburg Palace—have also been turned off overnight since July.—AFP

## Wartime Beckmann portrait poised for auction record

A remarkable wartime self-portrait of painter Max Beckmann will be auctioned in Germany next week, valued at a record-setting estimate of up to 30 million euros. "Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa" (Self-Portrait Yellow-Pink), widely considered a masterpiece and in private hands since it was painted in 1943, features the artist during his Dutch exile from Nazi Germany. It was initially a gift to his wife Mathilde, known as Quappi, who kept it until her death in 1986. The picture has been in a private Swiss collection for decades, and not shown in public since the mid-1990s. "No comparable artwork has been offered on the German auction market since 1945," said Micaela Kapitzky, director and partner of Berlin's Grisebach auction house, which is handling the sale on December 1.

Its potential selling price has been valued at a whopping 20-30 million euros (\$21-31 million) — the highest pre-sale estimate for an artwork ever offered in Germany and for a Beckmann work worldwide, according to Grisebach. The painting was displayed behind glass at a public preview this week to guard against vandalism by climate activists who have been targeting artworks. Private collections, museums and other institutions around the world have expressed interest in acquiring the painting. Its historical and social significance have sent its value soaring, amid a booming German art market profiting from Brexit woes.

Beckmann's time in Holland was marked by relief at escaping Nazi Germany but frustration at being unmoored—an ambivalence that surfaced in striking ways in his work, Kapitzky told AFP. "He flees the Nazis and then is surrounded by them again (in occupied Holland) and yet somehow he manages to find this surprising inner peace," she said of the picture at auction. "He knows of his importance as a painter. There's even a subtle smile that you can see."

#### 'Still I live'

Kapitzky said the self-portrait was also

a testament to the "intimate" love story between Beckmann and Quappi against the backdrop of World War II's horrors. "Quappi always kept it, until her death. She never separated from it," Kapitzky said. "Max Beckmann was a very self-confident man but he needed Quappi at his side." Beckmann (1884-1950) enjoyed massive acclaim in Germany during his lifetime, with top dealers placing his work with private collectors and major institutions. That was until the Nazi regime labeled his daring, politically charged art "degenerate" and removed them from German museums in 1937.

under the hammer. His clothing, perhaps a dressing gown, is trimmed with bright fur in what could be seen as an expression of tenacious defiance. "When it first arrived, I thought 'wow, it is amazing what power this picture exudes,'" Markus Krause, who will conduct the auction, told AFP.

#### Anti-Nazi statements

Beckmann would ultimately die in New York at the age of 66, of a heart attack on a sidewalk on his way to the Metropolitan Museum of Art where his "Self-Portrait in Blue Jacket" was exhibited. Paintings by Beckmann, now considered one of the



Micaela Kapitzky, director and partner of Berlin's Grisebach auction house, poses next to the painting "Selbstbildnis gelb-rosa" (Self-Portrait Yellow-Pink) by German painter Max Beckmann (1884-1950) in Berlin.—AFP

Professionally thwarted and increasingly under threat, Beckmann left for Amsterdam, where he lived in self-exile for a decade before moving to the United States. "Silent death and conflagration all around me and yet still I live," Beckmann wrote in his diary after German troops overran Holland in 1940. In Amsterdam, Beckmann did not face poverty, as many of his 20,000 fellow German refugees did, nor was he under threat of deportation to a concentration camp like his Jewish friends. It proved a prolific decade, accounting for roughly one-third of his total output.

But unlike the sombre black tones of many paintings created there, a sunnier palate dominates the self-portrait going

most important artists of the 20th century, have exploded in value in recent decades.

His "Bird's Hell", ranked among Beckmann's most important anti-Nazi statements, sold at Christie's in London in 2017 for 36 million pounds (\$46 million, 41 million euros at the time) and set a new auction record for German Expressionism. Its pre-sale estimate was significantly lower than Self-Portrait Yellow-Pink, Kapitzky noted. She said many art buyers and sellers were now turning their backs on London in the wake of Brexit due to complications with shipments and customs clearance. "And so yes, the German market is beginning to benefit from it."—AFP

## Top Austria festival signs on Russian playwright Davydova

Austria's Salzburg opera, theatre and music festival said Thursday it had appointed exiled Russian playwright Marina Davydova as its drama director. The move comes despite several cultural institutions across Europe barring Russian artists in protest over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February. Organizers of the Salzburg Festival, one of the world's most prestigious summer music festivals, said Davydova had published a petition against the war on the day of the invasion and was forced to flee the country in early March after receiving threats.

They said the new drama director, who has been living in Berlin, would take up her position in October 2023 for three years. Davydova, who co-founded the New European Theatre festival in Moscow and was its artistic director for 23 years, welcomed the news.—AFP

## Python bites, drags Australian boy into pool

A five-year-old boy has survived being bitten, constricted and knocked into a swimming pool by a python the length of a small car, with his father telling media, "Aw look, it's where we live. It is Australia." Five-year-old Beau was playing by the edge of a pool in Byron Bay when a three-meter-long (10-foot) python struck from nearby vegetation, his father Ben Blake told Nine radio on Friday.



"I believe the python was sort of sitting there waiting for a victim to come along a bird or something—and Beau was it."

The python bit the child, plunged both into the water and coiled itself around a leg. The boy's 76-year-old grandfather leapt to the rescue, diving into the pool and lifting the boy out-with snake still attached. Ben Blake then prised the snake loose and tried to calm the situation. "I'm not a little lad, I had him released within 15-20 seconds," he told the radio station. The boy, who was said to be "an absolute trooper", is recovering well. "Once we cleaned up the blood and told him he wasn't going to die because it wasn't a poisonous snake, he's actually pretty good," Blake said.

While pythons are not venomous, the five-year-old is being treated to prevent the bite from becoming infected. Describing events as "somewhat of an ordeal", Blake added that snakes were a fact of life in and around the sub-tropical Byron Bay—a popular tourist town and surf hub an eight-hour drive north of Sydney. "It is Australia. They are about," Blake said, adding that the snake was released and "the naughty thing" went straight back into the vegetation—"the scene of the crime."—AFP



# Kuwait Times editor showcases artistic talents through mural

By Faten Omar

**S**hakir Reshamwala, Front Page Editor at Kuwait Times, tried his hand painting a mural “exploding” with colors and hidden meaning. Reshamwala used a wall of Kuwait Times’ disused printing press to paint his mural, taking advantage of his writing skills to play with words and transfer spoken language into a work of art. “Due to the nature of my work, being a writer, journalist and professional Scrabble player, wordplay is my forte. My mural titled ‘ANARkey’ of keys blasting out of an exploding pomegranate symbolizes anarchy and chaos, as ‘anar’ means pomegranate in many languages,” he explained.

Reshamwala has been drawing and painting since he was a child. “My family would praise me as a child for my drawing skills. It has been always a hobby, and I never thought of it as a profession. In college, I used to paint posters with typography, a technique of arranging words to make written language appealing when displayed,” he said.

“I won a couple of art competitions during my childhood, but it remained as a hobby and never developed into a career idea. Even though I have a degree in



finance, I was always into writing and words, and was the editor of my college’s book club magazine, which eventually led me to copywriting and journalism,” Reshamwala added.

Seeing murals by other graffiti artists at the old printing press made Reshamwala consider participating and sharing his talent with Kuwait Times. “I was interested when Kuwait Times announced opening the old printing press to artists to express their art on our walls.



Kuwait Times Front Page Editor Shakir Reshamwala poses in front of his mural titled ‘ANARkey’. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Then one day, Abdullah Boftain, Kuwait Times Deputy Editor-in-Chief, was showing me around, and at the spur of the moment I asked him if I could also make a mural, and he said ‘yes’. That encouraged me to be part of the art on the walls,” he said.

Art and writing aren’t the only things Reshamwala is passionate about - handcrafts and using tools allowed him to see the different artistic angles of his painting. “While I was painting, I thought why not make the keys 3D to give them a different dimension. Due to my passion for tools, I drew outlines of the keys on sheets of plywood and cut them out with a jigsaw,” he explained.

Regarding the material used in the art

work, Reshamwala pointed out this was his first time painting on a wall, so he prepared by watching tutorials online to hone his skills. “I used acrylic colors on the wall, with spray paint for highlighting. The keys too were spray painted after getting a lick of acrylic. I worked on the mural over three weekends. It was hard to translate a small canvas painting to the wall, so I made gridlines to scale up my artwork.”

In ‘ANARkey’, Reshamwala has painted a distinctive, lively, deep, vibrant and vivid piece of art. The artwork blends colors to present a nice kind of chaos, with detailed and bold brushwork.



## Costa Rica crocodiles survive in ‘most polluted’ river

**I**n one of the most polluted rivers in Central America, a vulnerable crocodile species is thriving despite living in waters that have become a sewer for Costa Rica’s capital, experts say. Every day, trash and wastewater from San Jose households and factories flood into the Tarcoles River, which vomits tires and plastic into the surrounding mangroves. Nevertheless, some 2,000 American Crocodiles have adapted to life in the toxic river that bears witness to the country’s decades-long battle with waste management.

“It is a super-contaminated area, but this has not affected the crocodile population,” said Ivan Sandoval, a biologist with the National University of Costa Rica. “The Tarcoles River is the most polluted

river in Costa Rica, and one of the most contaminated in Central America. Heavy metals, nitrites, nitrates, and a large amount of human waste can be found,” added the crocodile expert.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), there are only about 5,000 of the crocodile species-found in 18 countries-left in the world after decades of hunting and habitat loss. The organization lists the *Crocodylus acutus* as “vulnerable,” but says its numbers have increased in recent years. The Costa Rica population is “healthy and robust.” Indeed, the large reptiles-basking in the sun and occasionally feeding on fish that come up the channel from the sea-appear unphased by some 150 types of bacteria that Sandoval says have been detected in the river. He describes the carnivores as “living fossils” with the capacity to survive very tough conditions. “They haven’t had to change anything in millions of years, they are perfectly designed.”

### Lawns not applied

Sandoval said that since 1980, Costa Rica’s population of the crocodiles “are recovering,” and warns of the threat of

tourist activities. The river’s crocodiles are a major draw for foreign visitors, who take boat tours to see the creatures up close. Some feed the animals, which is prohibited, and Sandoval worries about them getting too used to being close to people. Juan Carlos Buitrago, 48, who captains one of the tour boats, says he and other locals regularly pull hundreds of tires and plastic waste from the water.

He delights in the fauna of the river, with macaws flying overhead at sunset, but wishes his countrymen would stop polluting his “office.” “We cannot hide the pollution,” he tells AFP. Costa Rica has impressive environmental credentials, with a third of its territory marked for protection, 98 percent renewable energy, and 53 percent forest cover, according to the UN’s environmental agency.

However, the law is not always strictly applied, as in the case of the Tarcoles River. Lawyer and environmentalist Walter Brenes, 34, said that all of Costa Rica’s rules and regulations “do not solve the problem.” He said the country needs “real public policy that is completely aimed at protecting wildlife.” — AFP



## Wolves emboldened by parasite more likely to lead pack: Study

**W**olves infected with a common parasite are far more likely to become the leader of their pack, according to a new study, suggesting that the brain-dwelling intruder emboldens its host to take more risks. The single-celled parasite, *Toxoplasma gondii*, only sexually reproduces in cats but can infect all warm-blooded animals. Between 30-50 percent of people worldwide are estimated to be infected with the parasite, which remains for life as dormant tissue cysts. However people with a healthy immune system rarely have any symptoms.

While some studies have reported an association between people having the parasite in their brain and increased risk-taking, other research has disputed these findings and no definitive link has been proven. The new study, published in the journal *Communications Biology* on Thursday, took advantage of 26 years’ worth of data on grey wolves living in the Yellowstone National Park in the United States to investigate how the parasite could affect their behavior.

The researchers from the Yellowstone Wolf Project analyzed the blood samples of nearly 230 wolves and 62 cougars-the big cats are known spreaders of the parasite. They found that infected wolves were more likely to foray deeper into cougar territory than uninfected wolves. Infected wolves were also 11 times more

likely to leave their pack than wolves without the parasite, the study said, indicating a higher rate of risk-taking. And an infected wolf is up to 46 times more likely to become pack leader, the researchers estimated, adding that the role is normally won by more aggressive animals.

Study co-author Kira Cassidy told AFP that while “being bolder is not necessarily a bad thing,” it can “lower survival for the most bold animals as they might make decisions that put them in danger more often.” “Wolves do not have the survival space to take too many more risks than they already do.”

Cassidy said it was only the second study on *T. gondii*’s effect on a wild animal, after research last year found increased boldness in infected hyena cubs made them more likely to get closer to-and killed by-lions in Kenya. Laboratory research has also found that rodents with the parasite lose their instinctual fear of cats-driving them into the hands of the only host where *T. gondii* can reproduce. William Sullivan, a professor of pharmacology and toxicology at the Indiana University School of Medicine who has been studying *T.gondii* for more than 25 years, called the wolf paper “a rare gem”.

However he warned that such an observational study could not show causation. “A wolf that is a born risk-taker may simply be more likely to venture into cougar territory and contract *Toxoplasma*,” he said. But “if the findings are correct, they suggest we may be underestimating the impact *Toxoplasma* has on ecosystems around the world,” he added. — AFP





## Sports

# Lakers stun Spurs 105-94; Celtics overpower Kings

## LeBron James returns from a 5-game injury absence

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James returned from a five-game injury absence to score 21 points on Friday as the Los Angeles Lakers beat the Spurs 105-94 in San Antonio for their first road win of the NBA season. James pulled down eight rebounds and handed out five assists with three steals and a blocked shot in 33 minutes on the floor, with Lakers coach Darvin Ham saying the four-time NBA champion looked "phenomenal" after missing five games with a groin injury. The Boston Celtics, led by 30 points from Jayson Tatum, downed the red-hot Sacramento Kings 122-104 to improve their league-leading record to 15-4.

On a busy night in the NBA after a day off for the US Thanksgiving holiday, the Milwaukee Bucks rallied for a 117-102 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers in a battle for second place in the Eastern Conference. In San Antonio, all eyes were on James, who is on track-if he stays healthy - to surpass Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the league's all-time leading scorer as early as February. He scored the first basket of the contest as the Lakers quickly powered to a double-digit lead. They led 59-41 at halftime, but the young Spurs team had sliced the deficit to 81-78 by early in the fourth.

The Lakers responded, James's dunk taking the lead back to 10 points. "I felt pretty good," James said. "I've been non-stop around the clock (getting treatment) for the last couple of weeks to get back on the floor." Anthony Davis scored 11 of his 25 points in the final period, finishing with a double-double that also included 15 rebounds. Ham was delighted with what he saw from his superstar, James's nine turnovers notwithstanding. "He was moving great," Ham said. "Obviously there's going to be some rust there... but I thought he looked great." James said he expected to be back on the floor when the Spurs hosted the Lakers again Saturday and he expects to see improvement. "My rhythm, my timing was a little off on a few of my passes," he said. "But I'll be a lot better as the games go on." In Boston, the Celtics survived a sloppy third quarter to down the Kings, whose eight wins in November included a seven-game winning streak that ended with a loss to Atlanta on Wednesday.

Boston led by as many as 16 early in the second quarter, but the Kings used a 40-point second period to cut the deficit to two points at halftime. The Kings kept



SAN ANTONIO: LeBron James #6 of the Los Angeles Lakers drives over Zach Collins #23 of the San Antonio Spurs in the second half at AT&T Center on November 25, 2022. — AFP

pushing in a third quarter that featured four lead changes. The game was tied 84-84 when Boston reserve Payton Pritchard drained a three-pointer and Tatum fed Luke Kornet for an alley-oop dunk. Tatum then came up with a steal and a basket, followed by a rebound and a three-pointer to give the Celtics a 94-84 lead going into the fourth.

### Antetokounmpo dominates

In Milwaukee, Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 38 points to take the Bucks past the Cavaliers, who led by 16 in the first half but were out-scored 35-10 in the third quarter as the hosts turned things around. The Phoenix

Suns maintained their slim lead in the Western Conference with a 108-102 victory over the Detroit Pistons.

Deandre Ayton scored 28 points and grabbed 12 rebounds and Devin Booker added 21 points in the Suns' third straight victory. The reigning champion Golden State Warriors rode a hot start to a 129-118 victory over the Utah Jazz, improving to 10-10 in what has been a rocky season so far. It was a battle of the top two picks in the 2019 draft in New Orleans, where Ja Morant scored 23 points with four rebounds and 11 assists to lead the Memphis Grizzlies to a 132-111 victory over Zion Williamson's Pelicans.—AFP



MALAGA: Australia's Jordan Thompson (right) with Australia's Max Purcell returns the ball during the men's double semi-final tennis match between Croatia and Australia of the Davis Cup tennis tournament at the Martin Carpena sporthall in Malaga on November 25, 2022. — AFP

## Australia reach first Davis Cup final since 2003

MALAGA: Australia reached their first Davis Cup final since 2003 on Friday when they battled back to beat last year's runners-up Croatia 2-1. Max Purcell and Jordan Thompson stunned 2021 Wimbledon champions Nikola Pietrangeli and Mate Pavic 6-7 (3/7), 7-5, 6-4 in the decisive doubles to hand Australia a final clash against either Canada or Italy on Sunday.

The victory was reward for the decision by Australia skipper Lleyton Hewitt—who played in the 2003 title-winning team—to pair Thompson with Purcell. Matthew Ebden, who had partnered Purcell to this year's Wimbledon title, had been scheduled to feature in the deciding rubber before the late switch. "It's been a long time," said Hewitt. "We're a very proud Davis Cup nation and I'm very proud of these guys. They deserve to be in the final and in with a chance of winning this thing."

Hewitt admitted there had been a "slight injury concern" over Ebden. "But I had no concerns about the

chemistry of these two (Purcell and Thompson)." After Mekic and Pavic claimed the 53-minute opening set in the tiebreak to nudge Croatia closer to a fourth Davis Cup final in six years, the Australian pair hit back. They broke in the 11th game of the second set to level before breaking again in the seventh game of the decider on their way to victory after two hours and 14 minutes.

Earlier, Alex de Minaur beat former US Open champion Marin Cilic 6-2, 6-2 to pull 28-time champions Australia level after Borna Coric had given Croatia the lead in the semi-final with a 6-4, 6-3 victory over Thanasi Kokkinakis. Cilic, ranked 17 in the world, was undone by 23 unforced errors as De Minaur, the world number 24, avenged a loss to the Croatian when the two countries met in last year's tournament.

"Marin's a hell of a competitor, a veteran player of our sport that has accomplished amazing things. I knew what to expect, so I knew it was never going to be easy," said De Minaur. "I knew I had to bring all the intensity I could, be as solid as I could, and try to be solid but aggressive at the same time." World number 26 Coric triumphed over 95th-ranked Kokkinakis in 92 minutes on the back of six aces and 18 winners as the two-time champions set their sights on a return to the final having lost to Russia in the 2021 title match.—AFP

## Italians inspired by Freddie Mercury in Espoo figure skating

ESPOO: Rebecca Ghilardi and Filippo Ambrosini channeled British rockers Queen as they took an early lead in pairs at the Espoo figure skating Grand Prix to keep alive their hopes of making the finals in Turin. In the short program at the sixth and last Grand Prix before the finals in their native country, the Italian pair skated to "Somebody To Love" and "Another One Bites the Dust". Ambrosini grew a moustache for the routine. "I represent Freddie Mercury and we feel this program, this music," he said.

American pair Anastasiia Smirnova and Danylo Siiyantsina, both born in Ukraine, were second followed by Russian-born duo Anastasiia Metelkina and Daniil Parkman, representing Georgia. In the men's short program, 25th-ranked Frenchman Kevin Aymoz jumped to a surprise lead over American Ilia Malinin. Japan's Shun Sato was third. Aymoz, returning from an ankle injury, gave a spectacular display. "I got injured six weeks ago," Aymoz said. "I am glad to be here, even if I don't have the technical level to do big quads. I'm not expecting a lot of results tomorrow." "The injury makes me realise that I am here to enjoy the moment."

In October, Malinin, landed only the second quadruple axel ever performed in competition to become Skate America's youngest men's champion, but on Friday the 17-year-old under-rotated on two toe-loops and stumbled on his triple Axel. "It wasn't the best skate that I had," he said. In the women's short program, Loena Hendrickx of Belgium took the lead by 1.30 points from Japan's Mai Mihara. Another Japanese skater, Mana Kawabe, was third.

Hendricks said she had struggled in the build up to the event. "I had a hard time working towards this competition. I felt a little ill last week and my blood results were not very good, so I had to take a little bit of rest," she said. The evening closed with Canadians Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier, the top-ranked pair in Espoo, set their new best score as they built a huge 8.87 point lead over Americans Kaitlin Hawayek and Jean-Luc Baker with another American pair, Christina Carreira and Anthony Ponomarenko 4.73 points further back in third.—AFP

## Afghanistan thrash Lanka in ODI opener

KANDY: Opener Ibrahim Zadran's sparkling century and four wickets by Fazalhaq Farooqi led Afghanistan to an emphatic 60-run win over Sri Lanka in the opening one-day international on Friday. Afghanistan posted 294-8 after electing to bat as Ibrahim, who hit 106, put on key partnerships, including a 118-run second-wicket stand with Rahmat Shah, who made 52, in Pallekele.

Afghanistan's Farooqi and fellow quick Gulbadin Naib shared seven wickets between them as the tourists bowled out Sri Lanka for 234. Pathum Nissanka's 85 and a threatening 66 by Wanindu Hasaranga went in vain as Afghanistan ended the Sri Lankan innings in 38 overs. But it was the batting that set the tone for Afghanistan's domination in the first ever bilateral ODI series between the two teams.

Ibrahim led the charge with his second ODI century and Najibullah Zadran's 25-ball 42 boosted the total but some disciplined bowling in the end checked Afghanistan, who looked like getting over 300. "The pitch was good for batting, I read the surface and took my time, and it worked," man of the match Ibrahim said. "The track remained the same throughout, we wanted to get to 320, that was the plan. Our bowlers did a great job."

Rahmanullah Gurbaz justified captain Hashmatullah Shahidi's decision to bat first as he hit a flurry of boundaries in his 53. Ibrahim joined the attack as the two put on 84 runs to set the tone for the batting charge. Cameos from Najibullah and Naib, who made 22 off 24 balls, took on the bowlers in the end but Sri Lanka gave away just 31 runs in the final five overs and took five wickets. Hasaranga returned impressive figures of 2-42 in his 10 overs.



KANDY: Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga de Silva plays a shot during the first one-day international (ODI) cricket match between Sri Lanka and Afghanistan at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy on November 25, 2022. — AFP

The hosts started briskly but regular wickets hurt their progress with Naib picking two to rattle the top-order. Nissanka reached his fifty in 42 balls and put on 47 runs with skipper Dasun Shanaka, who fell to Naib. Farooqi denied Nissanka his ton but Hasaranga soon hit back to raise hopes of a turnaround. He smashed Mohammad Nabi for a six and four fours in a 22-run 31st over and raised his fifty in 31 balls. Wickets kept falling and Hasaranga was the last man out to Farooqi, who finished with figures of 4-49.

"The difference between the two sides was the partnerships. Their side batted around Ibrahim and had three partnerships," said Shanaka. "We had starts but couldn't convert it." The loss dented Sri Lanka's chances of a direct qualification to the 50-over World Cup in India next year with crucial Super League points up for grabs in the series. Shanaka said Sri Lanka need to "win three out of (remaining) five games (for World Cup qualification) and we're looking forward to that." The second match is on Sunday at the same venue.—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

Kalzen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kalfan	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
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# Iran stun Wales 2-0; Qatar out; England miss a chance

## Netherlands, Ecuador draw 1-1 as Gakpo shines

DOHA: Host nation Qatar crashed out of the World Cup on Friday after a second straight defeat before an uninspired England missed the chance to wrap up qualification for the last 16 following a 0-0 draw with the United States. Qatar lost 3-1 to Senegal and became the first team to be knocked out of this World Cup after the Netherlands and Ecuador drew 1-1 in the other Group A game. Asian champions Qatar had high hopes coming into the tournament but became only the second home team to crash out in the group stage, after South Africa in 2010.

Goals from Boulaye Dia, Famara Diedhiou and Bamba Dieng were enough to give African champions Senegal the win. Mohammed Muntari scored Qatar's only World Cup goal so far in a deeply disappointing debut on football's biggest stage - it is the first time a World Cup host nation has gone out after just two games. "We would like to say we're very sorry to the supporters, to the country," said Qatar defender Tarek Salman, who was a second-half substitute. "We have made them feel bad about losing two games in a row in the World Cup."

The Netherlands took an early lead against Ecuador through Cody Gakpo - his second goal of the tournament - but Ecuador leveled through captain Enner Valencia's tournament-leading third goal. Louis van Gaal's Netherlands, who have four points, will qualify for the last 16 with a draw against Qatar in their final match. Senegal must beat Ecuador to advance to the knockout phase. After thumping Iran 6-2 in their opening match, an unimaginative England produced a limp display against the USA and were booed off at full-time.

Gareth Southgate's men would have been guaranteed to advance from Group B with a victory, but they rarely troubled a determined US team. "A draw isn't the end of the world for us, it puts us in a great position in the group," England captain Harry Kane said. "After our first performance people thought we were just going to landslide every team we play, but it's not the case." England need only avoid a four-goal defeat by neighbors Wales on Tuesday to advance and know a victory will send them through as group winners.



DOHA: Netherlands' midfielder #21 Frenkie De Jong (center) fights for the ball with Ecuador's midfielder #20 Jhelson Mendez (left), Netherlands' Andries Noppert and Ecuador's defender #25 Jackson Porozo during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group A football match between the Netherlands and Ecuador on November 25, 2022. — AFP

### Emotional Iran leave it late

Earlier, Iran scored twice deep into stoppage time to stun Wales 2-0 and breathe new life into a World Cup campaign overshadowed by mass anti-government protests at home. The Iranian players sang the national anthem before their win over Wales, having opted to stay silent in their opener in Qatar in an apparent gesture of support for the demonstrators. They were worthy winners against a team reduced to 10 men late in the match.

Iran, who would have been eliminated if they had lost, punished Gareth Bale's Wales in the eighth minute of injury time when substitute Rouzbeh Cheshmi smashed home. The Iranians sent their thousands of fans at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium in Doha wild when Ramin Rezaeian clipped in a second goal on the counter-attack. There were emotional scenes as Iran's players and staff, including their Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz, embraced on the pitch and took in the acclaim of their supporters.

Mehdi Taremi, the team's star striker, paid tribute to Iran's fans. "Thank you to our supporters, they helped us all the time," said Taremi, who was cut down by Wayne Hennessey when the goalkeeper came harrying out of his goal. Hennessey was sent off in the 86th minute, earning the first red card of the World Cup. "We need those supporters to support us like always," added Taremi, whose side will reach the last 16 if they win a politically charged clash with the United States on Tuesday. — AFP

## Neymar to miss next World Cup match

DOHA: Neymar will sit out Brazil's next World Cup game after he injured an ankle in his team's opening win against Serbia, the team doctor said on Friday, and a report said he may not return until the last 16. The Paris Saint-Germain star suffered ligament damage in the 2-0 victory against Serbia on Thursday when he collided with Nikola Milenkovic. The 30-year-old tried to continue but was substituted with about 10 minutes to go and underwent an examination on Friday. Rodrigo Lasmar, the doctor for the Brazilian football federation (CBF), said Neymar would miss the match against Switzerland on Monday.

However, Brazil's Globo Esporte reported that he could also be sidelined for the final Group G game against Cameroon on December 2, but then would return if Brazil reach the knockout phase. "Today is one of the most difficult moments of my career... and again in a World Cup," Neymar wrote on Instagram.

"I have an injury yes, it's annoying, it's going to hurt but I'm sure I'll have the chance to come back because I'm going to do my best to help my country, my team-mates and myself."

Brazil right-back Danilo will also miss Brazil's second game with an ankle strain. "We will not have these two players for our next match but they continue their treatment with the aim of recovering in time for the rest of the competition," the doctor said in a video released by the CBF. Coach Tite was optimistic after the Serbia match that Neymar would be back to lead Brazil's bid for a record-extending sixth World Cup crown. "You can be certain that Neymar is going to play in the World Cup," Tite said, adding that the attacker had initially stayed on the pitch after hurting his ankle "because the team needed him".

### Injury-prone

Neymar's career has been peppered by injuries which have impacted on his previous two World Cups. In 2014 he suffered a fractured bone in his back in the quarter-final win over Colombia, meaning he was sidelined when the hosts were thrashed 7-1 by Germany in the semi-finals. Four years later he raced to recover from injury in time for the tournament in Russia, but Brazil never hit the expected



LUSAIL: Brazil's forward #10 Neymar falls during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group G football match between Brazil and Serbia at the Lusail Stadium in Lusail, north of Doha. — AFP

heights before losing to Belgium in the last eight. The former Barcelona star, who has 122 caps for Brazil, also missed the 2019 Copa America after suffering torn ligaments in his right ankle. In 2021 Neymar was out for about 10 weeks of the French season after suffering ligament damage to his left ankle. — AFP

### Today's matches on TV

#### FIFA World Cup 2022

Japan v Costa Rica 13:00

Alkass EXTRA One HD

Alkass EXTRA TWO HD

Belgium v Morocco 16:00

Alkass EXTRA TWO HD

beIN Sports HD 2 Max

Croatia v Canada 19:00

beIN Sports HD 1 Max

Spain v Germany 22:00

Alkass EXTRA TWO HD

## Iran fans celebrate beating of Welsh

TEHRAN: With the sound of the referee's final whistle, Iranians poured into Tehran's streets on foot, by scooter and car to celebrate their national team's World Cup win over Wales on Friday. An explosion of joy greeted Iran's 2-0 victory - with both goals coming deep in injury time - as many momentarily forgot the tension created by two months of unrest following the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini. The faces piling into Martyr's Square, in the centre of the capital, were all smiles.

Amid waving flags parents danced with children on their shoulders to the sound of plastic trumpets, while a cacophony of music escaped from cars stuck in a sprawling traffic jam. "I am delighted with this victory because my passion is football, not politics," said Mehdi, 18. The sound of car horns merged with cries of happiness outside a mosque in Tehran's upscale Saadat Abad neighborhood as Iran's "Cheetahs" delivered a beleaguered population an extra-time gift against their Group B rivals.

"In the previous match we were under terrible pressure because of the situation in the country, but today we decided to go for it," said Reza, 24, who came to watch the match with a friend. Iran suffered a humiliating 6-2 defeat by England in their opening group match on Monday. Iran's players had refused to sing the national anthem before the match and the nation's media attributed the team's poor showing to the weight of competing political pressures.



AL-RAYYAN: Iran's players celebrate their victory with Iran's Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group B football match between Wales and Iran on November 25, 2022. — AFP

### Mood had changed

Against Wales on Friday the mood had changed. The team sang the national anthem and in the stadium supporters did not chant slogans criticising the national team, as they had in the previous match. Many Iranians had become disenchanted with the national team and although Friday's win appeared to shift sentiments some remained unwavering. On the edges of the celebrating crowds two women, both in their fifties, had not forgotten.

"We have always supported the national team but not this time," said Fariba. "We

are in mourning for the young people who have died during the protests." Arman, 28, agreed and saw no reason to celebrate. "This team is completely indifferent to me," he said. "For the moment the wounds have not healed". Others thought the victory was for Iran's people. "It is our national team - not the government's - that won the victory," said Jaffer, 48, from northern Guilan province. Heavy police numbers in the streets have become a common sight since the protests began, but on this occasion authorities did not move on the crowds. — AFP

## Exit looms as Spain, Germany face off

DOHA: Just one match into the Qatar World Cup, Germany face what amounts to a must-win clash against Spain on Sunday, a team they have not beaten in a competitive fixture since 1988. Before Germany were stunned 2-1 by Japan in their opening match, the team faced heavy criticism for backtracking on a promise to wear the armband in support of diversity and human rights.

Their response was powerful - a team photo before the Japan match in which all 11 players covered their mouths, suggesting they had been silenced by FIFA, who had threatened on-field sanctions for anyone wearing the armband. But after Japan scored two late goals to beat Hansi Flick's team, the Germans were hammered by some observers for losing focus on the football when they should be concentrating on avoiding a second successive group stage exit in a World Cup.

On Friday, Chelsea striker Kai Havertz said the players were holding onto their beliefs but knew the challenge ahead, especially against a Spain team that steamrollered Costa Rica 7-0 in their opening game. "Everyone knows our point of view

and how we think," Havertz said in a pre-match press conference.

"Really, our focus is 100 percent on football, nothing else. We just said what we think, what our point of view is, everyone knows that, and now it is about playing football." With super-market chain Rewe pulling their sponsorship and with TV ratings for the Japan game the lowest in Germany for a World Cup in more than 30 years, Havertz recognised that the challenges were not just on the field, saying: "I know not everyone is behind us."

Havertz revealed the squad and Flick held a wide-ranging team meeting on Thursday, admitting "it was time to tell ourselves the truth". Havertz said "everyone left the meeting knowing what's going on". Sitting alongside Havertz, midfielder Julian Brandt said "we had a very good exchange. All of us left the conversation feeling like we had the determination to win the game."

The importance of the Spain match at the Al Bayt Stadium cannot be underestimated - national squad manager and 1996 Euros winner Oliver Bierhoff has asked what another early exit would mean for the future of football in Germany. Speaking with Germany TV network ARD on Friday, Bierhoff said losing "our first final" in Qatar would have widespread ramifications for the sport. "What does it mean for German football? For the further development?" Bierhoff asked. — AFP



## Poland overwhelm Saudi Arabia 2-0, top Group C

Lewandowski scores first World Cup goal of his prolific career



AL-RAYYAN: Saudi Arabia's goalkeeper #21 Mohammed Al-Owais (right) makes a save from an attempt at goal by Poland's forward #09 Robert Lewandowski (left) during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group C football match between Poland and Saudi Arabia on November 26, 2022. — AFP

DOHA: Robert Lewandowski scored the first World Cup goal of his prolific career on Saturday when he netted in Poland's 2-0 win over Saudi Arabia, bursting their bubble following the team's giant-killing act against Argentina. Barcelona forward Lewandowski made sure Poland took a big step towards the last 16 in Qatar when he rolled home in the 82nd minute after being gifted the ball by Abdulleh Al-Malki.

However it was a battle for Czeslaw Michniewicz's side, who were leading at that point thanks to Piotr Zielinski's roofed finish and an incredible double save from Wojciech Szczesny after Salem Al-Dawsari's penalty late in the first half. Poland leapfrogged the Saudis into first place in Group C, with Lionel Messi's Argentina facing Mexico later on Saturday.

Egged on by a vocal crowd, Herve Renard's Saudi team came out with the bit between their teeth and the Poles frequently struggled to handle their

aggressive press. Poland were shown three early yellow cards. Mohamed Kanno had the game's first decent effort on goal, tipped over by Szczesny in the 13th minute. Lewandowski initially found it hard to get into the game as he was immediately surrounded by a gang of defenders led by Ali Al-Bulayhi, who at one point looked to be heading out of the game after being accidentally studded by the Barca star.

### Super Szczesny

Lewandowski played a key role in Poland's opener against the run of play in the 39th minute, pulling back for Zielinski to finish after nearly clipping home his first World Cup goal. Szczesny then stepped up to save his team minutes later after referee Wilton Sampaio awarded a soft penalty, when Saleh Al-Shehri went down heavily under pressure from Krystian Bielik.

The Juventus goalkeeper did well to bat away

Dawsari's nervy spot-kick but the ball fell to Mohammed Al-Burayk, who was denied on the rebound by a sensational stop. Szczesny was again Poland's savior nine minutes after the break when he charged off his line to keep out Dawsari following a chaotic passage of play that ended with the ball being ballooned over the bar.

Poland were again close to buckling under intense Saudi pressure but should have been further ahead midway through the second half when Arkadiusz Milik and Lewandowski both struck the woodwork in the space of three minutes. Malki then scuffed wide from the edge of the box and it was his mistake that allowed Lewandowski to seal the points. Nothing looked on when Malki received a pass on the edge of his own area but he let the ball slip past him and right into Lewandowski's feet, allowing him to roll in a simple finish and end his hoodoo. — AFP

## Holders France in last 16 after Mbappe double

DOHA: Kylian Mbappe scored twice, including a late winner, as holders France edged Denmark 2-1 on Saturday to become the first team to reach the last 16 of the World Cup. A potent French side knew a second victory in as many Group D outings would take them through to the knockout phase and they were well worth the lead that Mbappe gave them when he opened the scoring at Stadium 974 just after the hour mark.

However, Andreas Christensen soon equalized for the Danes and Les Bleus needed Mbappe to deliver again in the 86th minute as he turned in Antoine Griezmann's cross to puncture the Danish resistance once and for all. Having scored four during France's victorious 2018 campaign and one against Australia, Mbappe now has seven goals in nine World Cup appearances.

Didier Deschamps's side now have the luxury of going into their final group game against Tunisia



DOHA: France's forward Kylian Mbappe scores his team's second goal in front of Denmark's goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel at Stadium 974 on Nov 26, 2022. —AFP

knowing a draw will guarantee them top spot, and even a defeat may not prevent them finishing first. Having come roaring back to batter Australia 4-1 in their opening match in Qatar, France were more wasteful in front of goal on this occasion but at least they did not come unstuck against opponents who have caused them problems before.

They were reigning champions when a defeat to the Danes knocked them out of the 2002 World Cup, while the sides played out the only goalless draw in 2018. More recently Kasper Hjulmand's side beat France

"As a striker you need to have that confidence and believe that you can score in every match," said Japan-based centre-forward Duke, 31, whose physical presence was a nuisance all game to Tunisia. "I actually was messaging some of my family saying that I was going to score today." Duke made the letter "J" after scoring and said that was for his watching son. "The gesture was a letter J for the first letter of his name," said Duke. "I haven't seen it yet but apparently he did it back to me from the stadium, which was a really special moment and I'm going to treasure it for the rest of my life."

Australia's best previous World Cup performance came in 2006 when they reached the last 16, in the days of Tim Cahill, Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka. Graham Arnold's Australia don't have players of that ilk but they have lots of heart and kicked off to deafening whistles in front of 42,000 at Al Janoub Stadium, where their fans were heavily outnumbered.

Each Australia touch was met with whistles from the throbbing ranks of Tunisia's bouncing, bellowing and

home and away in this year's Nations League, and it seemed that Deschamps had learned lessons from those two encounters.

If France were a shadow of their usual selves in Copenhagen in September, they were much better in this match, played in a pop-up stadium made of shipping containers on Doha's waterfront. Deschamps changed three of his back four, with Theo Hernandez at left-back in place of his injured elder brother Lucas and Raphael Varane coming in for his first game in over a month.

But the French attack was untouched on the Australia game. If Olivier Giroud took the headlines then, here Ousmane Dembele was electric at times on the right, Griezmann excelled in an advanced midfield role, and Mbappe made the difference. France's pace, power and passing were all too sharp for the Euro 2020 semi-finalists who were lucky to go in level at half-time.

There were some France appeals for a red card in the 19th minute when Mbappe burst onto a beautiful threaded through ball by Griezmann only to be hauled down by Christensen, but the Danish defender escaped with a yellow. The holders' best chances in the first half came from headers by Varane and Adrien Rabiot, but when Mbappe turned away from Joachim Andersen just before the hour mark and accelerated away, it was a sign that a goal was coming. — AFP

flag-waving supporters. Australia had only ever won two matches at the World Cup before this and squeezed into this edition via a playoff. But they started the better against a Tunisia team who held Denmark 0-0 in their opener and are looking to reach the knockout stage for the first time. The match was being shown on primetime Saturday night television in Australia and viewers saw their gritty side dominate the first half.

Australia took the lead their possession deserved midway through the first half. Craig Goodwin, who scored the opener in the loss to France, crossed from the left and the ball ricocheted for Duke to glance his header back over his own shoulder and into the net. Defender Harry Souttar of Stoke City then made a heroic last-ditch block from the dangerous Youssef Msakni as half-time approached. Tunisia's fans had their heads in their hands in injury time when Msakni finally escaped Souttar, only to sidefoot wide from close range. — AFP



Saudi Arabia's goalkeeper #21 Mohammed Al-Owais (left) makes a save from an attempt at goal by Poland's forward #09 Robert Lewandowski (center) on November 26, 2022. — AFP photos



A Saudi Arabia fan kisses a replica of the FIFA World Cup trophy during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group C football match between Poland and Saudi Arabia.



Poland's forward #09 Robert Lewandowski celebrates scoring his team's second goal on November 26, 2022.



A Saudi Arabia fan looks on ahead of the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group C football match between Poland and Saudi Arabia at the Education City Stadium in Al-Rayyan on November 26, 2022.



Fans of Tunisia react after the team was defeated by Australia 1-0 in the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between Tunisia and Australia on November 26, 2022.



France's forward #10 Kylian Mbappe (top) jumps over Denmark's defender #13 Rasmus Kristensen during the Qatar 2022 World Cup Group D football match between France and Denmark on November 26, 2022.

## Australia revive World Cup hopes, beat Tunisia 1-0

DOHA: Goal hero Mitch Duke said he had a feeling he would score after his header gave dogged Australia a 1-0 World Cup win over Tunisia on Saturday to revive their last-16 hopes. The striker's clever looped header in Qatar put Australia in front in the 23rd minute and they desperately held on in the second half to silence Tunisia's vociferous fans. The Socceroos sit second in Group D with three points from two games, having been well-beaten 4-1 by holders France in their tournament opener. They face Denmark - who play France later Saturday - in their final group game and the knockout round is in sight.