

# MPs overwhelmingly reject ‘disappointing’ new Cabinet

## Lawmakers urge PM to correct the situation, call for reforms

### Sheikh Mishal: A trustworthy leader

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah two years ago designated HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to be the heir apparent, his right hand for managing state affairs and leading the march towards further development and prosperity. On the second anniversary of proclaiming Sheikh Mishal as Crown Prince, the light is focused on his crucial roles as HH the Amir's right hand, trusted adviser and deputy at times where the need arises, bearing the grand national responsibility and proving to be a trustworthy leader.

His Highness the Crown Prince, since his proclamation, has been guiding the judicial, legislative and executive authorities to perform national tasks, maintaining jurisdictions' separation and respecting laws for safeguarding the homeland's stability and its people's prosperity. Sheikh Mishal, born in Kuwait in 1940, is the seventh son of the late 10th Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who ruled the country between 1921 and 1950. — KUNA (See Page 3)



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MPs overwhelmingly rejected the new Cabinet line-up on Thursday and demanded a correction. Opposition MP Ammar Al-Ajmi, who was appointed in the Cabinet, declined the post immediately after the new government was named late on Wednesday, saying it included ministers who do not respect the constitution. That immediately triggered a crisis, because Ajmi was the only elected MP in the Cabinet, and under Kuwaiti law, the Cabinet must include at least one elected MP.

A ceremony scheduled on Thursday for the new Cabinet to be sworn in by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah did not take place, without any official comment. It was not immediately known if HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah will look for another lawmaker to replace Ajmi or make wider changes as demanded by over 40 of the 50 elected MPs, many of them from the opposition.

The main objections of the MPs centered around some of the six old ministers retained in the Cabinet, accused by MPs of “not respecting the constitution” because they voted for a controversial law in the previous Assembly that protected the

prime minister against public questioning. Leading veteran opposition MP Ahmad Al-Saadoun, tipped to be Assembly speaker, said “the selection of the ministers is not in line with the election's outcome.”

MP Saifi Al-Saifi said the Cabinet line-up does not reflect the ambitions of the Kuwaiti people and the results of the elections. “The prime minister did not learn from the experiences of the previous governments, and this will take us back to square one,” said Saifi, who urged the premier to correct the situation before the Assembly's opening session on Tuesday.

MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri said the prime minister should select ministers not suspected of links to corruption, and the selection of ministers should respect the will of the people. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari called on the prime minister to expand his consultations and meetings before announcing the government. New MP Hamad Al-Obaid said the prime minister should accept the resignation of the ministers and then form a new Cabinet in a bid to avoid confrontations between the Assembly and the government. MP Adel Al-Damkhi called on the prime minister to select statesmen for the Cabinet who believe in carrying out reforms and are capable of countering corruption.

## For Saudi fan, road to World Cup is a desert trek



Saudi trekker Abdullah Alsulmi crosses a desert area near Al-Khasrah on Sept 27, 2022 during his solo trek to the Qatari capital ahead of the FIFA World Cup. — AFP

AL-KHASRAH, Saudi Arabia: The idea hit Abdullah Alsulmi earlier this year, while he was watching a television show in which a senior Qatari official promised an “exceptional” experience at the upcoming World Cup. His excitement building, the 33-year-old Saudi recalls thinking: “I will go to Doha no matter what, even if I have to walk!”

It was an unlikely beginning to what has become an audacious adventure dismissed by some of Alsulmi's own relatives as “crazy”: A two-month, 1,600-km solo trek from his native Jeddah to the Qatari capital. Alsulmi says the journey, faithfully documented for his thousands of Snapchat followers, is meant to highlight regional enthusiasm for the first World Cup in the Middle East – which Saudi officials have pitched as a milestone “for all Arabs”.

“We want to support the World Cup,” Alsulmi told AFP one day last week as he sheltered from the midday sun near roadside shrubs in the town of Al-Khasrah, 340 km southwest of Riyadh. Wearing a wide-brim hat and a backpack to which he'd affixed Saudi and Qatari flags, he said: “I consider myself like a Qatari who is very interested in this World Cup and its success.” — AFP (See Page 11)

## Gunman kills at least 37 in Thai nursery attack

UDON THANI, Thailand: A former Thai police officer armed with a gun and a knife killed at least 37 people in northeast Thailand on Thursday, most of them children at a nursery, in one of the kingdom's deadliest mass killings. Following the attack, gunman Panya Khamrab went home and killed his wife and child before taking his own life, police said. Armed with a shotgun, pistol and knife, Panya opened fire on the childcare center in northeastern Nong Bua Lam Phu province, at about 12:30 pm (0530 GMT).

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh

Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Thursday a cable of condolences to Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn over the killings. HH the Amir expressed his deepest sorrow and condolences to the victims' families and hoped for a swift recovery of the injured in this horrendous attack. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Thai monarch.

National Police Chief Damrongsak Kittipraptat told a news conference the gunman had killed 37 people, including 23 children and his own family, and wounded 12 others. Nanthicha Punchum, acting chief of the nursery, described harrowing scenes as the attacker barged into the

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NONG BUA LAMPHU, Thailand: National Police Chief Damrongsak Kittipraptat speaks with a police operation team in this northern Thai province following an attack on a nursery on Oct 6, 2022. — AFP

## French author Annie Ernaux wins Literature Nobel

STOCKHOLM: French author Annie Ernaux, known for her deceptively simple novels drawing on personal experience of class and gender, was on Thursday awarded the Nobel Literature Prize. Ernaux, 82, was honored “for the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory”, the jury said.

The feminist icon told reporters in Paris the award created a responsibility to “continue the fight against injustice”. She said literature could not have an “immediate impact”, but she nonetheless felt the need to maintain the struggle for the rights of “women and the oppressed”. Her more than 20 books, many of which have been school

texts in France for decades, offer one of the most subtle, insightful windows into the social life of modern France.

Ernaux is the second woman among the eight Nobel laureates honored so far this year, with women vastly under-represented in the history of the prizes. French President Emmanuel Macron hailed the award, calling Ernaux's voice “that of the freedom of women and of the forgotten”. Personal experiences are the source for all Ernaux's work and she is the pioneer of France's “autofiction” genre, which gives narrative form to real-life experience.

Above all, her crystalline prose has excavated her own passage from working-class girl to the literary elite, casting a critical eye on social structures and her own complicated emotions. “Ernaux consistently and from different angles, examines a life marked by strong disparities regarding gender, language and class,” the Swedish Academy noted.

“Her work is uncompromising and written in plain language, scraped clean,” it said. “And when she with great courage and clinical acuity reveals



PARIS: French author Annie Ernaux reacts during a press conference after she won the 2022 Nobel Literature Prize at the Gallimard headquarters on Oct 6, 2022. — AFP

the agony of the experience of class, describing shame, humiliation, jealousy or inability to see who you are, she has achieved something admirable and enduring.”

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## Kuwait, Years From Now

Student Art Competition 2022

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## Local

# Mental health issues linger on even after the pandemic

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on the mental health and well-being of people, but it still remains an unresolved issue for many people in Kuwait. Nearly three years have passed since the outbreak of the pandemic, but adults and children of Kuwait have not yet recovered from its psychological effects.

This great transformation has had a great psychological impact, with cases of depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder and other psychological symptoms being seen, which people have been unable to deal with. Even after schools resumed at full capacity, children are still unable to adapt to their surroundings.

Ahmad Abdul Salam told Kuwait Times that his three-year-old son faces a struggle in accepting other children around him, noting that his son is not used to seeing anyone else other than his parents. "He still cries and has anxiety when other children come close to him at the nursery. Teaching him how to communicate is becoming harder and harder with time. We do not blame him - after all, he has not seen anyone else in two years," he said.

Teacher Iman Al-Haddad said: "It seems that higher fees charged by therapists are due to the increase in the number of patients who have suffered from psychological issues and due to the pandemic - being quarantined for long periods under strict health measures, as well as other psychological, social and genetic causes."

She added children were greatly affected. "Students in schools are more isolated these days and are only on their phones. They do not interact with people - always through social media. Students nowadays are living in their own bubbles," Haddad said.

Parents continue to report higher levels of stress than non-parents and are more likely to say that their mental

health has worsened after the pandemic. Um Fahad, a mother of two, was suffering from panic conditions since before the pandemic. The latest solution she opted for was to visit a psychiatrist, but the treatment was not completed due to the high fees charged for psychological consultations.

"In Kuwait, consultation starts at hundreds of dinars in some cases. How can people be in proper mental health shape if we cannot get the proper treatments," she wondered, adding the pandemic did not just impact young people, but also their parents. "We had to deal with the stress of keeping our children's mental health stable while taking care of our financial issues and our depression. The overload was too much to handle. The Kuwaiti government must consider what we went through and give all citizens free mental consultations," Um Fahad added.

Several citizens and residents stressed the need to review the fees charged by psychiatric clinics and take steps to reduce them, as they sometimes are more expensive than airline tickets and hotel accommodations. Saba Al-Essa explained to Kuwait Times that it is cheaper to treat your mental issues in another country than in Kuwait. She suggested that private psychiatric clinics must reduce the cost of consultation, so that everyone can avail their services, calling on relevant institutions to activate their role in this field and open social and psychological service centers at all medical centers to serve Kuwaitis.

Meanwhile, Ali Al-Sultan stressed the importance of the role of specialists and psychological and social consultants to alleviate the suffering of mental patients as well as reduce the pressures experienced by some members of society to achieve a safe and comfortable environment for all. He said young people were more affected than older groups, explaining that some stud-



ies confirmed that the COVID-19 epidemic had destroyed the personalities of young people and led some youngsters to be introverts, while developing symptoms of mental illnesses.

The international medical journal Lancet conducted a study in 204 countries in 2020 that showed cases of depression and anxiety increased worldwide by more

than a quarter. According to UNICEF, children have been directly affected by the pandemic, with some experiencing interruption in education. It is estimated that more than 1 in 7 adolescents aged 10 to 19 have been diagnosed with a mental disorder and 1 in 5 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 often feel depressed or have a lack of desire to do things.

## Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House participates in international exhibitions

**KUWAIT:** Ali Al-Masoudi, Head of the Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House, said that they have received an impressive response for their participation in the publishing exhibitions held in Istanbul and Barcelona.

"We are quite keen to continue to reach more readers in Kuwait and abroad with our books and this has been a priority for us, for nearly half a century."

On the exhibition held in Istanbul, Al-Masoudi said that after the book exhibition which was recently held in Riyadh, he considers the exhibition in Istanbul, as the most important annual book exhibition to be held outside the Arab world.

"Our section at the exhibition was popular and well-received, which gives us the assurance that we are on the right path and we take pride in showcasing our creative published work. These range from contemporary literature works to documents on history, heritage and the sciences. We also display books translated from other countries and languages including the Turkish language which was appreciat-

ed by many of the Arab tourists in Turkey as well as the residents who were interested in the Arabic language," he said.

Al-Masoudi also said that the goals of the publishing house align well with the goals of the exhibition in Istanbul, which functions as a non-profit exhibition aimed at reviving the Arabic language and is also looking at ways to document the historical and literary connection between the Arabs and the Turks. He added that this was also the goal of the Suad Publishing House, as it aims to enrich the creativity of the Arabic language and bridge the gap between the Arab culture and other cultures.

"Our publishing house's participation in the exhibition comes at a time when we are displaying translated works of Suad Al-Sabah's works from Arabic to the Turkish language called 'And flowers know anger', which was published a few days ago and was quite popular among the Turks and Arabs as well."

He also added that the exhibition was a great opportunity for publishers in the region, as it saw the



Ali Al-Masoudi

participation of more than 30 countries, with around 100 events being held in the form of lectures, book signing sessions and other events.

Meanwhile, speaking with regards to the publishing house's participation at the book exhibition held in Barcelona, Al-Masoudi said that he hoped that the exhibition would serve as a good opportunity to showcase the Arabic and Islamic heritage and also be a meeting point for many cultures.

He also said that Dr Suad Al-Sabah hoped that the participation of the publishing house in exhibitions held at home, in the region and abroad would help to highlight the publishing house's initiatives globally.

"The books displayed at the exhibition are not just in Arabic, but also include many Arabic books translated to around 20 different languages from several categories," Al-Masoudi added.

He also said that Dr Suad Al-Sabah's ambitions were as per the instructions of her late husband Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, to support Arabic creativity in the Arab world, especially among the younger generations and to reward their creative talents.

Al-Masoudi said that, "Our publishing house aims to achieve the aspirations of Dr Suad Al-Sabah, in showcasing Arabic culture in the region and abroad and in giving a prominent position for Kuwait in all the international cultural events that we participate in."



Suad Al-Sabah Publishing House's booth in Istanbul.

## KFAS announces winners of the Kuwait 2021 Prize

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) announced Thursday winners of the Kuwait 2021 Prize. The Prize is given annually to distinguished Arab scientists who have made outstanding achievements and contributions. In a statement, KFAS Director General Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel said the Award amounts to KD 40,000 (about \$132,000) for each of the four fields. The statement added that the 'Condensed Matter Physics' prize was equally awarded to Saudi scientist Dr Othman Bakr and Egyptian scientist Dr Omar Abdulsabour, who worked together at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia, as their research focused on the use of perovskite material in solar energy appli-

cations and high-energy radiation sensors.

The prize for 'Applied Medical Sciences' went to Egyptian scientist Dr. Nabil Sidah and his Lebanese peer Ali Taher, on their research and treatment experiments on Thalassemia and high cholesterol. The prize for 'Educational Sciences' went to Lebanese Dr Fuad Abdulkhaleq on researching STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) in classrooms to enhance students' skills. The prize for 'Linguistics' went to Lebanese scholar Dr Ramzi Baalbaki. The Kuwait Prize was established in 1979 in accordance with the objectives of KFAS to support scientific research, innovation and creativity. — KUNA



Khaled Al-Fadhel



KUWAIT: Dr Khaled Al-Saeed with representatives from the areas declared as healthy cities.

## Abdullah Al-Salem, Shamiya declared healthy cities

**KUWAIT:** The Patients Helping Fund Society (PHFS), represented by the Department of Social

Development participated in a celebration to confirm Abdullah Al-Salem and Shamiya as healthy cities, an event which was hosted by the Office of Healthy Cities.

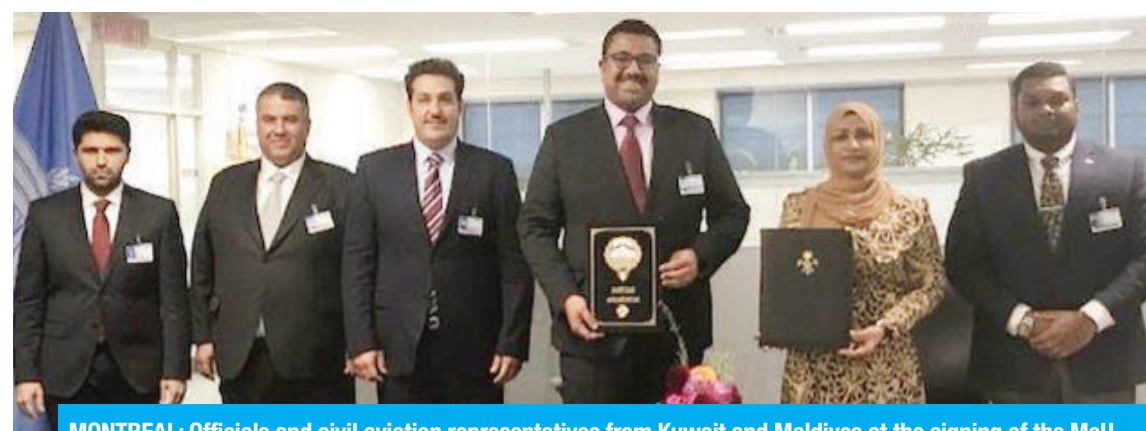
Acting Health Minister Dr Khaled Al-Saeed, representatives from the healthy cities' as well as members from the WHO and governors of Capital and Hawally governorates were present. Representatives also honored the PHFS for their cooperation and support for the initiative.

## KFF puts out fire in truck, Faiha co-op

**KUWAIT:** A fire broke out in a truck travelling on the 6th ring road. Fire stations from Mishref and

Qurain responded to the call and put out the fire with no human casualties.

Meanwhile, another fire broke out in a warehouse in Faiha cooperative and fire stations from Shuwaikha and Shuhada responded to the call and put out the fire. The store suffered some material damage but no casualties.



MONTREAL: Officials and civil aviation representatives from Kuwait and Maldives at the signing of the MoU.

## Kuwait, Maldives sign civil aviation MoU

**MONTREAL:** Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation signed on Wednesday, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Maldives' Civil Aviation Authority to achieve flexibility in air services for the economic benefit of

both countries. This came during the General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), being held in Montreal, Canada, between Sept 27 and Oct 7. Head of Kuwait's Civil Aviation Sheikh Abdullah Ali Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said in a statement to KUNA that this MoU helps strengthen the bilateral air relations, as well as facilitate the operation of commercial and cargo airlines. He also added that it aims to link Kuwait's International Airport with other international airports to enhance air transport, as well as encourage trade exchange between Kuwait and Maldives. — KUNA



## Local

# Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal proves to be trustworthy leader

**KUWAIT:** Two years ago, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah designated His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to be the Heir Apparent and his strong support for managing state affairs and lead the march towards further development and prosperity. Today, Sheikh Mishal completes two years in this crucial role as His Highness the Amir's trusted adviser and his deputy whenever the need arose, proving to be a true and trustworthy leader.

Upon proclaiming the declaration of allegiance, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf announced on Sept 29, 2020, after consulting with other members from the Al-Sabah family and in line with the Kuwait Constitution and Kuwait's Hereditary Law, that Sheikh Mishal was to be chosen as the new Crown Prince and on October 8, he took the Constitutional Oath in front of His Highness the Amir, following an extraordinary session at the National Assembly, when 59 MPs unanimously declared allegiance to him as the Heir Apparent. In his statement delivered at the session, he pledged to be "the strong right hand and trusted adviser for His Highness the Amir, to be a faithful citizen who works for the welfare of the homeland and its progress and to maintain the national unity while adhering to the country's sovereignty and guiding principles."

Since his proclamation, His Highness the Crown Prince, has been guiding the judicial, legislative and executive authorities to deliver their critical responsibilities, maintain the jurisdiction's separation and follow the laws to safeguard the stability and governance of the country.

Sheikh Mishal said, "Kuwait is the cause of our



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

existence and thus we are all partners in shouldering the responsibility of managing our country," adding that the people and the rulers should play key roles in promoting Kuwait as well as in maintaining unity and stability in the country.

He also vowed to keenly seek to attain the aspirations of the Kuwaiti people by promoting unity and

preventing dissension. "I will be with you to draw a bright picture together for our future," he declared, reiterating his commitment to democracy and justice.

On June 22, His Highness the Crown Prince addressed a statement to the people on behalf of His Highness the Amir, declaring that the leadership has decided to listen to the people to "correct the path of the political situation in the country in a manner that will reflect its best interests," whereby he declared constitutional dissolution of the National Assembly based on Provision 107 of the Kuwait Constitution and called for parliamentary elections. His Highness Sheikh Mishal said that "we would not interfere in the people's choice of their representatives," adding that the higher leadership would not influence the parliament's internal elections. "We will not support one segment against another and we will observe the same distance with everybody," he stressed.

In accordance with this desire, the parliamentary elections, held on Sept 29, were organized so that the citizens could freely choose their representatives in the parliament and have the last word in this decision. Meanwhile, Sheikh Mishal headed, on Sept 14, a Kuwaiti delegation to the 42nd session of the GCC Supreme Council, in the Saudi capital, Riyadh. On July 16, he led the Kuwaiti delegation at the Jeddah Summit for Security and Development that saw the participation of officials from the GCC countries, the US, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq. On Sept 19, His Highness the Heir Apparent met King Charles III of Britain, to convey the condolences of His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people on the demise of Queen Elizabeth II, who was deeply cherished by the Kuwaiti leadership and her people. He also remem-

bered her for her pioneering role in cementing the historic and special relations between the two friendly peoples and their countries.

Sheikh Mishal, over the past decades, have held a series of senior positions, serving as Minister of Interior, Chief of the National Guards and have also accompanied previous Amirs on foreign missions abroad. Born in 1940, Sheikh Mishal is the seventh son of the late 10th Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who ruled the country between 1921 and 1950. He studied at the Al-Mubarakiya School and pursued his higher studies in 1960 at the British Hendon Police College, following which he joined the interior ministry holding key positions such as Head of General Inspection from 1967 until 1980. It was during his stint there that the interior ministry was changed into a state security department.

On April 13, 2014, he was named the second chief of the National Guard and remained in this post until he was proclaimed the Crown Prince. As Chief of the National Guard, Sheikh Mishal contributed to drafting the National Guard's strategy aimed at protecting the country, its legitimacy, constitution and people. He earned an honorary chairmanship of Kuwait's Pilots Society in 1973 and was also the co-founder of the Kuwaiti wireless communication society and its honorary chairperson. In 1977, he was named by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the Head of the Al-Nibt Poetry Diwaniya. On Dec 4, 2018, Florence Barely, the French Minister of the Armed Forces, decorated him with the Legion of Honor Medal for his key role in establishing friendly relations between Kuwait and France. — KUNA

## Kuwait Oil Minister: Production cuts indicate a positive sign

**VIENNA:** Kuwait's Acting Oil Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Faris believes that the decision of the OPEC Plus oil ministers on Wednesday to reduce production by two million barrels per day will have positive repercussions on the oil markets which he hopes would serve the global interest. OPEC Plus ministers have accomplished "important and pivotal work" for the world, regarding the provision of energy and petroleum fuels, the minister told KUNA at the conclusion of OPEC Plus talks in Vienna. "The decision today places a huge responsibility on us to follow market developments - in terms of reducing production in the event of an increase in supply or



Dr Mohammad Al-Faris

increasing production quantities when there is a need for more oil supplies," he said. The 23 countries affiliated with OPEC Plus will "continue to consult among themselves and follow market developments," he said, adding they would "take appropriate measures" based on the needs of global markets, and their balance, in a manner that serves global interests.

Asked about the reaction of major oil importing countries, mainly the West, to the decision, the minister said, "we understand consumer fears about the possibility of higher prices, but what moves us in OPEC Plus is basically the issue of achieving a balance between supply and demand and from there we work on maintaining this balance in a way that prevents fluctuations and market collapse." The OPEC Plus alliance "serves the global economy, and does not threaten it," he went on to clarify, adding that what distinguishes the decisions of OPEC and OPEC Plus is the "purely technical character that continuously reflects the reality of the market and its balances." "Over its long history, OPEC has not taken decisions for the purpose of imposing hegemony," he went on to clarify. "It is keen to provide sufficient supplies to the market and at reasonable prices that do not harm the interests of the producers or consumers." — KUNA

## Sheikha Hessa selected as Chairwoman of Arab Businesswomen Council



Members and officials of the Arab Businesswomen Council.

**KUWAIT:** Dr Sheikha Hessa Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Chairwoman of the Arab Businesswomen Council has said that she is leading efforts to support and empower women in Kuwait as well as in the region. In a speech, after being elected for the seventh consecutive term as the Head of the Council, Sheikha Hessa pledged to spare no efforts in empowering women and honing their skills to make them suitable for employment. "Our plan for

the council's seventh session which would be from the year 2022-2026, would be to support medium and small enterprises," adding that "those women who excel in their work will be duly rewarded." She also said that her Kuwaiti peer, Khairiah Dashti was named the council's secretary general for the seventh consecutive term. The council's seventh session was recently inaugurated at the Arab League Headquarters. — KUNA

## Kuwait Club, US Embassy host sports event on Int'l Day of Peace



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Sports Club, in partnership with the US embassy in Kuwait and the Be Strong Project hosted a sports day on the International Day of Peace, which included a volleyball game featuring 50 players from the club and the US army.



## IWG visits National Council for Culture

**KUWAIT:** A delegation from the International Women's Group (IWG) visited the National Council for Culture (NCCAL), Arts and Letters on Wednesday 5 Oct 2022.

The delegation included Ghada Shawky, President of the IWG and spouse of the Ambassador of Egypt, Rima Al-Khalidi, Vice President and spouse of the Ambassador of Palestine and Patricia Campos, Vice President and wife of the Ambassador of the Republic of Mexico. Dr Issa Al-Ansari, Acting Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters received the delegation, accompanied by Mohammed bin Reda, Director of the Department of Foreign Cultural Relations.

The delegation briefed Dr Al-Ansari on the group's activities and events and also heard from the Secretary-General of the Council's activities and the role they play in linking cultures between countries. It was agreed during the meeting to hold joint activities in cooperation between the NCCAL and the IWG in the near future. At the end of the meeting, Ghada Shawky presented an honorary shield on behalf of the International Women's Group.



**KUWAIT:** International Women's Group (IWG) delegation with Dr Issa Al-Ansari and Mohammed bin Reda.

## Photo of the day



White-eared bulbuls perch on a tree branch as the waxing gibbous moon sets behind in Kuwait City on Oct 6, 2022. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Kuwait-funded initiative helps Gazan students stay in school

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** With the harsh conditions that people in Palestine and Gaza in particular are suffering from due to the siege imposed on the Strip by the Zionist entity, Gazans are struggling to obtain many of their basic rights. One of them is the right to join college, but many cannot do so due to the poor financial conditions in Gaza.

"Hibr Campaign" is an initiative that was established last year by Haya Al-Shatti, a Kuwaiti woman who decided to lend a hand and support students in Gaza by opening a donation link under the aegis of the International Islamic Charity Organization, to give an opportunity to Gaza's students to enroll into university and complete their higher education.

Kuwait Times met Shatti, founder of the initiative, to discuss her campaign that has already succeeded to reach more than 1,000 college students in Gaza and other areas of Palestine. Shatti spoke about the main impetus that led her to start the campaign. "After visiting Gaza on several

occasions, I felt I had to support the people there in a way that assists them over a long term and not just temporarily, and help them better their lives. I found education could be a great step towards supporting the people in the Gaza Strip," she said.

"I found outstanding students in Gaza facing extremely difficult conditions with no electricity, while their parents were suffering from a severe shortage of financial resources. So, I decided to launch the 'Hibr campaign' in Kuwait in Ramadan to support college students in Gaza. We aimed to raise KD 120,000 (\$360,000), but collected KD 200,000 (\$600,000)," Shatti pointed out.

Shatti elaborated on her choice to support the education issue. "I supported this issue because education should be a basic right for everyone due to its importance in building the future of mankind. When people live in difficult conditions such as poverty, they can overcome it over the years, but obtaining a college degree after passing a certain age is not easy, due to the difficult circumstances that the people of Gaza are living in," she told Kuwait Times.

"I am dealing with a class of people in Gaza who have already graduated and are academically superior. If we do not help them, it would be like destroying an entire family and not just the future of one outstanding student. I believe that these students, after finishing their studies, will be able to help their families by getting a decent job that would help them live a decent life, which is any person's natural right," Shatti added.

Shatti explained the campaign includes young Kuwaiti women volunteers who help in coordinating the campaign work. Their ages are similar to the ages of the Gazan students, which helps to get more support from them due to their knowledge of the importance of education at their age. "There is a huge number of students who graduated



Haya Al-Shatti

from schools and need our support to help join colleges, in addition to those who are already in universities. The previous campaign only covered the first year of college costs for more than 1,000 students in Gaza, and they still have more years to go to complete their degrees," she said.

"Due to the large number of students who still need support to complete their university education, we decided to set categories depending on the labor market's need to give top priority to students who are willing to study the required majors such as medicine, due to the great need and shortage of doctors in Gaza," Shatti explained. She said the campaign began independently, and later came under the International Islamic Charity Organization. "The donations collected is a combined effort between individuals and families in Kuwait and government and private schools and universities in the country," she said. Shatti hopes the campaign can be adopted by charities in other GCC countries to have a wider base to support students in the Gaza Strip.

## India seeks to bolster defense ties with Kuwait: Ambassador

By Sajeev K Peter

**KUWAIT:** The visit of three Indian naval ships to Kuwait signifies India's commitment to establishing cooperative partnership with friendly nations of the Indian Ocean region and beyond, said Indian Ambassador Sibi George on Wednesday. During a reception hosted on board INS TIR on the occasion of the visit of the ships, the ambassador said: "Such enhanced cooperation would help both navies address maritime challenges together."

Three Indian naval ships - INS TIR, INS Sujatha and Indian Coast Guard ship INS Sarathi - arrived on Oct 4, marking a milestone in defense ties between India and Kuwait. The reception to celebrate the visit of the ships was attended by ambassadors, captains of the three ships - Capt Sarvpreet Singh, Capt Randip Ghosh and Capt Parithosh Pathak -, senior officers from Kuwait Navy and Indian Navy, Kuwaiti dignitaries and Indian community members.

The ambassador said he is happy to see the significant achievements India has made in building a very strong navy, which is contributing immensely in ensuring the safety, security and stability of the Indian Ocean and beyond. "I

am confident that in coming months, we will have more visits of ships and more bilateral engagements between Indian and Kuwaiti defense forces," he said.

George thanked the Kuwaiti leadership and Brig Gen Ahmed Mohammed Al-Bati, Kuwait Navy Director General, Operations and his team for the arrangements and support extended to the visiting naval team. The ambassador recalled the dispatch of an emergency medical team from India to Kuwait and then the supply of medical oxygen from Kuwait to India, which made Kuwait one of the largest suppliers of medical oxygen to India.

In his opening remarks, INS TIR Captain Sarvpreet Singh said India and Kuwait share a special bond that has been traditionally warm and friendly and is rooted in history. "This bond has been nurtured by excellent bonhomie and an environment of friendship and trust between our countries," he said. Kuwait has diplomatically facilitated many peace initiatives in the region in recent past and deserves accolades for the same," Singh said. "The senior leaderships of both Indian and Kuwaiti navies have very positive intent and focused interest to further cooperation and relations. The visit of the prestigious First Training Squadron is indicative of that intent," said Singh.

The ocean being a global common, India and Kuwait are maritime neighbors and share mutual stakes in each other's progress, prosperity and territorial stability, Singh said. "Our navies have a major role to play in advancing these national goals. We understand that cooperation between willing navies in maritime neighborhood has not just an additive but a multiplicative effect in keeping the seas safe," he pointed out.



A dance performance on board the Coast Guard ship INS Sarathi.



Indian Ambassador Sibi George addresses the gathering during a reception on board INS TIR at Shuwaikh Port on Wednesday.



The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf

# Kuwait, Years From Now

## Student Art Competition 2022

**10 October - 13 November 2022**

We are excited to welcome each and every youngster to our Student Art Competition 2022. We hope everyone is ready to showcase and create beautiful artworks of Kuwait in the future. We're searching for great art - so get your paintbrushes, color pencils and markers ready. Let your talent flow and start painting. Good luck to our young artists!

- The competition is open to students aged 6-18 years under the categories of 6-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-14 years, 15-18 years and special abilities students.
- The competition is open to all schools in Kuwait (government and private).
- 5 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools and individuals interested in participating in this competition are welcome.
- You can use any drawing sheet, but of A3 size.
- All artworks must be hand drawn and not computer generated.
- All paintings should be submitted by email at art@kuwaittimes.com in PDF format only.
- Kuwait Times reserves the right to retain the drawings for future use.
- Participants should include on the bottom of the artworks the following: Name, age, email address, phone number and school in legible font.

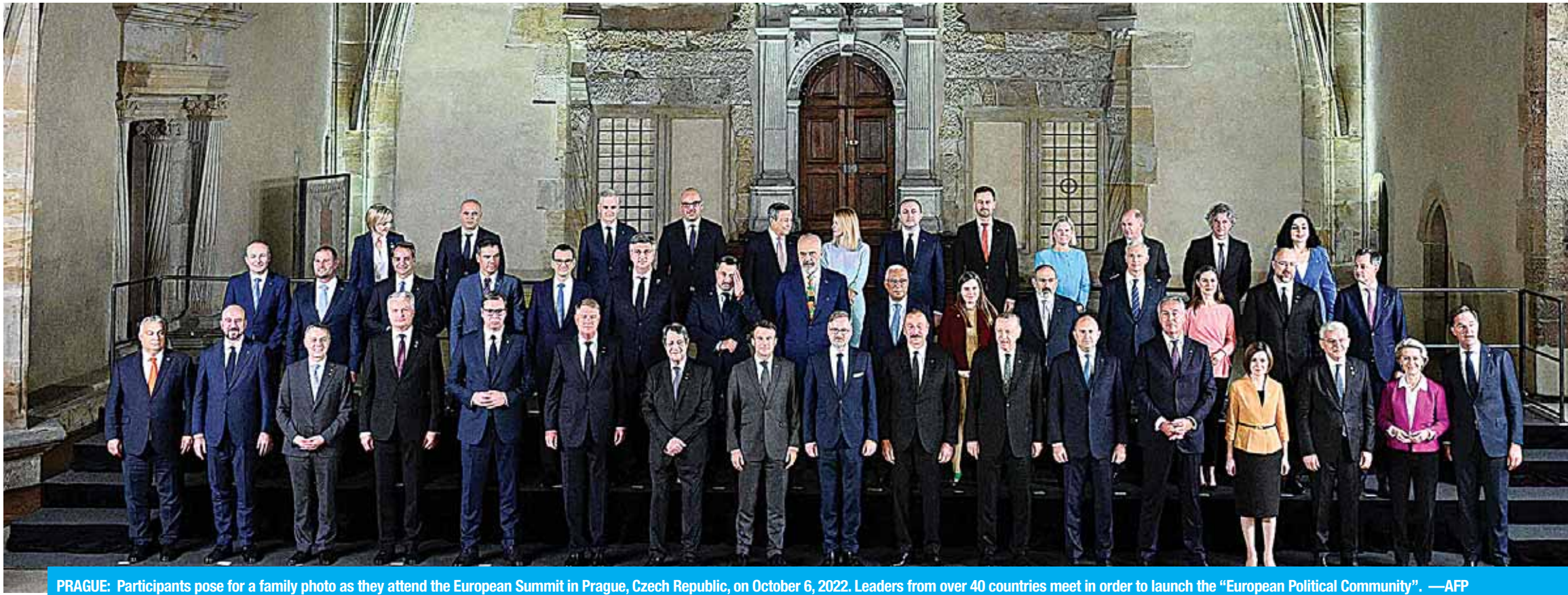


Strategic Partner





## UK government talks tough on immigration – again



PRAGUE: Participants pose for a family photo as they attend the European Summit in Prague, Czech Republic, on October 6, 2022. Leaders from over 40 countries meet in order to launch the “European Political Community”. —AFP

# EU ‘community’ meets in face of Russia’s war

## Europe is facing its biggest crisis since Second World War with unity and resolve

**PRAGUE:** Leaders from Ukraine, Britain and Turkey joined their EU counterparts on Thursday for an inaugural summit of the “European Political Community” aimed at bringing the continent together in the face of Russia’s aggression against Ukraine. The gathering in Prague—a brainchild of French President Emmanuel Macron—has been billed by Brussels as a “platform for political coordination” for the 44 nations attending.

But there are deep disagreements—and even open conflict—among some of the participants and scepticism that the one-day event will only be a photo opportunity. Those meeting in the historic Prague Castle also include the leaders of Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia, Georgia, Iceland, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia and Switzerland. “It sends first of all a message of unity,” Macron said as he arrived for the summit. “The objective is first of all to share a common reading of the situation affecting our Europe and also to build a common strategy.”

Russia, which is not invited, will loom over the meeting as discussions focus on the economic and security turmoil from its invasion of its pro-Western neighbour. “If you just look at the attendance here, you see the importance,” said Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo.

“The whole European continent is here, except two countries, Belarus and Russia. So it shows how isolated those two countries are,” Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelensky—currently overseeing a counter-offensive against Moscow’s forces—was connecting via video link from Kyiv. His prime minister Denis Shmyhal was standing in for him in Prague.

“Europe is facing its biggest crisis since the Second World War with unity and resolve,” British Prime Minister Liz Truss tweeted. “We must continue to stand firm to ensure that Ukraine wins this war, dealing with the strategic challenges that it has exposed.”

Despite the rhetoric there are expected to be few concrete results from the summit. France said it hopes to define potential room for cooperation among the leaders on protecting critical European infrastructure such as pipelines, cybersecurity and energy supplies.

EU officials expect to agree to hold a follow-up gathering of the community in six months in a country outside the bloc, with Britain and Moldova both offering to host. While there are major questions over the usefulness of the enterprise, there will be a lot of activity on the sidelines as leaders hold bilateral talks.

### ‘Talking shop’

The gathering at least passed its first hurdle of convincing key European powers outside the EU to show up. Truss, a fierce supporter of Britain’s independent path since Brexit, came on one of her first major trips abroad after taking office.

London was wary about the event being dominated by the European Union and reportedly wanted to change the name from “community” to “forum”. Truss may be hoping for a respite from her woes at home after unleashing turmoil on Britain’s economy. But she could face a tricky ride from EU counterparts over UK efforts to renegotiate the post-Brexit trade deal for Northern Ireland.

“I welcome the opportunity to work with leaders from across the continent in this new forum,” Truss wrote in the Times newspaper. “But this must not cut across the G7 and NATO, and it must not be a talking shop.”

The presence of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had been a sore point for some. EU members Greece and Cyprus have long-standing disputes with Ankara and the unpredictable Turkish leader is proving a headache for Sweden and Finland as a threat to their bids to join NATO.

Even more fraught could be the attendance of the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, whose troops continue bloody clashes along their volatile frontier. Armenia’s prime minister has said he will meet Azerbaijan’s president together with Macron and EU chief Charles Michel in Prague.

Those pushing to join the EU—Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova and the Western Balkan nations—have welcomed the initiative, but are on their guard about it being an alternative to membership. “Please don’t treat European political community as a substitute,” said Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda. —AFP



CYTHIRA, Greece: This screen grab from a video made available on October 6, 2022 by the Hellenic Coast Guard, shows the rescue of migrants from a shipwreck off the island of Kythira, south of the Peloponnese peninsula. —AFP

## Greece migrant sinkings leave 18 dead, dozens missing

**ATHENS, Greece:** At least 18 people died, nearly all of them women, and about 30 more were still missing after two migrant boats sank in gale force winds off Greece, the coastguard said Thursday, with survivors dramatically winched to safety.

A vessel believed to be carrying around 40 people went down east of the island of Lesbos, coastguard spokesman Nikos Kokkalas told state TV ERT. The bodies of 16 women and a 15-year-old boy were recovered from the area, close to Turkey, he said.

Divers recovered an adult male body during the afternoon, the coastguard added. A few hours earlier, the coastguard had been alerted to a sailing boat in distress off Kythira island’s Diakofti port, south of the Peloponnese peninsula. Around 95 people had been on board.

Some survivors made it to shore and dramatic footage released by the coastguard showed them being winched up the vertical face of a cliff, some barely managing to hold on amid battering waves. The fire service and police reported 80 asylum seekers from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan made it ashore during a major rescue operation.

Kythira mayor Stratos Harhalakis said the coastal spot was “the worst possible place on the island” for a ship to sink. “Nobody could approach (them) by sea, it was incredibly difficult.”

There was no official toll yet from the second sinking near Kythira, but Harhalakis said he had seen five bodies.

### ‘Eradicate’ smugglers

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis deplored the “tragic loss of life” and called for “much more substantial cooperation” to avoid such disasters. “Eradicate totally the smugglers who exploit innocent people, desperate people,” he said.

The coastguard said 10 other women had been rescued in the Lesbos incident, while over a dozen people were believed to be missing. It was difficult to get more information from the survivors as they were “utterly panicked,” spokesman Kokkalas said.

The survivors in Kythira include seven women and 18 children, a coastguard spokeswoman told AFP. Kokkalas said their boat had been “completely destroyed.” Both rescue operations faced adverse weather. Off Kythira, winds were as high as 102 kilometres (63 miles) per hour, the coastguard said.

Greece has seen increased migration traffic this year, and accuses Turkey of failing to enforce a 2016 agreement with the EU to keep migrants from sailing on to Europe.

Migration Minister Notis Mitarachi tweeted after the two shipwrecks that Turkey should “take immediate action to prevent all irregular departures due to harsh weather conditions”. “Already today many lives lost in the Aegean, people are drowning in unseaworthy vessels. EU must act,” Mitarachi said. —AFP

## North Korea fires missiles, blames US for escalation

**SEOUL:** North Korea fired two ballistic missiles Thursday and flew warplanes, while claiming its recent blitz of sanctions-busting tests were necessary countermeasures against joint military drills by the United States and South Korea.

As the United Nations Security Council met to discuss Pyongyang’s Tuesday launch of an intermediate-range ballistic missile over Japan, North Korea blamed Washington for “escalating the military tensions on the Korean peninsula”.

The recent launches — six in less than two weeks — were “the just counteraction measures of the Korean People’s Army”, Pyongyang’s foreign ministry said in a statement Thursday. Seoul, Tokyo and Washington have ramped up joint military drills in recent weeks, and carried out fresh exercises Thursday involving a US navy destroyer from the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier’s strike group.

The United States redeployed the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to waters east of South Korea as part of a broad-ranging military response to Pyongyang’s Tuesday test, which also included joint bombing and missile drills.

The carrier’s redeployment prompted an angry response from the North, with the foreign ministry saying it posed “a serious threat to the stability of the situation on the Korean peninsula”. Seoul’s military said it had scrambled 30 fighter jets Thursday after 12 North Korean warplanes staged a rare “formation flight north of the inter-Korean air boundary [and] conducted air-to-surface firing drills.”

Early on Thursday, South Korea’s military said it had detected two short-range ballistic missiles launched from the Samsok area in Pyongyang towards the East Sea, also known as the Sea of Japan. It appeared to be the first time North Korea has fired missiles from Samsok, an official from Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters.

He added that they look like a “different type of short-range ballistic missiles” from previous launches. Tokyo also confirmed the launches, with defence minister Yasukazu Hamada telling reporters that it was important not to “overlook the significant improvement of (North Korea’s) missile technology”.

Later Thursday, South Korea’s President Yoon Suk-yeol spoke by phone to Japanese Prime Minister



SEOUL: A man walks past a television report showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul on October 6, 2022. North Korea fired two ballistic missiles on October as it justified its recent blitz of sanctions-busting tests as necessary countermeasures against joint military drills by the United States and South Korea. —AFP

Fumio Kishida, with the pair agreeing that the North’s “reckless provocation” must be stopped. They agreed on the need to “deliver a message to the North that consequences follow provocations”, Seoul’s presidential office said in a statement.

### China slams US

Pyongyang’s Tuesday firing of what officials and analysts said was a Hwasong-12 that travelled likely the longest horizontal distance of any North Korean test, prompted the United States to call for the emergency Security Council meeting.

At the meeting, North Korea’s longtime ally and economic benefactor China blamed Washington for provoking the spate of launches by Kim Jong Un’s regime. Deputy Chinese ambassador to the UN Geng Shuang said North Korea’s recent launches were “closely related” to military exercises in the region conducted by the United States and its allies.

Geng accused Washington of “poisoning the regional security environment”. The launches are part of a record year of weapons tests by isolated North

Korea, which leader Kim has declared an “irreversible” nuclear power, effectively ending the possibility of denuclearisation talks.

US ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield called for “strengthening” existing sanctions on North Korea, something China and Russia vetoed in May. The council has been divided on responding to Pyongyang’s nuclear ambitions for months, with Russia and China on the sympathetic side and the rest of the council pushing for punishment.

Analysts say Pyongyang has seized the opportunity of stalemate at the UN to conduct ever more provocative weapons tests. Officials in Seoul and Washington have been warning for months that Pyongyang will also conduct another nuclear test, likely after China’s Party Congress on October 16.

“At this point, for Kim to turn back and halt provocations would seem counterproductive to his interests, not to mention the amount of resources squandered to conduct these weapons tests,” Soo Kim, an analyst at the RAND Corporation, told. —AFP



## International

# UK government talks tough on immigration - again

## ‘We are talking about people with good reason to seek asylum in UK’

**LONDON:** Accusing asylum seekers of “abusing the system” and urging the need to “take back control”, the UK government is once again talking tough on immigration. But its latest pledge to reduce crossings from northern France in small boats comes with a blatant promise to defy international conventions.

“It’s not racist for anyone... to want to control our borders, it’s not bigoted to say that we have too many asylum seekers who are abusing the system,” said Home Secretary Suella Braverman. The stance earned Braverman, whose parents emigrated to Britain from Kenya and Mauritius in the 1960s, a standing ovation at this week’s Conservative party’s annual conference.

The 42-year-old anti-EU right-winger, who has been in the job for the past month, pointedly vowed to get tough on asylum seekers who do not “meet the needs of the country”. “If you deliberately enter the United Kingdom illegally from a safe country, you should be swiftly returned to your home country or relocated to Rwanda. That is where your asylum claim will be considered,” she said.

Successive Conservative governments since 2010 have been promising to drastically reduce the number of migrants but to no avail. Since the beginning of the year, a record 33,500 people have crossed the Channel in small boats.

More than half of them came from Afghanistan (18 percent), Albania (18 percent) or Iran (15 percent), according to the Home Office. Since 2018, Iranians and Iraqis have accounted for almost half of all migrants intercepted on the route.

## US targets ‘senior’ IS jihadist in Syria

**BEIRUT:** American forces targeted a “senior” member of the jihadist Islamic State group Thursday in a pre-dawn raid on northeastern Syria, the US military’s Central Command said. The operation is the latest US effort to clamp down on IS jihadists who have been territorially defeated but still orchestrate attacks in Syria and neighbouring Iraq.

“Centcom forces conducted a raid in northeast Syria targeting a senior ISIS official,” spokesman Colonel Joe Buccino said in an emailed statement to AFP, without elaborating. Syria’s state broadcaster had said a US airborne operation involving multiple helicopters left one person dead and saw several others captured in a government-controlled area of Syria’s northeast, which is mostly dominated by Kurdish forces.

The targeted village, Muluk Saray, lies 17 kilometres (10 miles) south of the Kurdish-held city of Qamishli and is controlled by pro-regime militias, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Thursday’s raid is the first such airborne operation in government-held territory since the start of Syria’s war in 2011, added the Britain-based war monitor.

The person killed in the operation “had been a resident of the area for years”, said the Observatory which relies on a wide network of sources in Syria. At least two people were captured alive in the operation, including a Syrian and an Iraqi, the monitor said.

### Little-known target

A resident of the village said three US helicopters carrying troops had landed in the operation. US forces raided a house, killing one person and taking

### ‘Diversion’

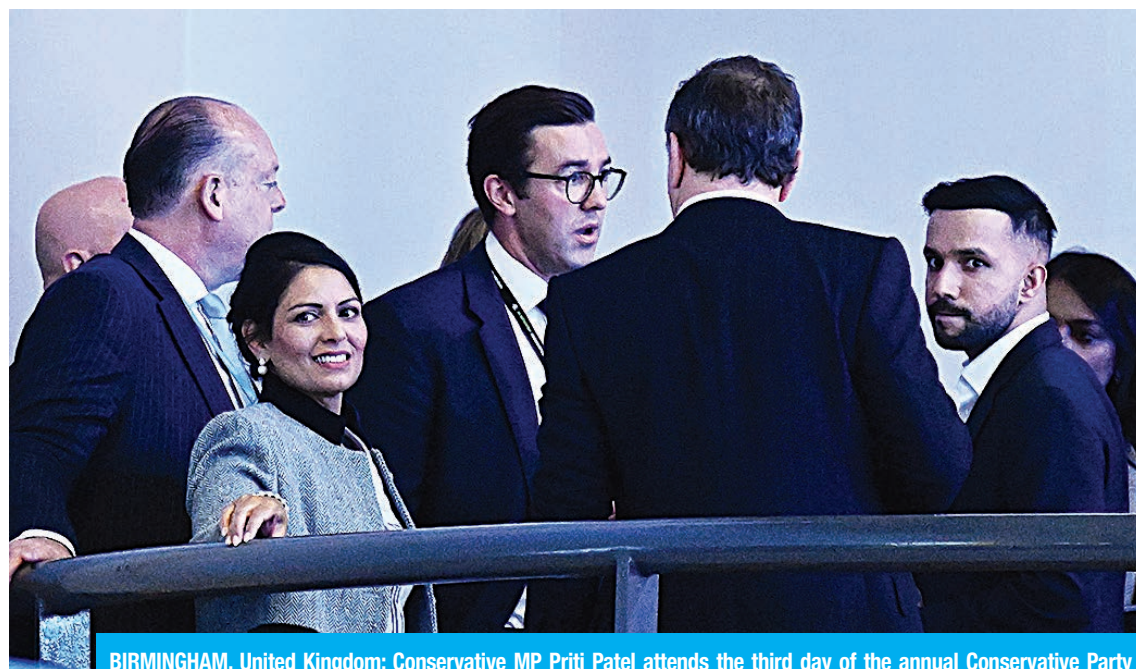
Zoe Gardner, an expert on British migration and asylum systems, said while the pro-Brexit Tories have never managed to reduce immigration, they have made a tougher for asylum seekers to settle. “For a long time, it (immigration policy) has been a way to gain support, when every other area of policy seems to be a failure for them,” she told AFP.

“Every time the government of Boris Johnson had a bad week in the newspapers, you can be sure they would announce another plan to target immigrants just to distract people.” The strategy, though, is in danger of running out of steam, she added.

Britons are overwhelmingly in favour of taking in refugees, according to polls, but are now more concerned about a cost-of-living crisis. Proposing to ban access to asylum would be a violation of the UN Refugee Convention to which Britain is a signatory.

It states that a migrant can travel in any way he or she wishes-or can-to a country to seek refuge, without being harmed by the mode of arrival. For some experts, such a ban would result in court action, just as it did when the government attempted to deport the first batch of failed asylum seekers to Rwanda.

In June, a plane bound for Kigali was grounded after last-minute legal challenges in the English courts, and a ruling at the European Court of Human Rights. Braverman, a former attorney general and successor to another hardliner Priti Patel, blasted the ruling of the “foreign court”, which Britain helped set up after World War II. She told conference delegates with a smile that her “dream” for Christmas would be to see “a front page of The Telegraph with a plane taking off to Rwanda”.



BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom: Conservative MP Priti Patel attends the third day of the annual Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham, central England. —AFP

### No other way

According to Braverman’s own department, 94 percent of the 50,000 or so migrants who arrived in the UK across the Channel between January 2018 and June 2022 applied for asylum. Some 82 percent of those applicants were still waiting for a decision, but the

majority who have received a response were successful. “We are talking about people with good reason to seek asylum in UK, with no other way of doing so because the government has closed the majority of other options”, said Daniel Sohege, a refugee law specialist who heads the association Stand For All. —AFP

## Iranian Kurd exiles in Iraq under fire as protests rage

**SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq:** As protests flare across Iran over the death of young Iranian Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini, the Kurdistan region of neighbouring Iraq has paid a price, coming under bombardment from the Islamic republic’s forces.

Their target is the long-exiled Iranian Kurdish opposition, installed in Iraq under Saddam Hussein during his war with Iran in the 1980s.

Tehran regards these armed factions as “terrorists” and accuses them of attacking its territory.

A general in Iran has charged that the Kurdish opposition groups have been inciting the Mahsa Amini protests in Iranian Kurdistan, in the face of a lethal crack-down by the security forces.

Amini, 22, was pronounced dead on September 16, days after Iran’s notorious morality police detained her for allegedly breaching Iran’s strict dress code for women.

According to Adel Bakawan, director of the French Centre for Research on Iraq (CFRI), Iran needed to “find an enemy” to blame for stoking the nationwide protests.

“The weakest link that could be targeted without provoking consequences was the Iranian Kurds,” he said.

On September 28, Iran unleashed a deluge of fire on positions of Kurdish militants in northern Iraq, killing 14 people and wounding 58, including civilians. It has followed up with less bloody attacks.

On Monday, Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani reiterated Tehran’s accusation against these

groups, saying they threaten the country’s national security. However, experts say the far-left groups have practically ceased all military activity, focusing on political action instead.

### Protected presence

Any fighters they still have could be viewed as reservists, keeping up training.

Iranian Kurdish journalist Raza Manochari said there has been an agreement since the 1990s between such groups and the government of Iraq’s own Kurdistan region.

It protects their deployment, “and in exchange, they do not engage in military activities, to avoid causing problems for relations with Iran”, he said.

Manochari, who has himself lived in Iraq for eight years, highlighted the ties between Kurds in the two countries: they speak the same Sorani dialect, and many have relatives on both sides of the border.

Massud Barzani, leader of Iraq’s Kurdistan Democratic Party and former president of the autonomous Iraqi Kurdistan region, was born in 1946 in Iran.

He is the son of iconic Kurdish nationalist leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani, a head of the only breakaway state in Kurdish history founded in the Iranian town of Mahabad until it was crushed by Iranian troops in 1946 after a year.

Today, Iran’s Kurdish minority—about 10 million people out of a population of 83 million—complain of marginalisation. “In Iran, the Kurds don’t have many basic cultural and political rights,” said Shivan Fazil, researcher at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

“The right of education in their mother tongue continues to be outlawed,” he said. Their plight is bleaker than that of Kurds elsewhere in the region, Fazil said, citing Kurds in parliament in Turkey since 2015, a de facto autonomy in northeast Syria and the regional Kurdish government in northern Iraq.—AFP

## Gunman kills at least 37 in Thai...

Continued from Page 1

nursery and the attacker parked his car and shot four of them dead,” she told AFP. “The shooter smashed down the door with his leg and then came inside and started slashing the children’s heads with a knife.”

Footage after the incident showed distraught parents weeping in a shelter outside the nursery, a yellow single-storey building set in a garden. The 34-year-old gunman was a former police sergeant suspended in January and sacked in June for drug use, Damrongsak told reporters. “As far as I know he was due in court tomorrow for a drug-related trial,” he said. He said the attacker was in a manic state but it was unknown whether it was drug-related. “What happened today will be a lesson to prevent this happening again in the future,” he said.

Damrongsak said the pistol used had been purchased legally and was a privately owned weapon, not police property. Witness Paweena Purichan, 31, said the attacker was well known in the area as a drug addict. She told AFP she encountered Panya driving erratically as he fled the scene. “The attacker rammed a motorbike into two people who were injured. I sped off to get away from him,” she said. “There was blood everywhere.”

Video Paweena posted online showed a woman lying injured in a roadside bush after apparently being knocked off her motorbike by Panya. Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha ordered the national police chief to “fast-track an investigation” and said he would travel to the scene of the attack on Friday. “This should not happen. This absolutely should not happen,” Prayut told reporters. “I am extremely sorry for those who were injured and lost (their loved ones).” A government spokesman said flags would fly at half-mast on Friday to honor those



AL MALIKIYAH, Syria: File photo shows US soldiers walk during a joint military exercise between forces of the US-led “Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve” coalition against the Islamic State (IS) group and members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the countryside of the Syrian town of al-Malikiya. —AFP

several others captive, the resident told AFP on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

“They used loudspeakers to call on residents to stay indoors” during the operation, the resident said. The resident identified the victim as Abu Hayel, a little-known displaced person from Hassakeh province.

The United States leads a military coalition battling IS in Syria. In July, the Pentagon said it killed Syria’s top IS jihadist in a drone strike in the northern part of the country. Centcom said he had been “one of the top five” IS leaders.

The July strike came five months after a nighttime US raid in the town of Atme, which led to the death of the overall Islamic State leader, Abu Ibrahim al-Qurashi. US officials said Qurashi died when he detonated a bomb to avoid capture. —AFP

killed in the attack.

Thailand forms part of Southeast Asia’s so-called Golden Triangle which has long been an infamous hotspot for the trafficking and abuse of drugs. Surging supplies of methamphetamine have sent street prices crashing in Thailand to all-time lows, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The mass killing comes less than a month after an army officer shot dead two colleagues at a military training base in the capital Bangkok.

While Thailand has high rates of gun ownership, mass shootings are rare. But in the past year, there have been at least two other cases of shooting murders by serving soldiers, according to local media. In 2020, in one of the kingdom’s deadliest incidents in recent years, a soldier gunned down 29 people in a 17-hour rampage and wounded scores more before he was shot dead by commandos.

That mass shooting, linked to a debt dispute between gunman Sergeant-Major Jakrapanth Thomma and a senior officer, triggered public anger against the military. The soldier was able to steal assault rifles from an army depot before embarking on his killing spree, posting live updates on social media as he did so. Military top brass were at pains to portray the killer as a rogue soldier.

The US embassy in Bangkok expressed condolences to the victims and their families after the latest tragedy, while Amnesty International said “hearts go out” to those affected. “I am shocked to hear of the horrific events in Thailand this morning. My thoughts are with all those affected and the first responders,” British Prime Minister Liz Truss tweeted. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese tweeted it was “impossible to comprehend the heartbreak of this horrific news”. — Agencies



Panya Khamrab

## French author Annie Ernaux...

Continued from Page 1

The chairman of the Nobel Committee, Anders Olsson, told AFP the Academy was taken with her “frankness”. “She is direct and brief and that is something that you never forget. That is very specific to her, it’s her special voice,” he said. He told Swedish news agency TT that Ernaux had been under consideration “for many years”. She debuted with the novel “Cleaned Out” in 1974, a cool-eyed but harrowing account of an abortion she went through while a student and which she had kept secret from her family.

But it was her fourth book, “A Man’s Place” from 1983 – a dispassionate portrait of her father and the social milieu that formed him – that started her literary breakthrough. She went on to

write a portrait of her mother in 1987, “A Woman’s Story”, which with “severe brevity” was a “wonderful tribute to a strong woman”, the Academy noted.

Outside France, recognition has come more recently, notably after the English translation of her key 2008 work, “The Years”, which was nominated for the prestigious Man Booker International Prize in 2019. In it, Ernaux used family photographs as well as scraps of popular culture to recall her life and explore the impact of bigger historical events.

The film “The Happening”, based on another 2000 account of her abortion, won the Golden Lion at last year’s Venice Film Festival. The Nobel Prize comes with a medal and a prize sum of 10 million Swedish kronor (about \$911,400). Ernaux will receive the award from King Carl XVI Gustaf at a ceremony in Stockholm on Dec 10, the anniversary of the 1896 death of scientist Alfred Nobel who created the prizes in his last will and testament. — AFP

## Nobel Prize for Literature 2022



**"For the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory"**

### Annie Ernaux

French

Age: 82

Born in Lillebonne, Normandy (FRA)

Literature professor in the Paris suburb of Cergy-Pontoise

• Published over 20 books, many of which have been school texts in France for decades

• Pioneer of France's "autofiction" genre, which gives narrative form to real-life experience



• Has become a trailblazer for a whole generation of French writers from tough and immigrant backgrounds

• Her uncompromising work, written in plain language, offers one of the most insightful windows into the social life of modern France

• Her writing "consistently and from different angles, examines a life marked by strong disparities regarding gender, language and class": Nobel Academy

\*Adapted into a movie and nominated for a BAFTA award this year

\*\*Nominated for the Booker International Prize in 2019

Source: nobelprize.org/AFP Photo

### NOTABLE WORKS

**Cleaned Out** (French title: Les armoires vides; published: 1974)

**A Man's Place** (La place, 1984)

**A Woman's Story** (Une femme, 1988)

**Shame** (La honte, 1997)

**Happening\*** (Levenement, 2000)

**The Possession** (L'occupation, 2002)

**The Years\*\*** (Les anneés, 2008)

**A Girl's Story** (Memoire de fille, 2016)





## International

# Zero-COVID in China key to Xi legacy as he eyes third term

## China argues zero-COVID places human life above material concerns

**BEIJING:** For many in China, years of gruelling lockdowns and privacy invasions aimed at extinguishing COVID have caused misery. For President Xi Jinping, the virus curbs are a triumph. His zero-tolerance approach to COVID has become synonymous with the efforts to cement his authority over China and its ruling Communist Party (CCP).

The endgame begins on October 16, when thousands of party delegates will gather in Beijing for a major party congress at which he is expected to secure a historic third term. "Xi's legacy and the legitimacy of the CCP are bound to the success of the zero-COVID campaign," Diana Fu, an expert on Chinese domestic politics at the Brookings Institution think tank, told AFP.

While the rest of the world has largely moved to live with COVID, Xi has insisted on draconian policies aimed at eliminating the virus. The approach has crippled growth in the world's second-largest economy, which was already struggling with a debt-laden property sector and high youth unemployment. But Xi has dug in his heels, declaring zero-COVID China's most "economic and effective" path forward, while maintaining policies that have deepened the state's control over the lives of its 1.4 billion people.

### Tests and QR codes

The headline-grabbing planks of the campaign continue to be the snap lockdowns-sometimes confining tens of millions of people to their homes for weeks or months. In one of the recent shutdowns, some residents in the megacity of Chengdu were not allowed to go outside even when an earthquake shook their apartment buildings.

And in the economic hub of Shanghai, a months-long lockdown led to rare scenes of protests from middle-class and wealthy Chinese. Public frustration has also pushed past China's internet censors and onto social media. In one of the highest-profile cases, a bus crash in rural Guizhou province that killed 27 people on the way to a COVID quarantine facility sparked a surge of online criticism. General curbs

that erode privacy and limit movement have also caused anger and resentment.

Residents in many cities must obtain a negative coronavirus test every few days to gain access to public spaces. They then use their smartphones to scan QR codes at entrances to offices, malls and restaurants and bring up their latest test results.

A green icon indicates they are free to enter, while red or amber means they may have, respectively, tested positive or passed near someone who has. That could lead to anything from a few days of home isolation to weeks at a quarantine facility.

The system also tracks people's movements, leaving it open to abuse, such as when authorities were accused of thwarting anti-corruption protests this year by turning participants' codes red. Before the pandemic, China's citizens were already under heavy surveillance. Steve Tsang, director of the SOAS China Institute at the University of London, said the COVID-monitoring apparatus was "in line with the model of social control" spearheaded by Xi.

### 'No choice'

China argues zero-COVID places human life above material concerns and has helped to avert the public health crises seen in other countries.

Officials have also voiced fears that the virus would overwhelm China's patchy healthcare system if allowed to spread unchecked, particularly in elderly rural communities. So far, China has reported just over 5,000 COVID deaths compared with more than a million in the United States.

But while the milder Omicron virus variant has reduced the risk of reopening in many countries, China's curbs continue to extract hefty economic and social costs. "They have to abandon zero-COVID ultimately," said Jin Dong-yan, a professor at Hong Kong University's School of Biomedical Sciences, calling it "wrong and against all scientific evidence".

The policy's initial success has created a sense of inertia among policymakers, according to Allen Wu, a professor at Nanjing University's medical school



**TIANJIN, China:** File photo shows, a health worker taking a swab sample from a man to be tested for the COVID-19 coronavirus in China's northern Tianjin. For many in China, years of gruelling lockdowns and privacy invasions aimed at extinguishing COVID have caused misery. For President Xi Jinping, the virus curbs are a triumph. — AFP

who has advised the World Health Organization. "There is this mentality that we did such a wonderful job in 2020 and 2021... if we (now) do nothing and a huge number of people get infected, that basically gives away all you have achieved," he told AFP.

Many in China speak favourably of zero-COVID, with Fu of the Brookings Institution saying state propaganda had convinced most people of the need to cut cases "at all human and economic costs". "A vast number of Chinese citizens still support draconian measures despite evident personal suffering," she said. Even those at the extreme end of the

policy have no option but to submit. Airline engineer Ian Jiang has spent 200 days in isolation hotels throughout the pandemic, and China continues to enforce quarantines for overseas arrivals of up to two weeks. Jiang, 38, described the measures as "very inconvenient for my personal life".

"But that's the Chinese government's policy," said Jiang. "You have no choice." There is unlikely to be much overt opposition when Xi receives the adulation of party delegates at this month's Congress. "The campaign, no matter the actual socioeconomic outcomes, will continue to be hailed as a triumph of Chinese socialism," Fu said. — AFP



**TOKYO, Japan:** Photo shows a group of activists holding up placards with images of Japanese citizen Toru Kubota, who was detained in Myanmar, during a rally in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo. — AFP

## Myanmar junta jails Japanese filmmaker for ten years

**YANGON, Myanmar:** Myanmar's junta has jailed a Japanese filmmaker for 10 years, more than two months after he was arrested while filming an anti-coup protest, a military spokesman said Thursday. The military has clamped down on press freedoms since its coup last year, arresting reporters and photographers as well as revoking broadcasting licences while the country plunged into chaos. Toru Kubota, 26, was detained near an anti-government rally in commercial hub Yangon in July along with two Myanmar citizens. He was sentenced on Wednesday to seven years in jail for breaching a law that criminalises spreading information detrimental to state security and peace and tranquility, a junta spokesman said in a statement.

It added he had also received a three-year sentence for encouraging dissent against the military—a charge that has been widely used in the crackdown. The sentences would be served concurrently, the junta statement added. A diplomat at Japan's embassy in Myanmar said Kubota also faces a charge of breaching immigration law, with the next hearing expected on October 12. Japan's foreign ministry said it had been providing consular support and would "continue to appeal to the Myanmar authorities for the early release of Mr Kubota."

The filmmaker had arrived in Myanmar in July and was filming a "documentary featuring a Myanmar per-

son", his friend Yoshitaka Nitta told a press conference in Tokyo in August. According to a profile on the FilmFreeway website, Kubota has previously made documentaries on Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya minority and "refugees and ethnic issues in Myanmar".

### 'Slap in the face'

Japan is a top donor to Myanmar and has long-standing relations with the country's military. After the coup, Tokyo announced it would halt all new aid, though it stopped short of imposing individual sanctions on military and police commanders. Kubota's jailing is a "slap in the face" for Tokyo, said Phil Robertson of Human Rights Watch. "It's time for Japan to stop playing games, and move to support real international sanctions that will squeeze the junta's revenue sources."

In September, Japan's defence ministry said it would halt a training programme for members of Myanmar's military from next year over the junta's executions of four political prisoners. The junta's execution of the four in July, in the face of international calls for clemency, was Myanmar's first use of capital punishment in decades and sparked international outrage.

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said Kubota's arrest and "trial behind closed doors... is symptomatic of the military junta's abysmal disregard for the rule of law". RSF's Asia-Pacific director Daniel Bastard urged Japan to stand-firm and obtain his release as "Myanmar's generals have become accustomed to using foreign journalists as bargaining chips in their relations with foreign governments". Kubota is the fifth foreign journalist to be detained in Myanmar, after US citizens Nathan Maung and Danny Fenster, Robert Bociaga of Poland and Yuki Kitazumi of Japan—all of whom were later freed and deported.—AFP

the initial assumption is that there is so much pressure from the overflowing river that pushed and knocked down the school's wall. The water overflowed into the school," he said.

Local media reported the three dead were students at the MITSN 19 school in South Jakarta. The police official did not confirm the identity of the victims. Footage on social media showed some teenage students crying in panic while trying to evacuate from the school, submerged in waist-deep waters.

Five people were killed in floods across the city last February that submerged entire neighbourhoods and sent thousands into shelters. In 2020, Jakarta saw some of its deadliest floods in years after downpours that also triggered landslides.

At least 67 people in the capital and nearby cities were killed in that disaster, with the floodwaters reaching the second floor of some buildings after rivers burst their banks. — AFP

## 3 dead in Jakarta floods after school wall collapses

**JAKARTA, Indonesia:** At least three people died in Indonesia Thursday after a flood in capital Jakarta surged into a school and caused a wall to collapse, a police official told local media. The Greater Jakarta metropolitan region houses around 30 million people and is regularly hit by floods in the rainy season.

"According to the information we received, 3 people died," Multazam Lisendra, police chief of Cilandak district in south Jakarta, told broadcaster Kompas TV. "For the cause, it needs to be investigated further, but

## Tortured domestic worker seeks compensation in HK

**HONG KONG, China:** An Indonesian woman who suffered daily "torture" as a domestic worker in Hong Kong went to court Thursday to seek compensation from her employers over treatment that left her physically scarred and mentally traumatised.

The abuse meted out to Kartika Puspitasari, 40, made headlines a decade ago and sparked protests over the treatment of foreign helpers in Hong Kong. Her employers, who were convicted and jailed, waged a two-year campaign of violence and humiliation against her, including burning her with an iron and beating her with a bike chain. "I still feel a heavy trauma that makes me emotionally vulnerable, I often have nightmares and tremble whenever I see people who look like my former employers," Kartika said via an interpreter at a press conference. "I lost my confidence and also feel insecure because of the visible scars on my body, which are still sore and painful."

Kartika said she returned home in 2014 without being compensated for two years' worth of labour, as her monthly wages were never paid. With help from activists, she returned to Hong Kong and testified in court on Thursday to sue her abusers for more than HK\$930,000 (\$119,000) — a rare attempt to pursue damages directly. Hong Kong is home to around 340,000 migrant domestic workers, mainly women from Indonesia and the Philippines. Rights advocates have long argued that they are acutely vulnerable to various forms of abuse and exploitation.

A tearful Kartika told reporters she was still afraid to speak publicly about her experience. "At the time, I was so desperate... I had no friends, couldn't contact anyone and was tortured every day." Eni Lestari, spokesperson of the Asian Migrant Coordinating Body in Hong Kong, said Kartika's case was "extreme, but not an isolated one". Abused migrant workers often lack proper food and rest—a situation made worse by the pandemic which gave employers excuses to keep helpers in the house, she added. Hong Kong's system, which requires domestic workers to live in their employers' households and pays a minimum monthly salary of HK\$4,730, was akin to "modern slavery", activists said. It is common for victims not to speak out because they cannot afford to seek redress in Hong Kong, especially when their visas expire at the end of their contracts, they added. Kartika's ex-employers—who were jailed for three and a half years and five and a half years respectively and have completed their sentences—did not appear in court on Thursday for the civil suit. — AFP

## India bolsters search for 20 still missing after avalanche

**DEHRADUN, India:** Rescuers stepped up efforts Thursday to find around 20 people still missing 48 hours after an avalanche in the Indian Himalayas claimed at least nine lives including a record-breaking woman climber.

A group of 41 climbing trainees and instructors were caught in Tuesday's massive snowslide near the summit of Mount Draupadi ka Danda II in the northern state of Uttarakhand. Nine bodies have been recovered so far and 12 people have been rescued, an official from the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering told AFP. Police on Wednesday had said 10 bodies had been retrieved. On Thursday, a team from the High Altitude Warfare School joined the Indian air force and local disaster agencies to help with the challenging rescue operations. An advance helicopter landing ground has been prepared at 4,900 metres (16,000 feet) above sea level and a trial landing was successful on Thursday morning, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police said. Sunil Lalwani, a trainee climber who was rescued, credited the instructors for saving many lives.

"We were 50-100 metres from the summit with our instructors ahead of us, when suddenly an avalanche hit us and took everyone down," Lalwani was quoted as saying by the Hindustan Times.

"It happened in a matter of seconds and we were dumped in a crevasse. We were somehow able to breathe... It's because of them (instructors) that we are alive today." Among the bodies recovered was that of accomplished climber Savita Kanswal, who had summited Everest this year.

Kanswal was an instructor with the expedition and had been feted by the climbing community for summiting the world's highest peak and nearby Makalu in just 16 days—a women's record. Fatal climbing accidents are common in the Himalayas, home to Everest and several of the world's highest peaks. In August, the body of a mountaineer was recovered two months after he fell into a crevasse while crossing a glacier in the neighbouring state of Himachal Pradesh. And last week, renowned US ski mountaineer Hilaree Nelson's body was found on the slopes of Nepal's Manaslu peak after she went missing skiing down the world's eighth-highest mountain.—AFP



**JAKARTA, Indonesia:** A woman makes her way through a street flooded due to heavy rain in a residential area in Jakarta on October 6, 2022. — AFP



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2022

# Business

## Lebanon far from gas riches even if deal agreed: Analysts

### Authorities are widely blamed for corruption and mismanagement

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon is grappling to strike a deal with the Zionist entity over contested maritime gas fields, but even with an agreement the cash-strapped country faces multiple hurdles before tapping potential hydrocarbon riches, analysts say. “A deal would mark one step forward but it does not mean that Lebanon has become a gas- or oil-producing country,” said Marc Ayoub, an associate fellow at the American University of Beirut’s Issam Fares Institute. “We are talking of a timeline of five to six years... before the first gas” if commercially viable reservoirs are in fact found, the energy expert told AFP, describing the timeframe as “optimistic.” With the demand for gas rising worldwide because of an energy crisis sparked by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Lebanon hopes that an offshore discovery would ease its current unprecedented financial downturn. But more than a decade since it declared its maritime boundaries and an Exclusive Economic Zone, it still has no proven natural gas reserves.

One well drilled in 2020 by a consortium of energy giants TotalEnergies, Eni and Novatek showed only traces but no commercially viable gas deposits. Further test drilling, in a block near the border, has been hampered by the maritime border dispute between Lebanon and the Zionist entity, which are technically still at war. Following years of US-mediated negotiations, a draft proposal from Washington at the weekend was welcomed by both sides.

But the Zionist entity on Thursday said it would reject amendments to the proposal requested by Lebanon this week, further prolonging a final agreement. A final deal, however, would allow “offshore exploration activities to continue,” off Lebanon’s coast, Ayoub said. “But that doesn’t mean that Lebanon has become rich... or that its crisis has been solved.”

## Libya PM defends undersea gas deal with Turkey

**TRIPOLI:** Libya’s Tripoli-based prime minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah has defended a deal signed earlier this week with Turkey over oil and gas exploration in the Mediterranean, which angered European nations. The memorandum of understanding, three years after a controversial maritime border deal, sparked a sharp reaction from Greece as well as from Dbeibah’s rivals in Libya, where two administrations are grappling for power.

“The Turkish-Libyan MoU is based on previous deals even prior to 2011,” Dbeibah said, referring to the year a NATO-backed uprising toppled dictator Muammar Gaddafi and plunged the North African nation into years of violence. “It’s our right to sign MoUs, and we have signed hundreds of them in order to promote cooperation with other states.” Dbeibah’s government was installed in the capital Tripoli in the west of Libya as part of a United Nations-led peace process last year.

But he has been challenged since March by a rival government based in the east, which argues that his mandate has expired and that he has no right to sign international agreements. The question of rights to Libya’s vast hydrocarbon resources has become more urgent this year as global energy prices have soared. “Global demand for gas has grown sharply since the Russian-Ukrainian war, and we will continue to explore for oil in our territorial waters in cooperation with other states,” Dbeibah said in a speech late Wednesday.

Monday’s deal builds on an agreement signed between Ankara and a previous Tripoli-based administration in 2019, at the height of a battle for the capital after eastern-based military chief Khalifa Haftar attempted to seize it by force. The delivery of Turkish drones to Tripoli-based forces shortly afterwards was seen as crucial in the victory over Haftar, who was backed at the time by Egypt, Russia and the United Arab Emirates. In the 2019 agreement, Turkey had laid claim to large areas of the eastern Mediterranean, angering Greece, France and the EU. On Monday, Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said he and his Egyptian counterpart “both challenged the legitimacy” of the deal.—AFP

## Truss fails to calm markets as Fitch lowers outlook

**BIRMINGHAM:** Prime Minister Liz Truss vowed to steer the UK “through the tempest” as she closed her party’s tumultuous annual conference on Wednesday, making an unapologetic pitch for economic “growth, growth, growth”. Since succeeding Boris Johnson, Truss has alienated voters, financial markets and many in the ruling Conservative party with a crash program of debt-fueled tax cuts to boost Britain’s stagnant economy.

### ‘First gas’

A 2012 seismic study of a limited offshore area by the British firm Spectrum estimated recoverable gas reserves in Lebanon at 25.4 trillion cubic feet. The authorities in Lebanon have announced higher estimates. Block 9 near the border with the Zionist entity contains the so-called Qana field or Sidon reservoir, and will be a major zone for offshore exploration by TotalEnergies and Eni that were awarded a contract in 2018. “This time next year, we should know if there is a commercial discovery in Qana or not,” Ayoub said. “If we have a discovery, it will take... no less than three to five years after exploration” before production could start.

This time frame, according to Ayoub, assumes there are no delays by Lebanese authorities who are widely blamed for the corruption and mismanagement behind the country’s financial crash. It took months for the Lebanese Petroleum Administration (LPA) regulatory body to name its board after it was formed in 2012, because of political disputes over nominations. Several bidding rounds for offshore gas and oil licenses have been hit by delays since they began in 2013. Already, Lebanon lags far behind the Zionist entity which has been investing in the offshore Karish field for years and is expecting its first gas within weeks.

### Risky investment

Roudi Baroudi, an energy consultant, said that gas or oil production could start within three years if commercially viable reservoirs are found. But to attract energy firms and benefit from potential discoveries, Lebanon desperately needs to undergo changes, he told AFP. “Lebanon is not a good investment unless the government implements reforms.”



NAQURA, Lebanon: A United Nations peacekeeping force (UNIFIL) vehicle drives on the coastal road to Naqura, the southernmost Lebanese town by the border with the Zionist entity, on Oct 3, 2022. — AFP

the energy expert said. Reforms would provide “the basic assurances that international companies need to work with less risk”.

State institutions in Lebanon have collapsed under the weight of the crisis, with strikes by civil servants adding to the paralysis. An economic recovery plan has yet to take off more than three years since the financial downturn began, despite mounting pressures from foreign donors and the International Monetary Fund.



VIENNA: Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Energy Abdulaziz bin Salman speaks during a press conference after the 45th Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee and the 33rd OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting on Oct 5, 2022. — AFP

## OPEC+ delivers diplomatic slap with output cut

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden got a diplomatic slap in the face Wednesday with the OPEC+ cartel’s decision to ignore both his efforts at isolating Russia and desperate attempts to hold down fuel prices ahead of midterm elections. “The president is disappointed by the shortsighted decision by OPEC+,” National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and top economic advisor Brian Deese said in a statement. That sounded like understatement.

Biden has been trying for months to walk an economic and geopolitical tightrope in which he lowers fuel costs for Americans while simultaneously cutting major energy exporter Russia from revenues needed to finance its war on Ukraine. And with just five weeks before midterm elections where the Democrats hope to cling on to control of Congress, Biden was having some success. Average gasoline costs have fallen by more than \$1 a gallon from politically damaging highs earlier this year, while the US-led Western coalition confronting Russia remains solid going into winter.

So the decision by Saudi-led OPEC and a set of Russian-dominated allies, collectively known as OPEC+, was a shock. Saudi Arabia is one of the closest US allies and the biggest single purchaser of top-end US weaponry. Biden himself spent considerable

political capital in July by visiting the kingdom and meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre reflected the administration’s frustration, saying “it’s clear that OPEC+ is aligning with Russia with today’s announcement”. Senator Chris Murphy, an ally of Biden, was blunter.

### Price rise looms

Higher fuel prices have already inflicted severe damage on Biden’s standing this year. Unlike other areas of inflation, fuel prices are literally emblazoned on large signs at gas stations, while motorists in many cases have no option other than to pay up. As president, however, there are limits on what Biden can do to fight the trend. The White House said Biden was ordering another dip into the country’s Strategic Petroleum Reserve, with 10 million barrels set to be put on the market next month in an attempt to dampen prices rises.

However, those reserves are fast emptying out after record withdrawals ordered by the administration, starting back in March. The reserves are now at their lowest level since July 1984 and it is not clear when the administration plans to purchase a refill. The next releases will continue “as appropriate to protect American consumers and promote energy security, and (Biden) is directing the secretary of energy to explore any additional responsible actions to continue increasing domestic production in the immediate term,” a White House statement said. In addition, the administration will “consult with Congress on additional tools and authorities to reduce OPEC’s control over energy prices,” the statement said. —AFP

desired effect so far,” said Susannah Streeter, an analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown. Global ratings agency Fitch on Wednesday lowered its outlook for British government debt from stable to negative, warning of “a significant increase in fiscal deficits over the medium term”.

Despite only being leader for exactly a month, Truss’s calamitous start, with a 10-day hiatus because of the death of Queen Elizabeth II, has already seen her fighting to keep her job. Former minister Grant Shapps, who supported Truss’s leadership rival Rishi Sunak, said she could face a no-confidence vote by MPs if the keynote speech fails to start reviving the party’s dismal standing in opinion polls. “In the end, I don’t think members of parliament, Conservatives, if they see the polls continue as they are, are going to sit on their hands,” he told Times Radio. “A way would be found to make that change.”—AFP

## IMF chief urges action as global recession risks rise

**WASHINGTON:** IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva urged global policymakers Thursday to take concerted action to avoid a “dangerous ‘new normal,’” as the risks of a worldwide recession are driven ever higher by repeated economic shocks. In a speech ahead of the fund’s annual meetings next week, the IMF’s managing director said it was critical to “stabilize the global economy by addressing the most immediate challenges” - including rampant inflation.



Kristalina Georgieva

Policymakers need to act together to “prevent this period of heightened fragility from becoming a dangerous ‘new normal,’” Georgieva said. But she warned the process will be painful - and that if central banks move too aggressively to tamp down price pressures, it could trigger a “prolonged” economic

downturn. Finance ministers and central bank governors from more than 180 nations will gather next week in Washington for the first fully in-person meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank since 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Faced with the “darkening global outlook ... the risks of recession are rising,” Georgieva said - announcing that the crisis lender plans to once again downgrade its 2023 forecast for the world economy, in the forecasts due to be published next week for the annual meeting. One-third of countries are expected to see at least two quarters of contraction, and “even when growth is positive, it will feel like a recession” because of rising prices eroding incomes, she said. The fund in July slashed its growth forecast for this year to 3.2 percent, and for next year to 2.9 percent - the third consecutive downgrade.

The meetings come at a difficult time for the global economy, with the pandemic largely under control, but soaring inflation and rising interest rates now threatening to reverberate around the globe and choke off nascent recoveries. “In less than three years we lived through shock, after shock, after shock,” Georgieva said in her speech at Georgetown University. Global supply snarls already were a challenge as demand surged following the pandemic slowdown, fueling inflation worldwide, and strains worsened in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine—which Georgieva called a “senseless war” - sending food and food prices soaring. “Far from being transitory, inflation has become more persistent,” and acting before high prices become entrenched is a key challenge for policymakers, Georgieva said - warning that “the cost of a policy misstep can be enormous.”—AFP



Business

# Hazy timeframe before electric airplane era becomes a reality

## US air safety authorities to take time to greenlight new technology

**NEW YORK:** Recent test flights suggest the era of electric airplanes is coming closer, but aviation experts caution that achieving commercial use hinges on regulatory approval which has an unknowable timeframe. Eviation Aircraft successfully completed a test flight in Washington state last week, showcasing a plane the company plans to begin delivering to airlines in 2027. That came on the heels of an Icelandair flight in August which carried Iceland's president and prime minister among its passengers.

Besides the benefit in eliminating carbon dioxide emissions, electric airplane travel potentially means less noise than conventional plane transport, as well as eliminating the need for jet fuel, a major expense for commercial airlines. Gregory Davis, chief executive of Eviation, called last week's test flight the start of "the next era of aviation," and said it offered a glimpse of what "affordable, clean and sustainable aviation looks and sounds like". But industry experts speak of a hazy timeframe before that future becomes reality, in part because of murkiness over how quickly US air safety authorities will move to greenlight new technology from a seven-year old company with no operating history. Eviation is "stepping into some unknown areas as far as how you certify and support electric aircraft," said Glenn McDonald, a principal at AeroDynamic Advisory, a consultancy. While the 2027 timeframe for the Eviation plane "could be realistic", McDonald noted that the Federal Aviation Administration has taken a more painstaking approach to certifications since the Boeing 737 MAX crashes in 2018 and 2019. The two-seat Velis Electro, certified by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency in 2020, is the only electric plane currently cleared for service.

Michel Merluzeau, director of aerospace and defense analysis at AIR consultancy, said the end of the decade was probably a more realistic timeframe than 2027 for the US market. "It's fundamentally early days," said Merluzeau, adding that the FAA will only approve the vehicle after exhaustive testing.

**Much testing ahead**

The Sept 27 test flight of Eviation's "Alice" aircraft was an eight-minute voyage that reached an altitude of 3,500 feet (1,065 m) on a sunny morning. The company plans to produce a cargo plane, a six-seat "executive" version and a "commuter" model carrying up to nine passengers on flights of up to 250 nautical miles. Davis characterized the test plane as "prototype aircraft built by hand." The commercial version is expect-



MOSES LAKE, Washington: Eviation CEO Gregory Davis (left) and Chief Test Pilot Steve Crane take questions at a press briefing after a successful test flight of Eviation's all-electric aircraft "Alice" on Sept 27, 2022. — AFP

ed to be the same size and weight, but with more advanced battery technology. "We fully expect to have our choice" of battery, Davis told AFP in an interview.

Among those closely watching the process is Global Crossing Airlines Group, a Miami flight company that has signed a letter of intent for 50 aircraft it plans to fly in Florida, the Bahamas and the Caribbean. Alice's appeal stems from the savings in jet fuel costs, said Ryan Goepel, chief financial officer at Global Crossing, which has said it expects to begin receiving planes in 2027. "We see this as a product that has a lot of demand and really low operating costs," Goepel said, adding that the test flight represented a "huge milestone."

Davis said the next step will be to analyze flight data, and the company expects to begin FAA testing in 2025, with commercial production also beginning that year. The agency declined to comment directly on Eviation, but a spokesman said, "speaking generally, the FAA can certify these new aircraft through its existing regulatory framework." "Some certifications could require the FAA to issue special conditions or additional airworthiness criteria, depending on the type of project," the official said in an email.

Setting specific conditions is a typical response from the FAA when addressing new technologies but that process can "take a while", said Waruna Seneviratne of the National Institute for Aviation Research at Wichita State University. Testing will be extensive before the FAA allows the jet on the market for the flying public, Seneviratne predicted. "The goal is to find that one incident, one bad part that's going to take an airplane down," he said.

Merluzeau said the fact Alice is a new plane rather than an established model reconfigured with an electric engine amounts to "an incredibly complex assignment" for the FAA. A lengthy, costly certification process would be a challenge for the young firm. "How do you survive long enough as a company when you know the certification is going to take a long time?" Merluzeau said. "How will they be able to do that when they are burning through cash?"

Eviation is currently backed by the Clermont Group, a Singapore private investment group chaired by Richard Chandler, whose wealth is estimated by Forbes at \$2.6 billion. An Eviation spokeswoman said the company "will be pursuing additional funding on the path to certification and production". — AFP

## German car sales up but picture bleak; factory orders fall

**FRANKFURT:** German car sales rose in September, official data showed Thursday, but analysts saw little reason to cheer as recession fears overshadowed a long-awaited easing of supply chain frictions. Almost 225,000 new cars hit the roads last month, the KBA federal transport authority said in a statement - a 14-percent increase on a year earlier. But the jump mainly reflected an "extremely weak" September last year and a delivery backlog from the previous month, the VDIK car importers' federation said. VDIK president Reinhard Zirpel said the picture over the first three quarters of 2022 was "sobering". "For the first time ever, passenger car sales are below two million units after nine months," he said.

Auto manufacturers have for months had to deal with supply issues, with shortages of key components leading to intermittent production stops and a slump in sales. EY analyst Peter Fuss said that while the global shortage in semiconductors - used in vehicles' electronic systems - appeared to be easing, car demand was likely to shrink in the coming months as Germany braces for a recession and inflation stands at historic highs.

"We should not expect a sweeping market recovery in the coming year. Consumer sentiment has reached a low point. Major purchases are being postponed," he said. On the bright side, sales of fully electric vehicles continued their upward trend, rising by 32 percent year-on-year. Especially the "luxury e-car segment, where price plays a smaller role, will keep booming," Fuss predicted. Meanwhile, German industrial orders fell more sharply than expected in August, official data showed Thursday, as soaring energy costs caused by the war in Ukraine take a toll on Europe's economic powerhouse. —AFP

AL SAFAT

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WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 6 OCTOBER 2022

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance											Valuation Multiples *			
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	993	1,026	1,035	962	73	27,709,115	50	5.12%	8.05%	1,024	1,038	18.7	2.00	2.4%	1.00
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	303	321	322	291	31	32,136,091	21	7.00%	20.81%	310	321	17.4	1.44	2.2%	1.25
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	197	200	206	192	14	8,045,611	2	1.01%	-4.59%	192	203	31.8	0.63	1.9%	1.17
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	221	217	226	205	21	11,061,419	-5	-2.25%	-9.22%	212	217	18.8	0.82	2.1%	1.30
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	840	824	873	779	94	375,790,436	-17	-2.02%	8.94%	815	840	28.9	3.64	1.3%	1.17
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	765	808	824	762	62	9,921,915	43	5.62%	13.43%	803	813	52.9	3.24	0.6%	1.09
204	National Investments	Financial Services	229	239	251	211	40	7,989,137	8	3.46%	9.13%	237	244	8.7	0.93	19.2%	1.81
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	132	123	133	118	15	13,838,060	-10	-7.52%	-13.38%	118	132	320.5	0.66	4.0%	1.01
252	Al Intiaz Investment	Financial Services	78	74.4	78	68.6	9.3	4,761,571	-1.1	-1.46%	-36.95%	68.6	78.0	NULL	0.43	12.1%	1.23
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	101	103	108	97	11	30,005,958	2	1.98%	-40.73%	97.0	108	12.5	0.75	2.8%	1.10
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	862	864	878	843	35	3,238,276	1	0.12%	15.49%	850	875	18.2	1.97	1.5%	1.05
501	National Industries	Financial Services	229	227	241	214	27	66,727,202	-2	-0.87%	-5.79%	221	232	5.2	0.95	4.9%	1.49
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,042	1,090	1,196	967	229	2,831,939	20	1.87%	25.14%	1,090	1,176	10.4	1.04	5.4%	0.98
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	853	812	853	769	84	1,110,021	-18	-2.17%	-4.69%	769	820	9.2	1.65	7.4%	0.94
526	Al Qurain	Basic Materials	271	269	275	255	20	2,351,000	-2	-0.74%	-22.48%	255	275	10.1	0.65	6.8%	1.06
603	Agility	Industrials	663	677	715	634	81	50,253,904	9	1.35%	-14.03%	656	694	53.5	1.19	2.4%	1.49
605	Zain	Telecommunications	584	590	598	570	28	24,084,641	5	0.85%	-0.84%	589	599	14.1	2.17	5.5%	0.80
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,302	3,370	3,385	3,252	133	568,379	95	2.90%	4.53%	3,350	3,440	7.7	3.69	12.0%	0.69
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	171	179	183	167	16	1,371,822	5	2.87%	-17.89%	167	184	NULL	0.65	0.0%	1.17
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,718	1,710	1,850	1,650	200	1,504,315	55	3.32%	32.56%	1,700	1,780	13.6	12.14	2.7%	1.41
818	Ahli United Bank	Banking	NULL	305	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	#N/A	0	0.00%	20.68%	-	-	17.9	2.04	2.8%	1.77
821	Warba Bank	Banking	221	226	235	216	19	31,672,204	5	2.26%	-17.52%	216	229	27.4	1.26	0.0%	1.09
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	370	378	389	358	31	4,142,141	4	1.07%	-34.54%	360	380	38.7	1.11	4.1%	0.50
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	362	360	374	351	23	2,271,584	-20	-5.26%	-2.70%	358	370	27.7	1.49	2.8%	0.75
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	193	193	195	190	5	2,989,260	-2	-1.03%	-15.35%	190	195	14.8	2.17	9.3%	0.47
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,079	2,085	2,165	1,880	285	631,214	6	0.29%	3.22%	2,045	2,106	21.6	6.96	3.2%	0.87
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	778	794	800	750	50	1,282,172	9	1.15%	#VALUE!	780	800	12.4	3.66	#VALUE!	0.49

\* As of end of week closing



## Business

# KFH rings bell commemorating cross-listing and trading of its shares on Bahrain Bourse



Chairman of KFH Hamad Al-Marzouq and the Bahraini Minister of Industry and Commerce Zayed Al-Zayani ring the trading bell in the presence of CEO Abdulwahab Al-Rashoud and senior officials.



Hamad Al-Marzouq signs the listing agreement with Sheikh Khalifa bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa in the presence of Zayed Al-Zayani and Chairman of Bahrain Bourse Abdul Karim Bujairi.



**Al-Marzouq: Cross-listing of KFH shares in Bahrain Bourse and Boursa Kuwait enhances liquidity in the market, contributes to the positive activity of both clearing companies and allows access to more investors**

**KUWAIT:** After receiving the approval of the Capital Markets Authority in Kuwait to list its shares on Bahrain Bourse (BHB), and to commemorate the cross-listing and trading commencement of KFH shares in Bahrain, Chairman of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq rang the ceremonial opening bell of Bahrain Bourse announcing the cross-listing as part of the successful completion of KFH's acquisition of AUB-Bahrain's 100 percent shares, following obtaining the result of the total approval rate from Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC), Bahrain Clearing and SICO on the proposal document.

The ringing of the bell ceremony was held in the presence of Bahrain Minister of Finance and National Economy Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa, Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain Rasheed Mohammed Al-Maraj, Minister of Industry and Commerce & Minister in Charge of Bahrain Bourse Zayed bin Rashid Al-Zayani, and the CEO of SICO Najla Al-Shirawi, along with

CEOs of listed companies, business officials, and investors.

Al-Marzouq said that he was pleased with the successful listing of KFH shares on BHB, stating that the cross-listing of KFH shares in Bahrain Bourse and Boursa Kuwait enhances liquidity in the market, contributes to the positive activity of both stock markets and allows access to more potential investors considering that the stock is being traded in more than one market worldwide, which means more capital opportunities for the organization. He noted that new liquidity will be directed to KFH after trading the issued shares of KFH due to the increase of KFH's weight on MSCI index, which will require foreign investors to adjust their portfolios based on the new ratio.

Al-Marzouq added that the cross-listing of KFH shares helps improve the governance structure that guides the instructions and objectives of the organization and plays a role in increasing the opportunities to attract the best talents to leverage the stock market and customer service.



Hamad Al-Marzouq delivers his speech at the official listing ceremony of KFH shares on the Bahrain Bourse.

He noted that one of the many advantages of cross-listing the shares is enhancing the reputation and geographical reach of the organization, saying that the Bank could benefit from the advertising strategy of cross-listed companies to attract foreign investors.

Al-Marzouq expressed his sincere gratitude to the trust given by the shareholders and investment communities represented by individuals, companies, and institutions. He thanked Boursa Kuwait,

Bahrain Bourse, CMA, KCC, Bahrain Clear, SICO and all the Kuwaiti and Bahraini regulatory authorities who granted the approval for acquisition.

He also praised the efforts of local and international consultants, in addition to the acquisition team who spared no effort to complete this major cross-border merger which increases the capital base of KFH to more than \$10 billion and strengthens the standing of Kuwait and Bahrain as prestigious financial hubs in the GCC region.

## Amid high inflation, online US insurance offers mislead elderly

**WASHINGTON:** One advertisement on Facebook promises zero-cost dental care for elderly Americans hit hard by rising medical bills. Another, on Instagram, offers free groceries in exchange for an email and phone number. But the ads are misleading, at best. So bad is the problem of deceptive Medicare marketing that a US congressional committee has asked 15 states to investigate. Big insurance companies, worried about their reputations and potential fines, have started to take note.

"If there's money to be made in finding customers for a particular product or service, chances are there will be a firm trying to get people to click on links on Facebook," said John Breyault, an expert on fraud and scams at the National Consumers League. Between 2020 and 2021, complaints from the tens of millions of Americans aged 65 and older who qualify for federal health insurance more than doubled, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Many complaints mention firms that hawk Medicare Advantage plans, which are provided by private companies. The online offers examined by AFP allude to genuine benefits in some of those plans. "Flex cards," for example, are offered to some chronically ill beneficiaries to help pay for out-of-pocket expenses. "With inflation taking a bigger bite out of people's pocketbooks for things like groceries and gas and other day-to-day expenses, an ad promising you help with that could be particularly enticing," Breyault said.

Claims of free dental care and grocery cards have circulated widely on social media since Jan 2022, when enrollment for Medicare Advantage began. But the benefits are only available to a comparatively small audience. And as older, typically unwaged citizens are hit by rising prices, watchdogs say they could be misled into changing their plans during traditional Medicare enrollment in October.

Over the past nine months, dozens of Facebook pages have promoted free grocery cards and dental care in hundreds of English- and Spanish-language posts - some of which were boosted as ads and later removed for violating platform policies, an AFP analysis shows. One Facebook page called Senior Savings Club promoted a webpage promising a "spending card for free groceries" in dozens of posts, according to the Facebook Ad Library, a public archive of paid advertisements on Meta platforms. The site's terms and conditions link to another website owned by Assurance IQ, a subsidiary of US insurance firm Prudential Financial. Bill Launder, a spokesperson for the Fortune 500 company, said a marketing firm created the video ad. "Prudential, through its business unit Assurance IQ, terminated that affiliate marketing relationship due to concerns about misleading marketing practices," he told AFP. —AFP

## Inflation squeezes Spain's legendary set lunch menu

**MADRID:** Dreamt up in the 1960s to attract tourists, Spain's three-course "menu del dia", or set lunch menu, has long been seen as the best deal in town. But with inflation hovering around 10 percent, its affordability is under threat as restaurants seek ways to economize. For a starter, main course and dessert or coffee (or both), bread and a drink, the average price is around €12.8 (\$12.60), according to figures from Hosteleria de Espana, Spain's main hostelry association representing the hotel and restaurant industry.

Offered by almost every Spanish restaurant, its price makes it a popular option in a country where people frequently eat out. "Everyone chooses it," says Sara Riballo, who is in her 30s, sitting on a terrace in central Madrid. "We eat out several times a week and we usually go for the set menu because it's better value for money, it's quicker and it's quite varied," agrees her colleague Estefania Hervás.

Spanish restaurants serve up on average four million "menus del dia" every day in the country of 47 million people, the hostelry association says. The idea was first cooked up nearly six decades ago when Spain was under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. A ministerial order was issued that all restaurants must offer a "tourist menu" to cater to the growing waves of foreign visitors to the Spanish coast. The decree was written into Spain's official state bulletin,

stating that the menu must from Aug 1, 1964 include, as a "minimum", a soup, a main course, a dessert, a glass of wine and some bread.

### 'Extremely worried'

The tradition has lasted until today, where it acts as a sort of barometer for the Spanish economy, says Emilio Gallego, secretary-general of the hostelry association. "It's a very, very popular way of eating lunch with millions sold every day across the country. It's something we are constantly tracking," he said. Describing itself as "extremely worried by the effects of inflation and the price rises of recent months," the association found three-quarters of its restaurants had raised the price of their menu del dia between Nov 2021 and April 2022.

And that was before inflation peaked in July at 10.8 percent. In recent months, the price of olive oil has risen by 42.5 percent alongside the cost of bread, milk, eggs, meat and pasta, not to mention the spiraling bills for electricity, refrigeration or gas for stoves and ovens. With the industry "badly hit by rising energy and raw material costs at a time when it was still recovering from the health crisis", it has had little choice but to raise prices, Gallego said. In most cases, restaurants have raised the price of their menu del dia by 10 to 15 percent, an increase of between €1.0 and €1.5.

At Cafe Gijon, a landmark restaurant on Madrid's central Castellana boulevard, they serve up 250 set meals a day, priced at €15 each. But manager Jose Manuel Escamilla said the prices are likely to rise in the coming weeks. "Everything's going up: the price of electricity and mortgage costs have shot through the roof. If things carry on like this, we won't survive. It's difficult because it will affect our customers but at the



MADRID: A pedestrian walks past a board showing the day's menu in the Spanish capital on Sept 5, 2022. —AFP

end of the day, if we don't do it, we won't be able to function," he said.

Many restaurants are searching for other ways to save money and protect their margins. At a restaurant in one of Madrid's chic neighborhoods, they are now ordering meat in bulk and whole fish rather than pre-cut portions because the price is lower, admitted one of its buyers, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Gallego believes other restaurants will adapt by creating other formats, such as a two-course option of a main course with either a starter or dessert. At Valgame Dios in Madrid's Chueca neighborhood, the number of dishes on offer has already been slimmed down. "Instead of three or four starters, we have two," explains waitress Laura Rubio, who says she's just "waiting to see what will happen" and whether it will put off diners. —AFP

## 'Gold dust': Liberians queue for rice

**MONROVIA:** In the Clara Town suburb of Liberia's capital Monrovia, Aminata Kanneh stands sweating under the hot midday sun, queueing in a 100-metre-long line to buy rice. "Today makes it two weeks that I have not been coming every day, but until now I have not got a grain of rice," the 34-year-old told AFP. Liberians around the country have for weeks been queuing outside wholesalers to get their hands on the national staple food after rumors of a coming rice shortage began circling about six months ago.

Supply-chain disruptions and Russia's war in Ukraine have caused food shortages and high prices across much of the world. But Liberia, a West African nation of five million people, has been hit particularly hard, with the government and UN blaming a delay in shipments. Rice prices have steadily risen to about \$25 per 25-kilogram bag, from the official rate of \$13, over the past six months.

"I can't sell a bag for even \$20 right now because rice has become gold dust", said Angeline Sandy, a 27-year-old retailer. "I bought a bag for \$23 - I am selling it for \$30." Some 1.3 million people - more than a fifth of the population - live on less than \$2.15 per day, according to the World Bank. One wholesaler

who asked not to be named blamed the price hikes on the war in Ukraine, citing heightened freight costs.

"In neighboring countries, rice is sold for more than \$20 (while) we are asking for only \$15 per bag", he said. "We are selling at a loss - we can't continue." Djaounsede Madjiangar, a spokesman for the UN World Food Program in West Africa, said the rice shortage was due to "delays in the incoming consignment". "On the price of rice, it is definitely impacted by the crisis in Ukraine", he said, adding that about 70 percent of Liberia's staple food, including rice, is imported. "As for many other countries in West Africa, the increase in domestic food prices reflects international food price trends, largely driven by the global energy crisis resulting from the Russia and Ukraine crisis", he said.

### 'Remain calm'

This week the commerce ministry called on Liberians to "remain calm" and refrain from panic-buying, adding that more supplies were on the way. It also urged retailers not to hoard the commodity. "We want to assure the public that the current stock of rice in the country can serve the market up to the arrival of the next vessel which is expected in the coming days", the Tuesday statement said. It said the government has been subsidizing importers to maintain a price cap on the staple product, and attributed "delays in incoming consignments" to a National Port Authority order in August to block vessels deemed defective from docking in the country. One wholesaler told AFP that Liberia needs at least 50,000 metric tons of rice per month to satisfy demand.



MONROVIA: People wait in line to buy sacks of rice from a wholesaler on Oct 5, 2022. —AFP

The commerce ministry said that some 150,000 metric tons would arrive between mid-October and early November, which would supply the market until early next year. Another 22,000 metric tons were expected "in the coming days", the statement said. Liberia also faced fuel shortages earlier this year with prices spiking and motorists forced to wait in long queues outside gas stations. One of the poorest countries in the world, Liberia is still recovering after back-to-back civil wars from 1989 to 2003 and West Africa's 2014-16 Ebola crisis. The country also suffers from high inflation and regular cash shortages. It ranks 178th out of 191 countries on the UN's Human Development Index. —AFP





Saudi trekker Abdullah Alsulmi crosses a desert area near Al-Khasrah area, some 350Km west of Riyadh, during his solo trek to the Qatari capital ahead of the FIFA World Cup. — AFP photos

## For Saudi fan, road to World Cup is a desert trek

The idea hit Abdullah Alsulmi earlier this year, while he was watching a television show in which a senior Qatari official promised an “exceptional” experience at the upcoming World Cup. His excitement building, the 33-year-old Saudi recalls thinking: “I will go to Doha no matter what, even if I have to walk!” It was an unlikely beginning to what has become an audacious adventure dismissed by some of Alsulmi’s own relatives as “crazy”: a two-month, 1,600-kilometre (1,000-mile) solo trek from his native Jeddah to the Qatari capital. Alsulmi says the journey, faithfully documented for his thousands of Snapchat followers, is meant to highlight regional enthusiasm for the first World Cup in the Middle East which Saudi officials have pitched as a milestone “for all Arabs”.

“We want to support the World Cup,” Alsulmi told AFP one day last week as he sheltered from the midday sun near roadside shrubs in the town of Al-Khasrah, 340 kilometers southwest of Riyadh. Wearing a wide-brim hat and a backpack to which

he’d affixed Saudi and Qatari flags, he said: “I consider myself like a Qatari who is very interested in this World Cup and its success.”

### Sun and scorpions

Alsulmi has experience with extended treks in Canada and Australia, where he used to live, yet those pale in comparison to the rigours of traversing the Arabian Peninsula. He typically sets out at sunrise and walks until 10 or 10:30 am, but then the heat forces him to break for a few hours before resuming in the afternoon and continuing until sundown. Occasionally he walks at night to maintain his goal of around 35 kilometers per day.

To keep his load light, Alsulmi subsists on food he can buy at petrol stations, often chicken and rice, while showering and washing his clothes at mosques. His social media posts capture details of life on the trail, from the mundane to the menacing: his nightly search for a spot to sleep, and the time he eyed a scorpion dozing dangerously close to his tent.

He also records conversations with Saudis he meets along the way, many of whom offer snacks and juice to keep him going. “There are moments of ups and downs, but when I meet people and hear these sweet words - ‘We will follow you on your account and support you’ - this encourages me to finish,” he said.

Straying from the main roads as often as he can, he says he has been rewarded with a taste of the varied scenery on offer in the kingdom-something he didn’t fully appreciate before. “Walking from Jeddah to Doha, every 100 kilometers is different. I mean, the first 100 kilometers there are sand dunes, then mountains, and then comes empty land, then farms,” he said. “I am going through all terrains in one country in two months. This is a beautiful thing.”

### A ‘simple’ sport

Alsulmi hopes that by posting about his experience, he can inspire other Saudis to consider trekking through their homeland. “When I do this, I want to con-

vey to people that hiking and walking is a beautiful sport, even if the weather is difficult here in Saudi Arabia, even if the terrain is difficult. We can do it,” he said. “It is a sport for simple people. You only need a bag and a few simple things, and a tent and nature.”

If all goes according to plan, Alsulmi will arrive in Doha in time for Saudi Arabia’s opening showdown against Argentina on November 22. It will be a moment of divided loyalty, since Argentina is his favorite team. Four days later, he has a ticket for the Green Falcons’ match against Poland. His hopes are high for a Saudi squad that has now qualified for six World Cups but advanced to the knockout stage just once, during its 1994 debut. “This year we have good players. The coach is the great French coach (Herve) Renard,” he said. “We expect and hope that this year the team will deliver an exceptional performance.”—AFP

## Qatar hopes World Cup flying headdress will be 2022 vuvuzela

Qatar wants the 2022 World Cup mascot of a flying white head-dress to symbolize football’s showcase tournament, just as the noisy vuvuzela horn did when South Africa hosted it in 2010. A flying keffiyeh head-dress named La’eeb, meaning super skilful player in Arabic, is the official World Cup mascot and is omnipresent on billboards across Qatar and on television. “La’eeb is a fun and mischievous character who comes from the mascot-verse, a parallel world where all tournament mascots live,” world football’s governing body FIFA said in its announcement. “He will bring the joy of football to everyone.”

The keffiyeh headdress, also known in the Gulf as a shemagh or a ghutra, is designed to protect against the sun, sand and dust. But it has not shielded



This file handout picture made available by FIFA on April 1, 2022, shows La’eeb, the official mascot for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

World Cup 2022 organizers from jibes on social media. Reaction to La’eeb has been mixed. Twitter comments have mockingly compared La’eeb to the cartoon character “Casper the Friendly Ghost” or a flying bedsheet. But it has its fans too.

La’eeb has been adopted by some

internet blockchain communities in China which have issued tokens bearing the mascot’s likeness. Qatar’s World Cup organizers would like to see a repeat of the Club 2019 World Cup championship when players from the Mexican side Monterrey wore keffiyehs after winning a match. Bertrand Roine,



Didier Grande, tosses in the air one of the fan shemagh scarves.

who won the world handball title with France and then moved to play for Qatar, has with his business partner developed the keffiyeh’s link to the World Cup by designing headdresses in the national colors of the 32 countries taking part. Roine hopes the colorful scarves will become “symbol” of the

games. “One friend told me, you have made a vuvuzela for Qatar,” he said. South Africa’s deafening vuvuzela plastic horns blew their way to worldwide notoriety with fans enthusiastically honking them at every goal.—AFP



Bertrand Roine, is pictured with one of the fan shemagh scarves, also known as ghutra or keffiyeh, that he designed.



Didier Grande, is pictured with one of the fan shemagh scarves.



Didier Grande, is pictured with one of the fan shemagh scarves.





Young men, dressed in their traditional outfits, attend a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men in Kabrousse.



Young men, who will start the initiation process the following year, blow whistles as they present themselves to the community, during a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men in Kabrousse, western Casamance. — AFP photos

# In Senegal, ancient male rite collides with modern times

**T**he dancers are a blaze of color, swirling amid a deafening, pounding noise. In their midst, a young man stands up. Wearing a beaded necklace and clad in a tight red shirt with multi-colored scarves hanging from his waist, with his arms outstretched, he makes a long cry to the heavens. This is an important moment for Cedric Djikila

in: it is designed to strengthen them spiritually for combat, which in the Diola culture is conveyed through wrestling, Senegal's national sport. As tomtoms and the bombolong, a traditional elongated drum, echo around the village of Kabrousse, the young initiates leap from side to side, their metal armbands rubbing against each other.

Some are bare-chested, others are wearing tunics, feathers or magic charms called grigris—those men who are due to marry in the coming year are dressed as women. The dancers swirl around, some brandishing swords or staves, and even fake snakes. Evening starts to fall and a gentle light, filtered by the emerald fronds of two giant kapok trees, bathes the dancers.

Young women arrive, gathering around the young men, swinging their hips, their makeup and hair perfect, crooning their support for their champions and rubbing powder on the sculpted male bodies. Children are there, and the elderly too. The mothers look adoringly at their sons on the brink of manhood—

"he's so handsome!" cries Cedric's mother, Angele Antessey Diatta, a proud smile illuminating her face.

## Threatened tradition

The party marking the end of these important rites coincides with the end of the rainy season each year in late September. Lower Casamance is part of

Those who return bring back different perspectives, fashions and tastes. Cedric praised the ancient traditions, but he also had his eye on distant horizons. He showed off his small house, which had no furniture, toilet or running water or even a floor.

He stopped school at the age of 12 to help his parents in the field. His father fell



A young man, dressed in his traditional outfit, sings and dances during a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men in Kabrousse.

Diatta, 21, on his path towards the coveted status of manhood. According to the traditions of the Diola people in Senegal's southern region of Casamance, he has entered the period of "Youth"—the intermediate chapter between adolescence and adulthood.

To prepare for the next step, a phase that may take half a dozen years, he and other young men of the same age have spent the past month together. They have been working in the rice fields and listening to the elders recount secret rites of passage and inculcate the values of hospitality and discipline. "Once you have been initiated, you change status," said Cedric. "You are free to travel, get married, take decisions that affect the entire community."

## Combat

Central to the transition to adulthood is the notion of warriorhood—"Life is a fight," said Cedric. "You always have to fight." And this where the dance comes



Dijimouna Mendy poses for a portrait in his traditional dress during a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men.



Senegal's southernmost region, and almost separated from the rest of the country by the tiny state of Gambia. The rituals, teaching and secrets conveyed from generation to generation vary from village to village, said Abdou Ndukur Kacou Ndao, an anthropologist. "But these practices are under threat today," he said. "In a hundred, two hundred years, it may well be that they no longer exist."

Pressures on animist-rooted traditions range from the growing place of Islam in Senegal, greater mixing among ethnic groups, and migration towards other regions within the country or abroad.

ill and two of his brothers also died of sickness, lacking treatment. He trained as a cook, working in one of the hotels in Casamance's Cap Skirring tourist resort, leaving for work at 4:30 am and returning in the afternoon to work in the rice fields. He said he earned 80,000 CFA (around \$120) a month. His dream was to get a job at the Club Med, an upmarket French vacation village at Cap Skirring. "When you get hired there, you make contacts enabling you to head off and live elsewhere," he said. — AFP

Young men, who will start the initiation process the following year, blow whistles as they present themselves to the community.



Young men, in the early stages of the initiation, attend a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men in Kabrousse, western Casamance.



Girls gather to watch the young men's performance during a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men.



Young men, dressed in their traditional outfits, sing and dance during a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men.



Young men perform to show their strength as girls cheer during a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men.



Young initiates pose for a portrait in their traditional dresses during a ceremony marking the end of the yearly initiation process for young men.



## Lifestyle | Features

## ‘Bella Ciao’, protest anthem the world loves to sing

From Ukraine to Chile, protesters worldwide have long rallied to the stirring Italian anthem “Bella Ciao”, now being sung by demonstrators in solidarity with women in Iran. The song, which talks of dying for freedom, was sung in Italy during World War II and became a symbol of resistance against the fascists. It has since become a global rallying call including in support of Iranians protesting the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini after her arrest by the feared morality police. Early in the protests, a video went viral of a singer-her head uncovered in defiance of the compulsory hijab-performing a version in Persian.

Since then “Bella Ciao”—meaning “Goodbye Beautiful”—has been sung by supporters of the protests including Kurdish women in Turkey and expatriate Iranians in Paris. Although it has long been associated with Italian partisan fighters, there is no evidence it was actually ever sung by them, according to Carlo Pestelli, author of the book “Bella Ciao: The Song of Freedom”. The song certainly became popular during the war, he said.

But its history goes back further to a 19th century musical tradition from northern Italy characterized by passionate themes, especially unfulfilled love. “It is difficult to say exactly what its origins are,” Pestelli told AFP. Its ambiguous lyrics have allowed its adoption for many causes, he said. “It wasn’t a communist song but a manifesto for freedom... it repre-



Protesters take part in a demonstration in support of Iranian women in Barcelona following the death of Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini in Iran.—AFP photos

sents apolitical values that everyone can understand and share,” Pestelli added.

It is also “an easy song to sing”, with a catchy chorus that even non-Italian speakers can pick up. The global reach of the song has been fuelled by popular interpretations, including by French star Yves Montand, and more recently, its inclusion in the Netflix hit “Money Heist”. And it can be heard wherever there are crowds rallying, from the streets of New York to Hong Kong and Athens.

#### Cry against oppression

Ukrainians this year have sung it in defiance of the invading Russian forces, it has been the soundtrack to dancing demonstrators in Tripoli, a chant by English football fans and a call for action by climate activists from Sydney to Brussels. In Rome and Paris, it was sung with emotion from balconies during the 2020 coronavirus lockdown. For many, the history of the song is of less importance than its global impact.



A boy looks on during a candlelight vigil to pay tribute to those who have died protesting the death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old who was killed in police custody after allegedly violating the country's hijab rules, outside the White House in Washington, DC.

“This song is very famous in Iran and all over the world because it is a symbol against oppression,” said Masah, a 29-year-old Iranian expatriate who attended a solidarity rally for the Mahsa Amini protests in Rome this week. While the lyrics are often translated, the chorus is normally sung in Italian, although it has been adapted. In Jerusalem last year, protesters against then prime minister Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu sang “Bibi Ciao” at the prospect of his departure.

In 2019, anti-regime protesters in Iraq rallied to their own version, “Blaya Chara”, meaning “no way out” in Iraqi dialect. “When we sing it we feel more united with the whole world,” added Masah’s sister, Shiva, 33, at the Rome Iran protest. “Music is a form of expression that allows you to communicate even without knowing other languages.”—AFP



## Hong Kong's Tony Leung says acting gets more rewarding with age

Legendary Hong Kong film star Tony Leung said that after 40 years in the business, he’s having more fun than ever playing diverse roles-though he’s still hoping to be cast as a serial killer. Leung, who was awarded the “Asian Cineaste of the Year” prize at South Korea’s Busan International Festival, is best known for his work with famed director Wong Kar-wai. Half a dozen of his films, including Wong’s “In the Mood for Love” (2000) and “Happy Together” (1997), will be screened at the festival, which is Asia’s largest and runs until October 14.

The 60-year-old actor, who made his debut on television in 1981, told reporters in Busan that he loved complex roles that made him think-and said he has had more chances to play them later in his career. “I think the first 20 years were about learning, and the second 20 years were about showing what you have learned,” Leung said Thursday.

He said he was “at a point where I can enjoy being an actor without being stressed. It’s a lot of fun as I can now play more diverse roles, and characters I can act as I get older.” Some of Leung’s best-known roles include a ruthless Chinese politician collaborating with the invading Japanese in Ang Lee’s 2007 period drama “Lust, Caution”, and an undercover policeman in Andrew Lau and Alan Mak’s “Infernal Affairs” series.

He made his Hollywood debut in 2021 by playing a well-layered supervillain in “Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings”, a superhero film based on Marvel Comics. “Personally, I would like to try playing a serial killer,” he said, adding he’s also interested in returning to television, which is experiencing something of a golden age thanks to streaming money.

Busan Film Festival director and acclaimed film critic Huh Moon-young said Leung is incomparable with other actors of his generation. Among Leung’s works are “many masterpieces that will long remain in the history of world cinema”, Huh told reporters. Leung has long been a well-liked figure in South Korea-where Hong Kong cinema enjoyed peak popularity in the early 1990s-and first appeared at the Busan festival in 1997. Since then, South Korea has cemented its status as a global cultural powerhouse, thanks in part to the explosive success of the Oscar-winning film “Parasite” and the Netflix series “Squid Game”.

Leung said the festival has come a long way since his first experience in Busan. “When I first visited the Busan festival, the opening ceremony was held after the organisers set up a small stage on a narrow road,” Leung said, adding that he lost a shoe during the chaos. —AFP

## Live and Let Buy: James Bond auction nets record haul for charity

A James Bond sale in London featuring the fictional superspy’s Aston Martin cars, suits and wristwatch has raised £6.9 million (\$7.8 million) for charity-more than all previous 007 sales at the auction house combined. The two-part sale by Christie’s and EON Productions’ to mark 60 years since the premiere of first film “Dr. No” concluded on Wednesday-the official James Bond Day. The auction spanned all 25 films in the saga, featuring props, posters, memorabilia and experiences as well as the vehicles, watches, and costumes.

The live auction last month realized £6.1 million, with a replica of an Aston Martin DB5 used for the stunts in 2021 blockbuster “No Time to Die” selling for nearly £3 million. The online sale, which finished on Wednesday, added another £771,000 to the total, with top earners including a signed script of 2006’s “Casino Royal” (£69,300), and a suit worn by outgoing Bond actor James Craig in 2012’s “Skyfall” (£44,100).

A menu that Bond ordered caviar from after winning a card game against supervillain “Largo” at a Bahamas casino

in 1965’s “Thunderball” sold for £60,480. Proceeds from the sale will go to various charities, including BAFTA, British Red Cross, Medecins Sans Frontieres, National Youth Theatre, Refugee Action and The Prince’s Trust.

“We are delighted with the extraordinary success of the Christie’s sale which benefits over 45 charities who do incredibly important work,” said Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli, producers at EON Productions. Adrian Hume-Sayer, Christie’s director and head of sale, said the result was “testament to the enduring

appeal of one of film’s greatest and best loved icons”.

“This is the fourth and by far the largest official James Bond charity auction on which Christie’s has been privileged to collaborate with EON Productions, we are thrilled that the money raised will benefit so many.” The money raised surpassed the combined total for all three previous official Christie’s 007 sales, said the London auction house. — AFP



A Christie's employee adjusts a costume and cracked mask worn by actor Rami Malek in the film “No Time to Die”.



A Christie's employee adjusts a costume used in the film “No Time to Die”.



A Christie's employee adjusts a costume used in the film “No Time to Die”.



A Christie's employee holds a pair of Omega watches worn by actor Daniel Craig in the film “No Time to Die”.



An Aston Martin DB5 stunt car from the film “No Time to Die” is displayed during a photocall ahead of the “Sixty Years of James Bond” auction at Christie’s auction house in London. — AFP photos

## Bowie, Kardashians inspire UK baby name choices

Ziggies and Saints are on the rise in Britain, with David Bowie and the Kardashians among cultural figures inspiring UK baby names, the official statistics body said Wednesday. Since Bowie died in 2016, the number of boys being named Ziggy each year has risen threefold, while the number of girls being named Bowie has climbed by a similar proportion, according to the Office for National Statistics’ annual report on UK baby names. The number of boys named

Saint has risen more than tenfold since the birth of Kim Kardashian’s son in 2015, from five to 59.

Films and television also appear to be influencing parents’ choices. The number of girls registered with the name Maeve, and boys with the name Otis-both characters from “Sex Education”—are still on the up after the second and third series of the

successful Netflix show aired in 2020 and 2021, the ONS data showed. Arthur had been rising in popularity before the gangster yarn “Peaky Blinders” first hit the screens in 2013 but jumped into 7th place in 2018 and 3rd in 2020.

From the big screen, the number of boys named Luca-eponymous star of last year’s Pixar fantasy-jumped into the top

30 for the first time. Bowie is not the only musician who appears to be a source of inspiration, with UK singers George Ezra and Mabel also apparently driving choices. Ezra was just outside the top-50 most common names given to boys in 2021, having risen in popularity as the musician’s star rose.

The number of baby girls named Mabel also peaked in 2021 at 885, following large increases in 2018 and 2020. “This may have been influenced by the singer and songwriter Mabel, whose breakthrough single ‘Finders Keepers’ reached the top 10 in 2017. Her album ‘High Expectations’ later reached number three in 2019,” said the ONS. Overall, Noah and Olivia were the most popular UK names for boys and girls in 2021, according to the statistics agency. — AFP





## Sports

# Verstappen looks for 'perfect weekend' in Japan to retain title

## Winning the title in Japan would be 'extra special' because of his team's relationship with Honda

**SUZUKA, Japan:** Max Verstappen said Thursday that he needs "a perfect weekend" to clinch his second straight Formula One championship at this weekend's Japanese Grand Prix. Red Bull's runaway championship leader can secure the title at Suzuka if he gains eight points on nearest rival Charles Leclerc of Ferrari and six on team-mate Sergio Perez.

That would happen if Verstappen wins the race and claims the fastest lap, or if he finishes first and Leclerc finishes lower than second place. The flying Dutchman is trying not to think too hard about wrapping up the title, despite 12 previous Formula One world championships having been crowned at the Japanese Grand Prix.

"It would be very nice if it was here, but if it doesn't happen here I will be even more in favour the next race," said the 25-year-old, who missed the chance to clinch the championship at last week's Singapore Grand Prix after a seventh-place finish. "It doesn't really change anything, you just want to have a good weekend and maximise everything you can. I need a perfect weekend to be able to clinch the title here but to be honest I'm not really thinking about it too much."

Verstappen would become only the third driver after Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel to clinch the title with four races to spare if he gets the job done in Suzuka. The Japanese Grand Prix returns after a three-year absence because of COVID and Verstappen is excited to be competing in front of the "crazy" Japanese fans again.

"They're very passionate-crazy but in a good way,

and they really dress up," said Verstappen, who has won 11 of 17 races so far this season. "You could see quite a few people walking around with a DRS rear wing on their heads. It shows you how popular motor sport is in Japan."

### Special relationship

Verstappen's Red Bull car will carry a Honda logo at this weekend's race as part of a "strengthened relationship" with the Japanese company. Honda officially left Formula One at the end of last season but signed an agreement to continue providing technical assistance in engine development to Red Bull and sister team Alpha Tauri until the end of the 2025 season.

Verstappen said winning the title in Japan would be "extra special" because of his team's relationship with Honda. "It's great to see the full name back on the car," he said. "It makes it extra special that they are back on the car just before their home grand prix. We have been working well together and it's been enjoyable."

Verstappen will be looking to improve on last weekend's performance, after a fuelling blunder in qualifying left him with too much work to do on the tight Marina Bay street circuit. Verstappen called the race "a prime example of how you don't want a weekend to go" but insisted there was "not really much to change" in Japan. "They all know that it was a bad weekend but we have also shown this year that we have had a lot of good weekends so we know how to do it," he said. —AFP



SUZUKA, Japan: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen attends a press conference ahead of the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix in Suzuka on October 6, 2022. —AFP

## Farah targets April return

**DOHA:** British running legend Mo Farah said on Thursday he is aiming for an April return from injury to road racing, adding he is covering more miles now than 20 years ago as he bids to extend his career. The 39-year-old four-time Olympic gold medalist withdrew from Sunday's London marathon because of injury and said there would be no "rash decisions" about racing again.

"I hope to participate again in the future. Honestly, training was going well," Farah told reporters at the World Innovation Summit for Health in Doha, where he spoke about the need to boost mental health help for athletes.

He said his problems started about two weeks before the London race. "I felt a little bit my hip, a bit sore and that was me out," he said. Farah said he would go to Ethiopia for three months of training in January. When asked about his next competitive race, he said: "I think April. It depends."

"It's not making rash decisions in terms of 'I just want to race'. I think you have to be in the right frame of mind and the body has to be right," Farah, who quit track events this year, had no particular race in mind. He said he just wanted to "tick the box" on winning another major marathon to add to his 2018 Chicago victory.

"I'm definitely retired from the track because I've achieved everything there is to achieve," said Farah, who also has six world titles. "There's nothing that you can improve or nothing more you could do. And that's the reason why I wanted to go to the road because I believe the roads—I didn't know what I was capable of."

Farah said he is now running between 120 and 125 miles (195-202 kilometres) a week, against 100 miles two decades ago. "About four weeks ago, it was the highest I have done for a while. It was close to 138 (miles). And you couldn't keep that going." "It has to be quality over quantity," he added. —AFP

## Iran charges ex-footballer for protests

**TEHRAN:** Iran has charged former football star Ali Karimi in absentia for his support for protests over Mahsa Amini's death in morality police custody, Iranian media have reported. A wave of unrest has rocked Iran since the 22-year-old Kurdish woman's death was announced on September 16 after her arrest in Tehran for allegedly failing to observe the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

The Iranian judiciary accused the former Bayern Munich midfielder of being "a prominent leader the recent riots", Mehr news agency said on Tuesday. Karimi, who reportedly moved to the United Arab Emirates a few months ago, was accused of "spreading the voice of the enemy and encouraging" the protest movement, Mehr added.

The 43-year-old former player and coach has repeatedly used Instagram, where he has more than 13 million followers, to support the protests and condemn Amini's death, saying "nothing can wash away this disgrace".

Ultraconservative daily Kayhan accused Karimi on Wednesday of having "led the riots" and "poured oil on the flames of the troubles", which led to the "death and martyrdom of young people". The street violence has led to dozens of deaths—mostly of protesters but also members of the security forces—and hundreds of arrests.

After last week's Friday prayers, "a group" of regime supporters gathered outside Karimi's home in Tehran, chanting "death to the organiser of sedition", Mehr reported. Karimi, the 2004 Asian Football Confederation player of the year, is the Iranian national team's third-most awarded player and fifth top scorer. —AFP



## Kuwait gymnastic team bags 8 gold, one silver

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Juniors Artistic Gymnastics team was in first place at the conclusion of the Arab Gymnastics Championship that was held in Wahren, Aleria as they won 8 medals 7 gold and one silver,

Algeria placed second and Qatar third.

Kuwaiti Abdallah Miqdad dominated the event by winning 6 gold medals in 7 events, while the 7th gold was won by the team. Mousa Al-Sahaf won the silver medal in the rings event raising the total medals won by Kuwaiti players to 14 (7 gold and seven silver), as the girls juniors had won 6 medals earlier.

President of Kuwait and Arab Gymnastics Association Fahad Al-Soula was happy for the achievement adding that Kuwait participation was highly successful in all aspects.



## 34th Arab Clubs Basketball Tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait teams participating in the 34th Arab Clubs Basketball Tournament, hosted by Kuwait Sports Club had positive results in the opening matches as Kuwait Basketball team

defeated Ahli Benghazi (Libya) 76-60 in its first round match. Meanwhile Kazima defeated Bashaer (Oman) 99-80, and Jahra defeated Dijla University (Iraq) 72-57.

The opening day saw Ahli (Egypt) defeating Mina (Yemen) 130-53, while Ahli (Bahrain) defeated Al-Sadd (Qatar) 69-60. Ittihad Alexandria (Egypt) defeated Aleppo Ahli (Syria) 99-52. Each winning team received 2 points while losers got 1 point.

The tournament had a simple opening ceremony and laser lighting was used besides a welcoming song for the delegation by Bashar Abdallah.

The ceremony was attended by President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser

Sabah Al-Ahmad, Acting Director of Public Authority for Sport Mahmoud Abul, Egypt's Ambassador Usama Shaltout, Kuwait Basketball Association Chairman Rasheed Al-Enezi and other dignitaries.

Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad said the tournament is an opportunity to strengthen ties between Arab brothers, while exchanging technical and administrative expertise. He said "welcome for our Arab brothers in their second country Kuwait and land or friendship and peace, and we wish them a pleasant stay."

Sheikh Fahad lauded the good organizations and wished Kuwait teams all success.



## 'Imperative' Formula One cost cap rules enforced: Hamilton

**SUZUKA, Japan:** Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton said Thursday that any team breaching Formula One's cost cap must be punished, after governing body FIA pushed the findings of an investigation back to next week.

FIA had been due to reveal Wednesday if any team had breached last season's \$145 million budget cap, but released a statement instead saying the report would be delayed until Monday, October 10.

Rival teams claimed at last weekend's Singapore Grand Prix that two teams, thought to be Red Bull and Aston Martin, had exceeded the cap, which was introduced last season to make racing more competitive.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen pipped Hamilton of Mercedes to last season's title on the last lap of a controversial final race at Abu Dhabi. Should any team exceed the cost cap then there are a range of penalties available, from fines for "minor" breaches of the cap all the way up to points deductions and disqualification from the championship for a serious "material" breach.

Hamilton warned the integrity of the sport was at stake as he spoke to reporters ahead of the Japanese Grand Prix this weekend at Suzuka. "I think it's imperative," Hamilton said when asked if teams who are found guilty should be punished, stressing that he does not know if any teams broke the rules.

"I was expecting those results to come out yesterday. I would like to think that if it's been delayed it's because they're taking it very seriously," he said. Hamilton said he trusted that the FIA would deal with the matter in the right way. "It would be bad for the sport if action wasn't taken if there was a breach," he said. He claimed Mercedes would have been in a different position last year if they had spent more mon-

ey but that was "not the name of the game". "I'm grateful that our team is very strict," he said.

Hamilton's Mercedes team-mate George Russell said their team could "bring more performance to the table if we had more money to spend". Russell said he would wait for the findings but suggested that any team found guilty should have their cost limit cut for next season.

"You would expect the amount that's gone over should be the amount that's taken off for next year's budget and probably a bit more on top of that as a punishment," he said. The FIA said the investigation was too complicated for the results to be published by Wednesday.

The governing body also said that claims they had leaked details of the investigation were "baseless". Sebastian Vettel said it was vital to abide by the outcome of the investigation. "You have to have a level of trust, otherwise it shakes up everything that exists in your world when you talk about racing," said the German who won four world titles with Red Bull. —AFP



## Sports

# Chelsea swat aside AC Milan to revive Champions League bid

## Chelsea level with third-placed Milan on four points ahead of a crucial trip to the San Siro

**LONDON:** Graham Potter admitted Chelsea's 3-0 victory against AC Milan was "really important" as they climbed back into contention for a place in the Champions League last 16 on Wednesday. Potter's side won for the first time in three Group E games as Wesley Fofana's first Chelsea goal was followed by second-half strikes from Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Reece James at Stamford Bridge.

Chelsea had kicked off their Champions League campaign with an embarrassing defeat at Dinamo Zagreb the day before Thomas Tuchel was sacked, while Potter's first match ended in a draw with Salzburg.

But second-placed Chelsea are now level with third-placed Milan on four points ahead of a crucial trip to the San Siro to face the Italian champions again on October 11. With three games left for each team, group leaders Salzburg are one point above Chelsea after beating Dinamo Zagreb 1-0 on Wednesday.

"It was a good night. We needed to play well. The attitude and application of the players was fantastic. Their personality was good," Potter said. "It's a really important win but there's still a long way to go in the competition."

Progress in the Champions League is essential to Potter's bid to stamp his authority on a squad expensively assembled by Chelsea's new owners with immediate success in mind. While Chelsea still have work to do to reach the knockout stage, Potter will be encouraged by the most dynamic performance of his three games since replacing Tuchel.

"The boys have been really open, responsible and fantastic to work with. They realised they weren't at the levels (when he joined). That's great from a coach's perspective," Potter said. Milan manager Stefano Pioli added: "We weren't dangerous enough, we have to

give credit to the opponents, but it's also down to us.

"We knew it would be a tough game but mentally we didn't play as a team." Potter has kept a low profile so far as he gets acclimatised to the first high-pressure job of his managerial career. The former Brighton boss had never attended a Champions League game before taking charge at Chelsea, so his first victory in the competition was a memorable milestone for the modest coach.

### Knockout blow

Exposing Milan's weakness at set-pieces, Chelsea took charge from the moment Thiago Silva met Mount's free-kick with a header that Ciprian Tatarusanu tipped over. Moments later, Silva threatened again with another header that deflected wide for the corner that produced Chelsea's 24th-minute opener.

With Milan negligent in their marking yet again, Silva reached Ben Chilwell's corner with a thumping header that was parried by Tatarusanu. Ruben Loftus-Cheek scrambled the rebound towards Fofana and the French defender fired low into the far corner from six yards.

Fofana's memorable evening turned sour following a challenge with Rafael Leao that forced the centre-back to limp off late in the first half. Despite being outplayed for most of the half, Milan would have been level in stoppage time if not for a woeful piece of finishing.

Leao scythed through the Chelsea defence to set up Charles De Ketelaere for a shot that Kepa Arrizabalaga pushed out to Rade Krunic, who blazed high over the bar from close range. That narrow escape served to refocus Chelsea in the second half and they delivered the knockout blow in the 56th minute.



**LONDON:** AC Milan's Spanish midfielder Brahim Diaz (C) fights for the ball with Chelsea's English midfielder Ruben Loftus-Cheek (R) during the UEFA Champions League Group E football match between Chelsea and AC Milan at Stamford Bridge in London. —AFP

Former Chelsea defender Fikayo Tomori was caught out by James' cross and Aubameyang was on hand to volley home. It was Aubameyang's second goal in successive games after the Gabon striker bagged his first for the club in their win at Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Toothless in attack with former Chelsea striker

Olivier Giroud anonymous and far too careless at the back, Milan were in disarray and it was no surprise when Chelsea struck again six minutes later. Raheem Sterling fed the unmarked James with a perfectly-weighted pass into the Milan area and the defender slammed a fierce strike past Tatarusanu from a tight angle. —AFP

## Nepal cricket star arrested on rape charges

**KATHMANDU, Nepal:** Cricket star Sandeep Lamichhane returned to Nepal and was immediately arrested Thursday, nearly a month after a court issued a warrant over the alleged rape of a 17-year-old girl.

Lamichhane, a poster boy for the growing popularity of cricket in Nepal, was taken into custody when he landed. Dinesh Raj Mainali, a spokesman for Kathmandu district police, told AFP. Wearing a white hoodie, black cap and black mask, he was swiftly escorted out of Kathmandu airport to a police van waiting outside.

Earlier Lamichhane had posted on his Facebook page that he was returning home to fight the accusations. "I will fully cooperate in all stages of investigation and will fight (the) legal battle to prove my innocence. Let the justice prevail," Lamichhane posted.

Lamichhane, 22, was suspended as Nepal's cricket captain after a court in the country issued the arrest warrant on September 8. It followed an accusation from the 17-year-old that the cricketer had raped her in a Kathmandu hotel room in August. But Lamichhane failed to return to Nepal from the West Indies where he was playing in the Caribbean Premier League.

### Growing popularity

Cricket does not enjoy the same adulation in mountainous Nepal it does elsewhere in South Asia. But it has been growing in popularity, with Nepal given one-day international status by the world governing body in 2018.

Lamichhane has been a major part in this rise as the most sought-after Nepali cricketer in lucrative leagues around the world. The leg spinner's big break came when he was snapped up for the lucrative Indian Premier League, the world's richest cricket tournament, in 2018.

Lamichhane last month issued a statement on social media reiterating that the claims against him were baseless, and defended his decision not to return to



**KATHMANDU, Nepal:** Nepali cricketer Sandeep Lamichhane (C) is escorted by police after being taken into custody to face rape charges, at Tribhuvan international airport in Kathmandu. —AFP

Nepal. "News of the arrest warrant issued against me... made me mentally disturbed. I could not think what to do and what not to do," he wrote.

"My health condition is gradually improving and I am planning to return to Nepal as soon as possible to vehemently fight back (against the allegations)." Soon afterwards, Nepali police said they had sought help from Interpol with a "diffusion" notice asking member countries for their cooperation in bringing Lamichhane back to the country to face charges.

### Victims speaking up

About 2,300 rape cases were reported in Nepal in the last fiscal year, according to police, but rights workers say many more assaults go unreported. Only a handful of women in Nepal spoke out during the global #MeToo movement and those accused have faced lit-

tle or no repercussions.

"Victims are now speaking up and there is hope in how the police is taking action. But laws are not enough... A lot needs to be done to push societal change," said Mohana Ansari, a former member of the National Human Rights Commission.

Public opinion on the case has been divided, with many supporting the hugely popular cricketer. The accusations against Lamichhane come after the conviction in early September of popular Nepali actor Paul Shah for sexual misconduct with a minor.

He was sentenced to two and a half years in prison and ordered to pay his victim compensation. In May, hundreds protested in Kathmandu for better laws and enforcement in cases of sexual violence after an aspiring model posted a series of TikTok videos detailing abuse when she was a teenager. —AFP



**MALANG, Indonesia:** School children walk past a banner placed in various places in Malang on October 6, 2022, as a call to investigate the stampede that killed at least 131 people in one of the deadliest disasters in football history. —AFP

acting. Officers responded with force, kicking and hitting fans with batons, according to witnesses and footage, pushing the spectators back into the stands where many would die after tear gas was fired. Several witnesses said police stood by and refused to help victims. Instead, bystanders rushed to help. Kiosk owner Edy Tanto said he saw people begin to pour out of the stadium when chaos erupted. He rushed to provide water from his shop to victims whose eyes were stung with the tear gas, which witnesses said police had fired into the stands. "I couldn't think straight," Tanto told AFP as he sat cross-legged on the floor of his shop.

"I just thought of helping them." Indonesian President Joko Widodo announced an investigation after the tragedy and called for a safety review of all stadiums. The Malang police chief was replaced Monday, nine officers were suspended and 19 others were put under investigation, according to police. But organisers of the match and club officials have also been blamed for the chaos. —AFP

## Man City thrash Copenhagen

**MANCHESTER:** Erling Haaland only needed 45 minutes to add two more goals to a remarkable start to his Manchester City career as the English giants thrashed FC Copenhagen 5-0 in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Haaland now has 19 goals in 11 competitive games for City and was denied the chance of a fourth hat-trick in five home games after being rested for the second half by Pep Guardiola. City were already 3-0 up at the break as the Norwegian twice swept home from close range before David Khocholava deflected Sergio Gomez's shot into his own net.

"I've never witnessed anything like it in my life," said City midfielder Jack Grealish on Haaland's scoring streak. "For the first and second goal I was just laughing. I was like, 'how?' He's just always there.

"Their keeper said to me: 'this guy - he's not human.'" Riyad Mahrez took advantage of Haaland's absence to score his first goal of the season from the penalty spot before Julian Alvarez rounded off the scoring.

With maximum points from their opening three games, City are cruising towards the last 16 and can seal qualification with two games to spare should they win in the Danish capital in six days' time. Copenhagen are languishing in mid-table in their domestic league and in manager Jacob Neestrup's second game in charge came to the Etihad with damage limitation in mind.

But for Copenhagen goalkeeper Kamil Grabara, City could easily have surpassed the six goals they smashed past Manchester United on Sunday. "The reason we were consistent all these years is that after a derby and lots of compliments, we are able to play a Champions League game and play the way we played," said Guardiola.

Haaland only had 11 touches before being replaced at the break, but four of them were shots on target. The 22-year-old now has 28 Champions League goals in 22 appearances and struck for the ninth consecutive City game when he converted Joao Cancelo's cross after seven minutes.

Grabara then produced stunning saves to deny Bernardo Silva, Haaland and Grealish. But Haaland was predictably in the perfect place to pounce on the rebound when he parried Gomez's shot just after the half hour mark.

Another effort from the Spanish full-back was heading towards goal when it struck the unfortunate Khocholava and rebounded into his own net. With the points safely secured, Guardiola took the opportunity to withdraw Haaland with 10 more games to come before the World Cup break in just over a month's time.

Youngsters Rico Lewis and Joshua Wilson-Esbrand were handed their Champions League debuts off the bench as Cancelo and Silva were also given a breather. But City still added two more goals in the second period as Mahrez responded to Guardiola's call for the Algerian to get back to his best.

Mahrez sent Grabara the wrong way from the penalty spot after Aymeric Laporte had been hauled down. He then turned creator for Alvarez to grab his first Champions League goal with a simple finish from close range. —AFP

## S Africa's Pretorius out of India ODIs, T20 World Cup

**LUCKNOW:** South Africa's Dwaine Pretorius has been ruled out of the ongoing one-day international series in India and the Twenty20 World Cup with a broken thumb, the country's cricket board said Thursday.

The bowling all-rounder sustained the injury during the third T20 on Tuesday, which South Africa won in Indore to avoid a white-wash with their 2-1 series defeat. Left-arm quick Marco Jansen has been added to the ODI squad and a further announcement on Pretorius' replacement for the T20 World Cup will be made in the coming days, Cricket South Africa said.

"The nature of the injury requires medical intervention and Dwaine will consult the Cricket South Africa designated hand surgeon on arrival in South Africa," chief medical officer Shuaib Manjra said in the statement. "Normal rehabilitation procedures will follow to ensure he speedily returns to playing cricket."

Qualifiers for T20's showpiece event in Australia will begin on October 16, followed by the Super 12 six days later. —AFP

## Six charged over Indonesia stadium disaster

**MALANG, Indonesia:** Indonesia's police chief on Thursday said six people had been charged over a football stadium disaster that killed 131 at the weekend. "Based on the investigation and sufficient evidence, we have determined six suspects," national police chief Listyo Prabowo told a press conference. The six people charged with negligence causing death include three police officers and three people responsible for the match and its security, including the head of Arema FC's organising committee and one of the club's security officers, he said.

Two of the police officers under investigation ordered colleagues to fire tear gas, he said. The third police officer under investigation knew about FIFA's safety regulations that prohibit the use of crowd control gas at pitchside but did not prevent tear gas being used by colleagues, he said.

The suspects face a maximum sentence of five years in prison if found guilty. The Indonesian football association had earlier banned the Arema FC organising committee chief and a security officer from football for life. The announcement came as anger grew over the police response to a pitch invasion. Officers reacted by firing tear gas into packed stands as fans of Arema FC tried to approach players following their defeat to fierce rivals Persebaya Surabaya on Saturday evening. Hundreds of people fled for small exits, resulting in a crush that left many trampled or suffocating to death.

### 'Negligence'

Police described the pitch invasion as a riot and said two officers were killed, but survivors accused them of overre-





NYON, Switzerland: President of the Portuguese Football Federation Fernando Soares Gomes da Silva (L), President of the Spanish Football Federation Luis Rubiales (C), and President of the Ukraine Football Federation Andriy Pavlenko pose during a press conference announcing Spain, Portugal and Ukraine's bid for the 2030 World Cup at the UEFA headquarters in Nyon. —AFP

## European football ‘united’ as Ukraine joins Spain, Portugal 2030 WCup bid

### Bid was more than a symbol of faith in our joint victory: Zelensky

**NYON, Switzerland:** Ukrainian football association (UAF) president Andriy Pavlenko said European football was “united” after his country was added to Portugal and Spain's bid to host the 2030 World Cup.

The original proposal from Spain and Portugal was announced two years ago but has been given a political impetus by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. “United as never before, the European football family, having condemned the crimes against the Ukrainian people, proved its commitment to the values that underlie our organisation,” Pavlenko told reporters.

“I thank you and all the friendly national associations for the help on behalf of thousands of little players-girls and boys from Mariupol, Kharkiv, Kherson, Irpin, Bucha and many other cities that were subjected to barbaric military aggression.”

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky said the bid was “more than a symbol of faith in our joint victory”. “Ukraine will endure, prevail and be rebuilt thanks to the solidarity of its partners,” Zelensky said on Twitter.

He added that it was “very symbolic” that two EU

nations were in a position to organise the tournament together with aspiring member Ukraine, in a video published on social media. On Wednesday, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed into legislation his annexation of four Ukrainian territories as the EU agreed a new round of sanctions against Moscow in response.

In recent weeks, Ukraine's forces, bolstered by Western weapons, have wrested Russian troops out of a string of towns and villages in the east and in the south. “These children were forced to leave their homes, their clubs and football schools, fleeing from bullets and shells,” Pavlenko said.

“Many of them received your support and found shelter in various European countries. “Now they can continue to play football in European clubs and have made new friends all over Europe. “The war will end, and we will organise World Cup 2030 matches together with Spain and Portugal at the highest level.”

War-torn Ukraine applied for European Union membership just five days after Russia's February 24 invasion

and the bloc accepted the candidacy in June. “Ukraine's participation in the bid to host the 2030 World Cup is also important for the unification and strengthening of Europe in these difficult times,” Pavlenko said.

“A few months ago, Ukraine received the status of a candidate for EU membership, and in the coming years we hope to obtain full membership. “The joint holding of the 2030 World Cup with Spain and Portugal will be a vivid historical event that will symbolise the unity of Europe from Lisbon to Kyiv, Donetsk, Lugansk and Sevastopol.”

The vote to host the 2030 World Cup is expected to take place in 2024.

#### UEFA support

The Spanish football federation (RFEF) said in a statement the idea was backed by UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin. “The institutional headquarters are in Madrid, the administrative headquarters are in Lisbon. Now the Ukrainian delegation will unite with us,” RFEF president Luis Rubiales said.

“In the coming months, we will come to work on practicalities.” Portugal held the 2004 European Championship and Spain hosted the 1982 World Cup, while Ukraine was a joint host of Euro 2012 with Poland.

“The example of tenacity and resilience set by the Ukrainian people is inspiring,” the Portuguese football federation (FPF) said. The FPF added the joint bid “aims to contribute through the power of football to the recovery of a country undergoing reconstruction”.

It added the terms of Ukraine's role in the bid “will be discussed and defined in due course”. It follows the announcement last month from an Egyptian official that Egypt, Greece and Saudi Arabia are in talks to jointly host the 2030 World Cup.

In August, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile and Paraguay launched their bid to host the event—which is the centenary of the first World Cup, held in Uruguay—with the hope of bringing the global showpiece back to its first home. The 2026 edition has already been awarded to three countries—Canada, Mexico and the United States. —AFP

## Real Madrid take control in Europe with Shakhtar win

**MADRID, Spain:** Real Madrid established a stranglehold at the top of their Champions League group with a 2-1 win over Shakhtar Donetsk on Wednesday, which should have been far more emphatic. Carlo Ancelotti's reigning champions have a 100 percent record in the competition and made light work of their Ukrainian opponents, who had to travel 10 hours to get to Madrid because of the war in their homeland. Rodrygo and Vinicius Junior's goals made the difference but the record 14-time winners were dominant and only profligate finishing—and fine goalkeeping from Anatoliy Trubin—stopped them from racking up a big lead.

After three games Madrid have a five-point lead on second-placed Shakhtar, with RB Leipzig, third, beating Celtic 3-1 in the other Group F match. “There are days like this, when the ball doesn't want to go in,” said Madrid midfielder Toni Kroos. “It was a game we could have won 7-1 or something like that, but in the end it's three points, that's the important thing.”

“The idea is to qualify as soon as possible, we've got all the points we can, it's not possible to do better. We want to win next week too (against Shakhtar) and seal qualification.” Karim Benzema led the line again on his second match back after injury and although he was still rusty, it didn't matter on a mostly comfortable evening.

Rodrygo broke the deadlock with a low effort from outside the area, curled home after 13 minutes. He was



MADRID, Spain: Shakhtar Donetsk Ukrainian midfielder Oleksandr Zubkov (R) scores his team's first goal during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 3 group F football match between Real Madrid and Shakhtar Donetsk, at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. —AFP

not punished for a loose first touch as the ball bounced back to him and stroked it past Trubin. Benzema, sniffing around for a goal to ignite his season, fired in a low effort which Trubin parried, as Madrid pinned the visitors back.

Vinicius, who left two Shakhtar defenders for dead by scooping the ball through the gap between them and darting through to delight the Santiago Bernabeu, soon added the second. The Brazilian put the finishing touches on an intricate team move, with Benzema feeding Rodrygo, to caress the ball into the bottom corner.

Vinicius had another shot cleared off the line by Valeriy Bondar, with Madrid angling for a third to put the game out of sight, while Benzema slashed a volley off-target. The overworked Trubin denied Vinicius and then Benzema in quick succession as Madrid poured forward, determined to right the wrongs of their draw with Osasuna on Sunday, the first points they have dropped all season in any competition. —AFP

## PSG held at Benfica despite Messi stunner

**LISBON:** Paris Saint-Germain were forced to settle for a 1-1 draw away to Benfica in the Champions League on Wednesday despite Lionel Messi's brilliant curling strike. The Argentina star scored midway through the first half in Lisbon but Danilo Pereira's own goal before the break ensured PSG and Benfica remain level at the top of Group H on seven points.

Both clubs failed to play for just the second time this season in all competitions but are four points clear of Juventus, who bounced back from successive defeats to beat Maccabi Haifa 3-1 at home. “We know it's difficult to play at this ground, with this atmosphere. Benfica are a team in form,” PSG captain Marquinhos told Canal Plus.

Messi only scored 11 goals in 34 games in his first season for PSG last term, but already has eight in 13 this time around. “It's normal, it takes a little time,” said Marquinhos. “Now he feels a little more comfortable... I hope Leo Messi has a great season until the end to win this title.”

Sitting top of the Portuguese league despite dropping their first points at the weekend, Benfica's high pressing rattled PSG as the hosts made a bright start. Goncalo Ramos, who drew interest in the summer from PSG, saw his effort blocked by Gianluigi Donnarumma's leg after he raced onto a long ball in behind the defence.

Ramos then stung the palms of Donnarumma from distance before the Italy goalkeeper produced a terrific save to deflect David Neres' shot wide.



LISBON, Portugal: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar scissor-kicks the ball during the UEFA Champions League football match between SL Benfica and Paris Saint-Germain, at the Luz stadium in Lisbon. —AFP

#### Messi's moment of magic

But PSG's vaunted three-man attack of Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe suddenly sparked into life and the visitors surged ahead as the Argentine finished the move he started in style. Messi's pass to Mbappe was helped on to Neymar, whose smart lay-off was whipped into the far top corner first-time by Messi for his 127th Champions League goal. Donnarumma again intervened to deny Benfica by parrying Antonio Silva's strike to safety, but the hosts got the equaliser their play deserved just before half-time. Enzo Fernandez was afforded far too much space to swing in a teasing cross from the left that Danilo inadvertently glanced in as he tried to track Ramos.

Neymar twice went close to restoring PSG's lead early in the second half, clipping the bar with an inventive overhead kick and forcing Odysseas Vlachodimos to punch away his free-kick. Achraf Hakimi could only drill straight at the Benfica 'keeper after being played in by Messi, while Benfica defender Nicolas Otamendi glanced a free-kick just past the post at the other end. —AFP