

**3** Kuwait Times reaches 100K followers on Instagram



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## Decree delaying Assembly opening becomes effective

Prime Minister begins meetings with MPs on political issues

Amir flies to Italy for medical checkups



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday departed to Italy to complete regular medical checkups. He was seen off at the airport by HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and senior officials. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: An Amiri decree which postponed the opening meeting of the National Assembly until Oct 18 was published on Sunday in the official gazette Kuwait Al-Youm, which means it has become effective. Some constitutional experts said the use of the article to postpone the Assembly's opening session is correct. Government spokesman Tareq Al-Mazrem said on Twitter the postponement was based on article 106 of the constitution that allows HH the Amir to suspend the Assembly for up to one month.

Top government constitutional advisor Adel Al-Tabtabaei and constitutional expert and professor of law Mohammad Al-Faili said in separate statements the article can be used because a date for the Assembly's opening session had already been set. But former Assembly speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the article cannot be invoked in this case and applies only when the Assembly is in session. He added on Twitter that the latest date by which the Assembly must convene is Oct 16, taking into account that Friday and Saturday are public holidays.

Leading MP and former three-time speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, tipped to be the next speaker, made no comment on the latest developments.

Under the constitution, the new National Assembly must hold its opening session within two weeks of announcing the election results, which were declared on Sept 30.

The postponement was decided to allow the prime minister more time to complete the formation of the Cabinet after MPs voiced strong opposition to the lineup and following the resignation of Ammar Al-Ajmi, the only elected MP in the Cabinet, in protest against the retention of several ministers from the old government.

MP Obaid Al-Wasmi said the Oct 11 session is still outstanding as the postponement applies only to assemblies that have already opened their term. MP Jenan Bushehri charged that such measures undermine the constitution and democracy. She called on Saadoun, the oldest member, to convene a meeting of MPs at his home to take measures to safeguard the constitution. Constitutional expert and professor of law Ibrahim Al-Humoud said National Assembly sessions can be postponed only when it has already started the term, not before inaugurating the house.

Meanwhile, the prime minister is scheduled to start consultations on Monday with lawmakers about forming the Cabinet and other political issues in the country. This will be the first contact between the prime minister, appointed in July, and MPs.

### News in brief

Sisi ratifies Kuwaiti grant

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has ratified a Kuwaiti grant to fund a project of a railway connection between Egypt and Sudan. The deal was signed in April 2022 between the Egyptian Ministry of Cooperation and the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in Jeddah. As per the deal, the Kuwaiti Fund would grant KD 750,000 to prepare a feasibility study for establishing a railway connection between Egypt and Sudan.

Inquiry into syrup deaths

BANJUL: Police in Gambia on Saturday announced they were launching an investigation into the deaths of dozens of children, amid growing concern over imported medicines. Following the deaths of 66 children, most from acute kidney failure, police said in a statement they were putting senior officers on the investigation. India is investigating cough syrups made by a local pharmaceutical company after the World Health Organization said they could be responsible for the deaths. — AFP

'Maneater' tiger shot dead

NEW DELHI: Indian police have shot dead a tiger dubbed the "Maneater of Champaran" that killed at least nine people, in a major operation involving 200 people including trackers on elephants, officials said Sunday. The big cat had terrorized locals on the fringes of the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Champaran in eastern India, killing at least six people in the past month including a woman and her eight-year-old son on Saturday. Earlier attempts to tranquilize the animal had failed. Locals celebrated after the animal was finally shot. — AFP (See Page 7)

### No work permit renewals mulled for unneeded jobs

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission will launch a plan next year to review documents related to expatriate workers, as many unneeded jobs are expected to be scrapped. "The CSC will begin a three-step plan which aims to review expatriates'

### Iran state TV hacked amid social unrest

PARIS: Hackers supporting Iran's wave of women-led protests interrupted a state TV news broadcast with an image of gunsight crosshairs and flames over an image of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in footage widely shared online on Sunday. In other anti-regime messages, activists have spray-painted "Death to Khamenei" and "The Police

are the Murderers of the People" on billboards in Tehran.

"The blood of our youths is on your hands," read an on-screen message that flashed up briefly during the TV broadcast Saturday evening, as street protests sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, 22, again rocked Tehran and other cities. "Police forces used tear gas to disperse the crowds in dozens of locations in Tehran," state news agency IRNA reported, adding that the demonstrators "chanted slogans and set fire to and damaged public property, including a police booth". But the enormous angelim vermelho remained elusive until the Sept 12-25 expedition.

Continued on Page 6

### Scientists reach tallest tree ever found in Amazon

RIO DE JANEIRO: After three years of planning, five expeditions and a two-week trek through dense jungle, scientists have reached the tallest tree ever found in the Amazon rainforest, a towering specimen the size of a 25-storey building. The giant tree, whose top juts out high above the canopy in the Iratapuru River Nature Reserve in northern Brazil, is an angelim

vermelho (scientific name: *Dinizia excelsa*) measuring 88.5 m tall and 9.9 m around - the biggest ever identified in the Amazon, scientists say.

Researchers first spotted the enormous tree in satellite images in 2019 as part of a 3D mapping project. A team of academics, environmentalists and local guides mounted an expedition to try to reach it later that year. But after a 10-day trek through difficult terrain, exhausted, low on supplies and with a team member falling ill, they had to turn back. Three more expeditions to the reserve's remote Jari Valley region, which sits at the border between the states of Amapa and Para, reached several other gigantic trees, including the tallest Brazil nut tree ever recorded in the Amazon - 66 meters.

Continued on Page 6

in coordination with many government bodies," the sources said.

"In the second step, there will be no renewals of all expiring work permits for unneeded jobs. The third step will be to only issue work permits for professional jobs that are required in the market, subject to professional tests, which will also be imposed on older permits, which will result in a decrease in the overall population next year," sources said, adding the interior ministry has informed CSC that it is currently looking for another detention center for people who are awaiting deportation.



TEHRAN: People gather next to a burning motorcycle in the Iranian capital on Oct 8, 2022. — AFP



This handout picture shows an angelim vermelho tree, the highest tree found in the Amazon rainforest, on Sept 17, 2022. — AFP

# Lord Mayor of London: Scope for enhanced Kuwait-UK economic ties

KUWAIT: Vincent Keaveny, Lord Mayor of London said that UK's relations with Kuwait are "longstanding", through cooperation that dates far back, particularly on the economic, financial and investment related spectrums. Brexit has allowed the UK to refocus and rethink its trade and investment strategy and to unearth ways to revitalize these ties with the wider Gulf Cooperation Council, the Lord Mayor told KUNA in an interview. The global COVID-19 pandemic has "held things back," he added, underlining the need to move on to a new post-pandemic stage.

London's status as the most important financial hub in the world, he said, has not been affected by Brexit, as it benefits from numerous advantages, including language, innovation and the ease of the movement of capital. Britain's capital has been able to create tens of thousands of jobs post-Brexit, especially in the field of innovation and technology, the Lord Mayor said, with employees in this field estimated at 2.3 million across the UK.

On the exchange rate drop of the pound last week and its impact on investment in London, he said, the government has now taken the necessary measures to recover and has learned the lesson that, when developing government economic policies, it must be certain that markets are ready for implementing such policies. This decline, he explained, was due to the fact that tax policies were announced before markets were alerted.

No damage has been caused to existing investments in London or the UK, and this will not be repeated, he underlined, noting that several investors and businessmen saw in the declining currency, new investment opportunities. Kuwaiti investments in London are long-term and have existed for decades, as the Kuwait Investment Authority office prepares to celebrate its 70th anniversary next year.

During these years, the UK has experienced many financial crises, an economic downturn and economic turmoil, he added. These investments have remained. As for the volume of trade exchange with Gulf countries, Lord Keaveny said last year it recorded about GBP 35.5 billion. The

volume of trade with Kuwait only exceeded GBP 2.4 billion, he added, citing the reason that many British goods are shipped to the country from the United Arab Emirates.

Lord Keaveny said there is a need to raise trade volume with Kuwait through joint action - the signing of a free trade agreement. This would reflect positively in improving these numbers, mirroring the two countries' depth of historic political relations. This would also be a starting point for the development of stronger long-term trade relations. Speaking about his visit, he said it included meetings with Kuwaiti officials, economic institutions and public benefit associations, during which they discussed cooperation in renewable energies and the UK's plans to reduce its carbon footprint to zero emissions. Other meetings brought him together with representatives of several Kuwaiti banks, who showed interest in financial technology services (FinTech), digital infrastructure and electronic banking services located in London. London is a financial center for electronic financial services, with USD 9 billion invested in the first six months of this year alone on these services.

This number is more than investments in Europe, Africa and the Middle East combined in regards to this sector, he suggested. Visits to other parts of the world, including Saudi Arabia and the UAE, alongside another 20 countries, saw banks also express their interest in these services. In regards to fossil fuel emissions, he said that the UK is committed to its goal to reach zero emissions and has set conditions and requirements on hydrocarbon products, in



KUWAIT: Lord Mayor of London, Vincent Keaveny with Ambassador Belinda Lewis. — KUNA

terms of reducing the proportion of emissions.

This is something Kuwait is working on, he said, indicating that the UK can be a partner in achieving this goal. Asked about the energy crisis in Europe during the upcoming winter period, he said recent geopolitical events have prompted the continent to search for solutions to the problem of energy supply chains and to rely on renewable energies. With regards to the British government, he said he is confident it has taken the necessary steps to secure energy during this difficult time. — KUNA

## Do we need a quota for women in the parliament?

Legalese



By Fajer Ahmed

Local@kuwaittimes.com

We are celebrating the comeback of women to the Kuwaiti parliament, after a lengthy absence. Two women were elected in the Kuwaiti parliament last week, and although this makes us celebrate the return of women to the parliament, data shows that this is 4 percent of the total Kuwaiti parliament members, making Kuwait the 185th country (7th from last) in the world with the least number of women representatives in the parliament. The law in Kuwait that allowed women to be members of the parliament was promulgated in 2005, 17 years ago, with a large percentage of women voting in the elections. It is surprising to see only two women in parliament today.

Why is this the case? There might be multiple answers for this question, as it is not a simple one. Some male candidates are more experienced politically as parliament members. Men also, generally speaking, have better social networks and better marketing skills in the country making their win more likely. But men in parliament now have a bigger responsibility to include women in Kuwait in their decisions including the two parliament members they voted for. This also raises another question of whether we need a quota in the future? In essence, it would mean having an imposed minimum number of female parliament members dictated by law.

## Kuwait underscores alignment to int'l laws at UNHRC

GENEVA: Kuwait, during its participation in the 51st session of the UN Human Rights Council, has emphasized on the necessity of adopting stances based on international laws and balanced policies.

The Kuwaiti delegation during the session, followed closely on the deliberations that had lasted for four weeks, contributing effectively to the tasks discussed among the political and regional groups, said Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen, Kuwait's Permanent Delegate at the UN and International organizations. In a statement to KUNA after the session, Al-Hayen said that the Kuwaiti diplomats, in

coordination with their GCC peers, prepared data regarding diverse issues that had been put on the table and addressed the conferees about the status of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Syria and Yemen.

The council also decided to extend the mandate of the rapporteurs concerned with the rights of the elderly, the nations' right to achieve development and also issues regarding access to drinkable water. He also underscored the significance of the international educational program in human rights, journalists' safety, protection of the global democratic order, the rule of laws and support of the rights of youth.

Al-Hayen praised the council's approval of a recommendation calling for boosting the governments' capacities to integrate human rights in all their tasks and limiting any breaches of these rights. In conclusion, he underlined Kuwait's balanced policies in support of peace and peaceful settlements as a sole means for resolving conflicts worldwide. — KUNA



GENEVA: Ambassador Nasser Al-Hayen during the 51st session of the UN Human Rights Council. — KUNA

## Kuwait reiterates support for global rule of law

NEW YORK: Kuwait has renewed its adherence to international resolutions and conventions for boost-

ing the rule of law and ensuring developmental progress globally. The official Kuwaiti stance came in a statement made by the diplomatic attache Bandar Faisal Al-Fegaan in front of the sixth committee of the United Nations General Assembly during a session on the rule of law at the national and international levels.

"The sovereignty law nowadays faces a host of challenges that threaten to undermine its execution and enable offenders to enjoy impunity, thus creating the environment for human rights breaches, diminishing the power of the judicial authorities, democracy and the ability to enjoy the simplest of freedom," Al-Fegaan pointed out.

This issue is being seen in the shadow of the ongoing global crises such as the climatic problem and the coronavirus spread, thus UN member states should support the measures stipulated in the UN secretary general's report, the Kuwaiti diplomat added.

"Kuwait places significant emphasis for bolstering the rule of law at the national and international levels. At the national level, Kuwait enjoys a democratic and constitutional system on the basis of separation of the three authorities. Therefore, Kuwait supports UN initiatives and measures for reinforcing the rule of law at times of conflict and



Bandar Faisal Al-Fegaan

in post-conflict situations, as well as the initiatives for judicial reforms in addition to combating corruption and reinforcing security. It also backs combating crime, violence and the UN efforts to secure that such offenders be referred to the judicial authorities," Al-Fegaan said, noting that "Kuwait continues to respect the international conventions, laws and treaties." — KUNA

## 131 kg of drugs seized

KUWAIT: The public relations department at the interior ministry has announced that the Kuwait coast guard and the anti-drug department has seized 131 kg of hashish.

"After initial investigations, the smugglers confessed to the crime and legal procedures have now been initiated against them," the public relations department at the interior ministry said. The department warns that it will punish anyone who attempts to bring illegal substances in the country.



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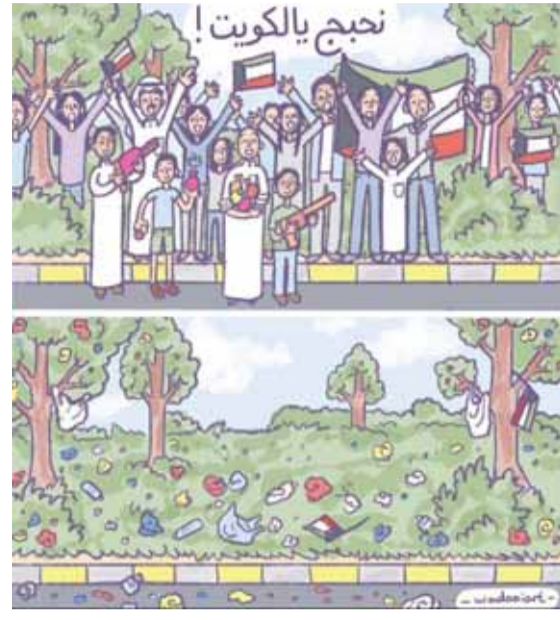
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Local

# Kuwaiti artists use digital art to take a stand



By Sara Mahmoud

**KUWAIT:** Art is a strong tool for starting a conversation - it's a creative medium that colors a picture, both figuratively and literally. Unlike reading, art doesn't require a prerequisite of education to be understood. These artistic messages can either have a specific meaning or just a creative release, it can uniquely be decoded by everyone. Today, local artists use their social media platforms for social and political awareness, they start discussions that are relevant to our day-to-day life.



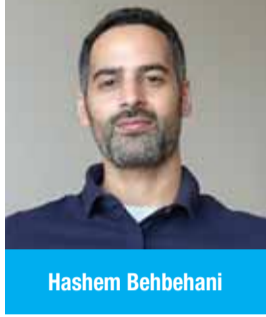
Fatemah Dashti

Shahad, an artist uses her burst of creativity through her comics, making experiences come to life in a fun, creatively genuine way. Through her comics and main character 'Shalala' she illustrates the mundane, the simple joys, and sometimes the societal frustrations.

As a member of society, Shahad, at times, paints emotions of distress at some of the normalized actions. For example, pollution is a big issue in Kuwait and she uses her art to convey her opinion about the issue.

Moreover, she illustrated her take on Kuwait's post-national day celebration chaos - people littering everywhere, with no moral or social responsibility for

their actions. She pointed out their lack of accountability to express her concern for the environment and the lack of awareness shown by these people, "I try not to focus on the negative, but at times, it's hard not to" she told Kuwait Times.



Hashem Behbehani

Fatemah Dashti, an artist uses her platform for female empowerment, mental health awareness, and the trouble of having to fit into the mold set by society. Her take on female experiences had gained her a lot of interest in the country. As a society, women have been conditioned to fit certain expectation in all aspects of their lives.

For instance, her piece 'because you're a girl and he's a boy' sparked a lot of controversy, yet she was just depicting the reality of a society that is more lenient when it comes to men yet judgmental when it's a woman. Fatemah's art doesn't just represent herself, it represents every woman struggling with societal expectations and every person dealing with mental challenges making her stories and narrations varied and diverse in nature.

According to her, "Just because I'm not going through the same struggles as others, doesn't mean I'm incapable of understanding them, it feels like my responsibility as a privileged women is to tell these

stories". Not only that, but in a society that has unrealistic expectations, she celebrates doing things in your own pace, not fitting the mold, and prioritizing mental health.

Meanwhile, Hashem Behbehani uses web comics as a way to express his thoughts in a form of a visual diary and at times works on creating art that tackles bigger topics by integrating humor and politics. His use of satire and irony to deliver a message makes the bitterness of the topic easier to swallow.



Shahad

According to him "satirical art is effective when the audience trusts that the artist has no ill intent but only to raise awareness and spark change". He believes that setting an honest tone for the sake of positive change is crucial when discussing political issues. For instance, the 2022 election ignited his need to voice his opinions in a burst of creativity that highlights the corrupt system as well as outline the hope the citizens have for change. As a Kuwaiti citizen, he feels the need to acknowledge these issues to create awareness, while also using humor to communicate with the audience. These artists show us that art, at times, shifts opinions more powerfully than words.

## MoH holds workshop for reconstructive surgeries

**KUWAIT:** The health ministry is to launch a workshop for head, skull and reconstructive surgeries, conducted by Al-Babtain Center for Burns and Plastic Surgery on Monday. "The workshop includes a team of surgeons in many

fields, carried out in cooperation with the French professor Arnaud Gelliselle who will lend his support for the complicated cases," the Head of the Cosmetic and Aesthetic Surgery Department at Al-Babtain Center, Dr Aqeel Lari said. "The aim of the workshop is to cooperate with international expertise and initiate exchange of knowledge to focus on scientific and professional gains as well as to develop Kuwaiti staff for the future," he added.

"Our cooperation with one of the most influential surgeons in the France comes with our faith in the importance of providing the best medical care services and the shared exchange of expertise." — KUNA



Dr Aqeel Lari



BERLIN: Delegates and representatives at the World Medical Association session. — KUNA



BERLIN: Delegates from the Kuwait Medical Association.

## Kuwait elected head of World Medical Association

**BERLIN:** Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) was elected as president of the World Medical Association (WMA) for 2023-2024 during the election held in the WMA conference in Berlin. Speaking to KUNA, Head of KMA, Dr Ibrahim Al-Tawla said Kuwait's presidency of the WMA, as the first Arab country, shows Kuwait's presti-

gious status on the global medical platform. The move will help the KMA raise issues, which concern doctors in Kuwait and share Kuwaiti medical views in international forums as well as provide opportunities to come up with recommendations on global medical work, he added. Meanwhile, Dr Masoma Al-Ali, Vice President of the KMA, said this position has a double significance as it coincides with the celebration of the diamond jubilee of the establishment of the WMA. The KMA dedicated this win to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and all Kuwaiti doctors. — KUNA

local spotlight

## Women and children's rights — a Cabinet priority



By Atyab Al-Shatti

Local@kuwaittimes.com

**W**here there's a will, there's a way. The new values that the government is trying to establish with regards to women's empowerment and child protection are values that the people have always aspired for and human rights defenders have sought.

But mountains are not made out of molehills and the road to gender equality and child protection has never been evident or manifested in past domestic government practices, despite the international endeavors by Kuwait when engaging with the international community and UN bodies, most specifically through the Universal Periodic Review, the non-contractual human rights protection mechanism.

Kuwait signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on Sept 2, 1994, expressing willingness to create a safe and just atmosphere where women can enjoy the same rights and obligations that men are enjoying in Kuwait. But 28 years later, we still find women struggling to obtain basic rights and be recognized by the laws as an equal being, even for the simplest rights that should be given without the need of advocacy, such as equal housing rights for women, citizenship for her non-Kuwaiti children and equality before the law with regards to educational rights.

According to the sixth periodic report submitted by Kuwait under article 18 of the convention in 2021 and issued to CEDAW, Kuwait stated in point 23: "With regards to abolition of article 29 of act no. 16 (1960), we note that national legislation links the right to physically discipline with limits on discipline. It may only be done for the purposes of educating and may not exceed those limits. In addition, under the Islamic sharia, there are limits to disciplining. It may not cause pain and must not leave any noticeable effects. Anything that goes beyond that is subject to provisions of act no. 16 (1960)".

While there is no way that an angry man who wants to physically discipline a person will not cause abuse or harm, disciplining can never be physical in any way and can never be related to any form of physical abuse.

Moreover, Kuwait signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child on June 7, 1990 and ratified it on Oct 21, 1991. But 31 years later, the child protection hotline does not provide efficient implementation mechanisms to tackle all abuse cases and assist those who are in need.

To dispel any doubts, the ministry of social affairs, women and children is not a new ministry, but was previously the ministry of social affairs. Finally, Rome was not built in a day, and I believe that change requires patience, dedication and action. I pray for the new Cabinet to achieve justice and succeed in accomplishing the desired goals.

## Kuwait Times reaches 100K followers on Instagram



@Kuwaittimes

By Ahmad Jabr

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Times' account on Instagram reached 100,000 followers on Sunday, in yet another milestone for the newspaper. It was not long ago that Kuwait Times ventured into the social media world in its constant endeavor to deliver the latest and most accurate news in English to its audience in Kuwait and the world. The past couple of years have been rich with events, including the COVID-19 pandemic which coincided with closures and forced suspension of traditional media. At that time when social media outlets were filled with fake news, Kuwait Times established itself as a reliable source of news in English to Kuwait's large English-speaking communities, earning people's trust to keep them informed with government updates accurately and on time. Since then, Kuwait Times' team strived to keep delivering on their promise to continue being Kuwait's most reliable source of news in English - both on traditional and digital media.

Established in 1961 as the first daily in the Arabian Gulf, Kuwait Times takes pride in its rich history as it continues to evolve. In this quest, Kuwait Times keeps up with the latest trends on social media and constantly explores ways to keep people updated with the latest news on various platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and most recently, TikTok, creating an array of diverse content that caters to a wide range of audiences. Kuwait Times brings with it a six-decade-long experience that made it a household name in traditional media in Kuwait and the region as it ventures into the fast-evolving world of digital journalism.

Of course, none of these achievements would have been possible without our readers' and followers' support. Kuwait Times would like to take this opportunity to thank its readers and social media followers for their trust and support. Kuwait Times would also like to recognize its audience as partners of success. We are on our promise to always be reliable, accurate and on time.

# Is Kuwait on the brink of an age demographic crisis?

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** An ageing population is an economic and social burden. It also has an impact on the politics of many societies, including how to allocate limited financial resources to pay for pensions and elder care, which could be an issue in graying economies around the world for decades to come. Kuwait is to face a Demography of Ageing by 2040 if fertility rates continue to decline, along with the high rate of celibacy and early divorce cases, according to a recent report by CSRGULE.

The research shows that a decrease in early marriage, increase in educated females and prioritizing education and employment over marriage, in addition to social media addiction and globalization, are all factors that affect the demographic growth of Kuwaitis.

Mohammad Al-Jassem told Kuwait Times that a reluctance to marry in Kuwaiti society is not a new phenomenon, but has recently risen among both women and men. "The reasons for reluctance are due to the housing crisis and the financial burden on the groom, where the bride's family demands a lot, which makes it impossible to consider marriage," he said.

Jassem called on the government to search for quick solutions by finding temporary housing for young people, as well as providing sufficient mate-

rial and moral incentives for Kuwaitis, stressing the importance of media awareness campaigns to motivate youth to marry and build a Kuwaiti Muslim family to preserve the young population and authentic customs and traditions.

Adnan Al-Shawwa agreed with Jassem, saying the costs of marriage are high, where a wedding costs between KD 10,000 to KD 25,000 or more in some cases, adding these costs do not include the high rentals and cost of living. Abdulaziz Al-Jumaili, a Kuwaiti young man who married after 30, said the reason for delaying marriage was his eagerness to complete his studies and be ready with a suitable job.

He added one of the most important reasons for the reluctance to marry is the bad marriage experiences of friends and relatives. "When we see how many fights, problems and financial issues our friends go through, we decide to not rush in getting married. The experience is not an easy; the responsibility is huge," Jumaili added.

As for Mariam Al-Khudhair, many Kuwaiti women believe that marriage restricts their freedom, especially since they see that men are not ready and responsible enough to start a family. "Many young males are not responsible emotionally and financially to take care of a family and children. They will leave all these responsibilities on the wife, which increases women's hesitation, and they think care-

fully before getting married," she said.

The annual growth of the Kuwaiti population declined from 3.3 percent in 2011 to about 2 percent in 2020, down to 1.8 percent in 2021, according to data from the Public Authority for Civil Information. The growth of the Kuwaiti population has continued to decline since 2015 at an alarming pace, with a sharp decline of about 1.8 percent in 2021 compared to about 2.5 percent in 2015. The age group of 0 to 14 years witnessed a decline in the Kuwaiti population from about 23 percent in 2011 to about 21 percent in 2021. On the other hand, the age group from 65 years and over increased from 2 percent in 2011 to about 4 percent by the end of 2021.

According to the study, there are many reasons for this. One of them is the negative marriage experiences shared on social media platforms that contribute to changing the stereotypical image of attachment and fertility rates. In addition, the high divorce rate in Kuwait increase the fears of those who are about to get married about the possibility of failing, which leads to not rushing to have children, as well as economic and social reasons.

A report issued by the Cabinet in August indicated Kuwait has the highest divorce rate in the world per capita. It was on the top of the list despite its low population, as the divorce rate has risen to 48 percent.

## Kuwait's Al-Ajmi among Hall of Fame nominees

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Winter Games Club announced the nomination of its chief Fhaid Al-Ajmi for induction into the International Ice Hockey Federation's (IIHF) Hall of Fame, the body said on Sunday. Al-Ajmi's nomination is a token of appreciation for his efforts to propel the sport of ice hockey to greater levels, the club said in a statement, citing his long-standing role as the sport's chief organizer in the wider Arabian Gulf region. The Kuwaiti official's nomination for a spot in the IIHF Hall of Fame, based in Lausanne, Switzerland, is a source of pride for the club, added the statement. If inducted, Al-Ajmi will become the first Arab to have garnered such an accolade, it said. — KUNA

## Zain sponsors Omar Khairat musical evening

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its official sponsorship of the special musical evening featuring Omar Khairat, held at The Arena Kuwait. The celebrated Arab musician, along with his full orchestra of 50 talented instrumentalists, returned to Kuwait after four years in a special evening filled with nostalgic tunes.

Zain sponsored this unique event as part of its strong belief in the private sector's vital role in supporting cultural and artistic programs, especially the ones that bring some of the Arab world's most prolific artists, like Omar Khairat, to Kuwait. Khairat's work has long been linked to many of the region's top cinema and television titles and deeply loved by fans of all ages.

The evening was produced and organized by Scene Productions and hosted at the Arena Kuwait, the nation's biggest multipurpose indoor hall. The celebrated Egyptian musician enter-



KUWAIT: Zain's team awarding musician Omar Khairat.

tained the crowd with 23 of his most popular pieces that have long been linked to renowned

Arab titles in cinema and TV. Musician Omar Khairat has mastered composing soundtracks that



Zain's dedicated booth during the event.

reflect deep emotions of nostalgia, happiness, and hope in an orchestral approach that preserves the spirit of Eastern and Arab identities with its tones, rhythms and instruments. Khairat's music has an immense relationship with the region's most popular cinema and TV titles. His work has greatly impacted establishing a large Arab fanbase for soundtrack concerts in the region.

Zain is always keen on supporting initiatives and programs that add to the local art scene and spares no efforts to shoulder any project with a creative vision that serves the local community and contributes to enriching the national economy.

## Embassy of Italy welcomes state-of-the-art naval ship

**KUWAIT:** The Embassy of Italy in Kuwait welcomed the Italian naval vessel, 'Paolo Thaon Di Revel' to the Kuwait shores. The ship is visiting Kuwait from the 9th to 12th of Oct, 2022. Paolo Thaon di Revel is an Italian multipurpose patrol vessel and is the flagship of Operation AGENOR of European-led Maritime Awareness in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASoH).

The Italian Ambassador to Kuwait, HE Carlo Baldozzi and the Force Commander of Operation AGENOR, Italian Rear Admiral Stefano Costantino, plans to host a naval diplomacy reception onboard the Italian navy ship on the 10th of Oct to engage in wider maritime dialogue with ambassadors and military representatives.

With its flagship and the Force HQ staff afloat, the European maritime initiative aims to promote inclusive trans-regional cooperation, to strengthen diplomatic and military relationships with key actors in the region. The European-led maritime awareness in the Strait of Hormuz will welcome representatives onboard ITS Thaon di Revel.

The Gulf Region is one of the most important trading regions in the world and the Strait of Hormuz connects the Gulf region with the open ocean, often seen as the bottleneck of international trading routes. Any incident in the Strait of Hormuz has a direct impact on the world's economy. Therefore, after a series of events in 2019, a coalition of European nations initiated an ad-hoc maritime mission, to reassure the proper transit of maritime merchant ships in the strait, by de-escalating tensions and promoting stability and prosperity. EMASoH naval and air assets monitor the international Sea Lines of Communication and accompany merchant vessels.

The Italian ship Thaon Di Revel, the first of seven Multipurpose Offshore Patrol Vessels, is an example of Italy's state-of-the-art manufacturing capability and superior military technology and know-how. Thaon Di Revel has a bow design that is similar to the ones used by the old Roman ships - an engineering solution that allows the ship to reduce fuel consumption and reach speeds of up to 32 knots. A unique characteristic is the Naval Cockpit, a fully Italian designed system with no comparable system-it allows only two operators (Pilot and Co-pilot) to conduct the Unit, controlling both the Propulsion and the Combat Systems, up to the weapons engagements.

Amongst the most important and avant-garde Italian companies, who contributed to the success of this extraordinary vessel are Fincantieri S.p.A., Leonardo S.p.A, Elettronica and MBDA.



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sibi George poses for a photo with Indian naval band members.

## Indian naval band presents riveting musical symphony

Sajeev K Peter

**KUWAIT:** Indian Naval Symphony Band offered a fitting finale to the visit of the three Indian naval ships to Kuwait with a riveting musical concert at the Indian Embassy hall on October 6. With the vocal support of Kuwait Choral Chambers, the naval band presented an engrossing ensemble, capturing the hearts and minds of the music enthusiasts that consisted of ambassadors, Kuwaiti dignitaries and Indian community members.

Popular Kuwaiti singer Mubarak Al-Rashed opened

the concert with a popular Hindi song. This was followed by an ensemble of some evergreen Western and Hindi pop numbers, besides some popular Indian patriotic numbers. The band showcased its skill as young sailor musicians played instruments like the xylophone, the glockenspiel and tubular bells with considerable agility and ease.

Indian Naval Symphony Band has, over the years, evolved into an excellent musician-led ensemble. Various conductors of the band in its history have increased the range of its repertoire to include arrangements of symphonies, solos, concertos and other forms of contemporary music that includes Indian classical and Western pop music.

Indian Ambassador Sibi George honored captains of the three ships - Capt Sarvpreet Singh, Capt Randip Ghosh and Capt Parithosh Pathak - following the concert. Indian naval ships INS TIR, INS Sujatha and Indian Coast Guard Ship Sarathi concluded their five-day visit to Kuwait on October 7.

## 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.





Thai nursery massacre families pray to free children's souls

## Zionist forces hunt east Jerusalem checkpoint attacker



KERCH: Black smoke billows from a fire on the Kerch bridge that links Crimea to Russia, after a truck exploded, near Kerch, on October 8, 2022. — AFP

# Ukraine hit after Crimea bridge blast

## 12 dead, 49 people including six children in hospital: Zelensky

**KYIV, Ukraine:** An overnight Russian missile strike killed at least 12 people in Zaporizhzhia, authorities said on Sunday, in the latest deadly attack to hit the southern Ukrainian city that President Volodymyr Zelensky called "absolute evil".

The reports came a day after a key bridge linking Russia with the annexed Crimea peninsula was partially destroyed by an explosion, and as the Kremlin replaced its top general amid major battlefield setbacks in Ukraine.

Zelensky said 12 people had died and 49 people, including six children, were in hospital after Russian missiles again hit Zaporizhzhia. City council secretary Anatoliy Kurtev, provided a higher death toll of 17.

At least 17 people including a child also died when seven Russian missiles hit the centre of the industrial city earlier this week. Regional official Oleksandr Starukh posted pictures of heavily damaged apartment blocks on Telegram and said a rescue operation had been launched to find victims under the rubble.

Zelensky denounced the "merciless strikes on peaceful people" and residential buildings as "absolute evil" perpetrated by "savages and terrorists". Divers were to inspect the waters beneath the giant Crimea bridge Sunday a day after a truck bomb ignited a massive fire on the road and rail link, killing three people.

"We are ordering the examination by divers, they will start work from six in the morning," Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Marat Khusnullin announced. "First results" of Russia's inspection of the bridge were due Sunday, he added.

Russia on Saturday said traffic had resumed

over the strategic link symbolising the Kremlin's 2014 annexation of Crimea. The 19-kilometre (12-mile) bridge was attacked at dawn, sparking celebrations from Ukrainians and others on social media, where dramatic footage showed it burning with a road section plunging into the water.

But Zelensky did not directly mention it in his nightly address and officials made no claim of responsibility. Following the blast, the bodies of an unidentified man and a woman were pulled out of the water, likely passengers in a car driving near the exploded truck, Moscow said.

Authorities had identified the owner of the truck as a resident of Russia's southern Krasnodar region, saying his home was being searched.

### 'Emergency situation'

The bridge is logistically crucial for Moscow, a vital transport link for carrying military equipment to Russian soldiers fighting in Ukraine. It is also hugely symbolic. President Vladimir Putin personally inaugurated the structure in 2018 — even driving a truck across—and Moscow had maintained the link was safe despite the fighting.

While some in Moscow hinted at Ukrainian "terrorism", state media continued to call it an "emergency situation". Zelensky's adviser Mykhailo Podolyak posted a picture on Twitter of a long section of the bridge half-submerged. "Crimea, the bridge, the beginning," he wrote.

But in a later statement, he appeared to suggest Moscow had a hand in the blast, noting the truck that detonated "entered the bridge from the Russian side". The Kremlin's spokesman said Putin had ordered a commission to be set up to look into the blast.

Officials in Moscow stopped short of blaming Kyiv, but a Russian-installed official in Crimea pointed the finger at "Ukrainian vandals." "There is an undisputed terrorist war against us," Russian ruling party deputy Oleg Morozov told the RIA Novosti news agency.

Military analysts said the blast could have a major impact if Moscow saw the need to shift already hard-pressed troops to the Crimea from other regions or if it prompted a rush by residents to leave. Mick Ryan, a retired Australian major general now with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said that even if Ukrainians were not behind the blast, it constituted "a massive influence operation win for Ukraine".

"It is a demonstration to Russians, and the rest of the world, that Russia's military cannot protect any of the provinces it recently annexed," he said on Twitter. Authorities in Crimea tried to calm fears of food and fuel shortages in Crimea, dependent on the Russian mainland since annexation from Ukraine.

### Moscow appoints new general

The blast came after Ukraine's lightning territorial gains in the east and south that have undermined the Kremlin's official annexation of Donetsk, neighbouring Lugansk and the southern regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson.

After weeks of military setbacks that triggered unprecedented domestic criticism of Russia's army, Moscow on Saturday announced that a new general-Sergei Surovikin—would take over its forces in Ukraine. Surovikin previously led Russia's military in southern Ukraine. He has combat experience in the 1990s conflicts in Tajikistan and Chechnya, as well as, more recently, in Syria. —AFP

## UK ministers urge party to back under-fire Truss

**LONDON:** Four ministers in Liz Truss's government on Sunday urged Conservative colleagues to back the embattled UK prime minister following a punishing week that exposed deep divisions within the party. Interior minister Suella Braverman, former finance minister Nadhim Zahawi, Commons leader Penny Mordaunt and environment minister Ranil Jayawardena all wrote articles for Sunday newspapers warning that they would soon find themselves in opposition unless the party united quickly.

Braverman wrote in The Sun on Sunday, "Those working with Labour to undermine our prime minister are putting the Conservatives' chance of victory at the next election in real danger. "So the choice for my colleagues and for us is as party is simple—Back Liz or get (Labour leader) Keir Starmer, hand-in-hand with (SNP leader) Nicola Sturgeon."

Braverman, however, was one of several ministers who went against Downing Street directions during her speech at the chaotic Tory Party conference this week. Zahawi wrote in the Mail on Sunday that the government had made mistakes unrolling its fiscal policy, which led to a humiliating climbdown over a plan to cut income tax rates for the top earners.

But he said that "now is the time" to rally behind Truss, again warning that rebels risked ushering in a Labour government "propped up" by the SNP. Fresh polling by Opinium for the Observer has put Truss's personal approval rating at minus 47.

In a sign of her fallibility, cabinet ministers are reported to be joining forces to demand Truss rules out mooted plans to raise benefits in line with wages rather than inflation, The Sunday Times reported. Former leadership rival Mordaunt was one of those who spoke out on the issue during the party conference. But she struck a conciliatory tone in a Sunday Telegraph article. —AFP

## N Korea fires more missiles, seventh launch in two weeks

**SEOUL:** North Korea fired two ballistic missiles into the sea early Sunday, Seoul's military said, the seventh such launch in two weeks, just hours after a nuclear-powered US aircraft carrier wrapped up joint drills off the Korean peninsula.

Seoul, Tokyo and Washington have ramped up combined naval exercises in recent weeks, infuriating Pyongyang, which sees them as rehearsals for invasion and justifies its blitz of missile launches as necessary "countermeasures".

With talks long stalled, Pyongyang has doubled down on its banned weapons programmes, firing an intermediate range ballistic missile over Japan last week, with officials and analysts warning it has completed preparations for another nuclear test.

South Korea's military said Sunday it had "detected two short-range ballistic missiles between 0148 and 0158 (1648-1658 GMT) fired from the Munchon area in Kangwon province towards the East Sea", referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

The missiles "flew approximately 350 kilometres (217 miles) at an altitude of 90 kilometres", Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement, calling the launches a "serious provocation". Tokyo also confirmed the launches, with the coast guard saying the missiles had landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zone.

Japanese senior vice defence minister Toshiro Ino said Tokyo was analysing the missiles, adding that "either one of them has the possibility of being a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM)". Seoul said last month it had detected signs the North was preparing to fire an SLBM, a weapon Pyongyang last tested in May.

The US military's Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement that they were "consulting closely with our allies and partners", adding that the launch highlighted the "destabilising" nature of North Korea's missile programmes.



SEOUL, South Korea: People watch a news broadcast showing file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul on October 9, 2022. —AFP

### Drills, drills, drills

North Korea's missile tests usually aim to develop new capabilities, but its recent launches, "from different locations at different times of day, may be intended to demonstrate military readiness", said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

"The Kim regime is trying to coerce Seoul, Tokyo and Washington to abandon their trilateral security cooperation." At an emergency meeting of Seoul's National Security Council following the missile test, however, South Korean officials vowed to strengthen that cooperation, according to a statement. The recent spate of launches is part of a record year of weapons tests by isolated North Korea, which leader Kim Jong Un last month declared an "irreversible" nuclear power, effectively ending the possibility of denuclearisation talks.

Seoul, Tokyo and Washington have ramped up joint military drills in response, with the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier and its strike group redeployed to the area last week. On Thursday, Seoul's military said it had scrambled 30 fighter jets after 12 North Korean warplanes staged a rare formation flight and apparent air-to-surface firing drills.

Go Myong-hyun, a researcher at the Asan Institute

for Policy Studies, said North Korea was trying to claim that the nature of its sanctions-busting weapons tests were the same as the defensive joint drills between the allies. "North Korea is trying to give equivalence through its continued missile launches," he told AFP. Analysts say Pyongyang is emboldened to continue its weapons testing, confident that gridlock at the United Nations will protect it from further sanctions. Last week, the UN Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss Pyongyang's launch over Japan, which officials and analysts said was a Hwasong-12 that likely travelled the longest horizontal distance of any North Korean test.

But at the meeting, North Korea's longtime ally and economic benefactor China blamed Washington for provoking the spate of launches, with Deputy Chinese Ambassador to the UN Geng Shuang accusing the United States of "poisoning the regional security environment". US ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield called for the "strengthening" of 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. —AFP

## APPOINTMENT OF PIA SPONSOR IN KUWAIT

**Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL)** invites application from reputable technically and financially sound, and managerially capable firms / companies for appointment as PIA Sponsor in Kuwait. Applicants should meet the "Eligibility Criteria" given in the RFP available on websites of [www.piac.com.pk](http://www.piac.com.pk) and [www.ppra.org.pk](http://www.ppra.org.pk).

Applications in sealed envelopes clearly marked as "Appointment of Sponsor for Kuwait", should reach PIA through the registered mail or courier service till (09-Nov-2022) at 1600 Hrs PST at the address given below. Tenders will be opened on the same date i.e. (09-Nov-2022) at 1630 Hrs PST in the office of DY.GM Agency Affairs.

PIACL reserves the rights to reject or accept any or all applications; however, the reason for the same will be communicated on request.

**Dy. GM, Agency Affairs**  
**Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited**  
Room No. 327, PIA Office Building, Blue Area  
Fazl-i-Haq Road, Islamabad, Pakistan,  
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## International

# Zionist forces hunt east Jerusalem checkpoint attacker

UN warns 'mounting violence' in occupied Palestinian territory 'fuelling a climate of fear, hatred and anger'

**JERUSALEM:** Zionist forces on Sunday hunted a Palestinian suspected of killing a 18-year-old military policewoman in east Jerusalem, an attack that left another Zionist in critical condition from a gunshot wound to the head.

The shooting at a checkpoint by the Palestinian refugee camp of Shuafat in Zionist entity-annexed east Jerusalem came amid spiralling violence in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. Hours earlier, two Palestinian teenagers were shot dead in a Zionist raid in the West Bank, as the United Nations warned that "mounting violence" in the occupied Palestinian territory was "fuelling a climate of fear, hatred and anger".

Police said the alleged Shuafat gunman, a 22-year-old Palestinian resident of east Jerusalem, was driven to the checkpoint by an accomplice. He got out of the car, opened fire and ran into the camp as the driver sped away. The dead Zionist soldier was identified as Noa Lazar.

Prime Minister Yair Lapid said Sunday his "heart" was "broken" by her death. "We won't rest until bringing the despicable murderers to justice," Lapid said before Jews were set to mark the Sukkot holiday.

Another Zionist, a 30-year-old man, was taken to Hadassah hospital in serious condition after being shot in the head, the medical centre said in a statement. Two additional border officers were lightly wounded by shrapnel, police said.

Police cordoned off the area near the checkpoint and officers remained at the entrance and exit of east Jerusalem. Three Palestinians in their 20s from east Jerusalem were arrested on suspicion of "involvement in the attack", police said.

## 'Devastating consequences'

Earlier Saturday, two Palestinian teenagers were shot dead in an operation by Zionist forces in Jenin, the north-

em West Bank flashpoint city. The Palestinian health ministry announced the killing of "two citizens by occupation (Zionist) bullets in Jenin", as Zionist troops carried out an arrest there. Eleven others were wounded. The ministry named those killed as Ahmad Daraghme, 16, and Mahmud as-Sous, 18. The Islamic Jihad militant group praised the teenagers as "its martyrs". Zionist's military said troops had entered Jenin to detain a 25-year-old Palestinian it said was a member of Islamic Jihad and suspected of shooting at troops in the area.

"During the activity, dozens of Palestinians hurled explosive devices and Molotov cocktails at IDF (Zionist military) soldiers and shots were fired at them," an army statement said, adding that soldiers had targeted "armed suspects".

In response to attacks on Zionist civilians earlier this year, Zionist's army has been conducting near daily raids in the West Bank that have left dozens of both Palestinian fighters and civilians dead.

Following the latest deaths in Jenin, the Palestinian presidency called on Washington to "exert serious pressure on Zionist to stop its all-out war against our Palestinian people". Zionist action "will push matters towards an explosion and a point of no return, which will have devastating consequences for all", said Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for president Mahmud Abbas, in a statement published by the official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

The agency also reported Zionist forces had fired directly at journalists during the Jenin raid. Two reporters were wounded Wednesday while covering a military operation witnessed by an AFP journalist near the West Bank city of Nablus, in which one Palestinian was killed. In May, Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead while covering a Zionist raid in Jenin.



JERUSALEM: A Zionist border policewoman reacts inside an ambulance following a shooting attack at a checkpoint near the Shuafat refugee camp in the Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem. —AFP

## 'Deteriorating situation'

Saturday's violence in Jenin came a day after two other Palestinian teenagers were shot dead by Zionist forces, according to the health ministry-Adel Dawoud, 14, killed in the northern West Bank, and Mahdi Ladadweh, 17, killed near the city of Ramallah.

The UN envoy for Middle East Peace, Tor Wennesland, voiced alarm at "the deteriorating security situation", saying at least 100 Palestinians had been

killed in the West Bank this year, "including children, amid a significant increase in Israeli military operations".

Zionist has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War and around 475,000 Israelis now live in settlements across the territory, which are considered illegal by most of the international community.

They live alongside some 2.8 million Palestinians, who in different areas of the West Bank are subject to Israeli military rule or live under limited Palestinian governance. —AFP

## Austrians vote in presidential election

**VIENNA:** Austrians were voting on Sunday in a presidential election expected to return incumbent Alexander Van der Bellen, seen as a beacon of stability as the Alpine country struggles with an energy crisis and inflation.

Campaigning on a slogan of "clarity" and "stability", Van der Bellen is widely tipped to clinch a second mandate, with his six challengers-all men-lagging far behind. "It would be nice if we had clarity today-nice for Austria, nice for us —, if we can then fully concentrate on the diverse tasks ahead, the multitude of crises... that we in Austria, in Europe, are facing," the 78-year-old economics professor said after casting his ballot in central Vienna. Polls put the pro-European liberal as securing more than 50 percent of the vote, thus avoiding a run-off. Some 6.4 million people are eligible to cast their ballots from the European Union country's total population of nine million.

Polling stations opened at 7:00 am (0500 GMT) and close at 5:00 pm (1500 GMT), with early projections to be published shortly after they close.

"I am in favour of consistency," 73-year-old retiree Monika Gregor told AFP outside a Vienna polling station, saying she had voted for Van der Bellen and thought he was "very clever". The former Greens leader is running again as an independent. Posters proclaim him to be "the safe choice in stormy times" as the ripple effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine push up inflation throughout Europe.

He has the explicit or implicit backing of Austria's



VIENNA, Austria: Austria's President Alexander Van der Bellen and his wife Doris speak to the media in front of a polling station in Vienna, during the presidential elections on October 9, 2022. —AFP

major parties except the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ). The latter has fielded its own candidate, Walter Rosenkranz, who is sitting in second place in the polls on 15 percent. Also standing for the presidency is 35-year-old punk rocker Dominik Wlazny, founder of the Beer Party, named for its advocacy of the popular beverage. He polled at less than 10 percent ahead of Sunday's vote.

Alexander Nittmann, 35, a software developer, said he had voted for Wlazny, hoping he would bring "a breath of fresh air". Van der Bellen-who supporters affectionately call "the professor"-faced an unexpectedly tough fight in 2016, only winning the race in a run-off against an FPÖ politician. But the FPÖ's ratings have plummeted since 2019, following a corruption scandal that brought down the government they were part of and led to the resignation of then-chancellor Sebastian Kurz himself in 2021. —AFP

major social media platforms.

One video shows a man who was shot dead at the wheel of his car in Sanandaj, Kurdistan's capital, where the province's police chief, Ali Azadi, later charged he was "killed by anti-revolutionary forces". Angry men then appear to take revenge on a member of the feared Basij militia, swarming him and beating him badly, in another widely shared video.

Yet another video clip shows a young woman said to have been shot dead in Mashhad in the country's northeast. Many on social media said it evoked images of Neda Agha Soltan, a young woman who became an enduring symbol of the Iranian opposition after she was shot dead at protests in 2009.

In the face of the violence and the online restrictions, protesters have adopted new tactics to spread their message of resistance in public spaces. "We are not afraid anymore. We will fight," read one large banner placed on an overpass of Tehran's Modares highway, seen in images verified by AFP. In other footage, a man with a spray can is seen altering the wording of a government billboard on the same highway from "The Police are the Servants of the People" to "The Police are the Murderers of the People".

Several water features in the Iranian capital were said to have been colored blood-red, although the head of city's municipality parks organization Ali Mohamad Mokhtari insisted that "this information is completely false and there isn't any change in the colors of fountains in Tehran". Iran has accused outside forces of stirring up the protests, as solidarity rallies have been worldwide. The United States, European Union and other governments have imposed new sanctions on Iran.

Iranian pop singer Shervin Hajipour - who was arrested after his song "Baraye" went viral online and became a protest anthem - appeared back in an Instagram video Sunday for the first time since his release. In a short message, the 25-year-old denied links to any "movement or organization outside the country" and said his song was only meant to "express solidarity with the people". —AFP

## French PM leads team to Algeria as ties ease

**ALGIERS:** French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne starts a visit to Algeria on Sunday with a top-level delegation, pushing for better ties with the former French colony and major gas exporter. Her two-day trip along with 16 ministers-over a third of her government-comes just six weeks after President Emmanuel Macron concluded a three-day visit aimed at ending months of tensions with Algiers.

Borne is expected to sign deals on economic cooperation, including energy-although deliveries of natural gas to France are "not on the table", according to her office. Ties between the North African country and its former colonial ruler had seen months of tensions after Macron last year questioned Algeria's existence as a nation before the French occupation, accusing the government of fomenting "hatred towards France".

But during his visit in August, Macron and his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune drew a line under the spat, declaring a "new, irreversible dynamic of progress". Borne is also set to meet Tebboune, as well as Algerian Prime Minister Aïmene Benabderrahmane, with whom she is expected to sign several agreements.

In an interview with news website Tout Sur l'Algerie (TSA), she said the visit would focus on "education, culture, the ecological transition and the economy". "More cooperation will be a source

of growth for our two countries," she said.

## Gas supplies to Europe

Shortly after arriving, Borne will lay a wreath at a monument to martyrs of Algeria's eight-year war for independence, and visit a cemetery for French nationals who resided in Algeria during France's 132-year rule which ended in 1962.

But the contentious subject of the two countries' history, particularly during the war, will not feature prominently on her agenda. During Macron's visit, the president had announced the creation of a joint commission of historians to examine the colonial period, including the war, but again ruled out a state apology for acts committed during the colonial period.

Borne's predecessor Jean Castex had been scheduled to visit Algeria in April last year but his visit was cancelled at the last minute amid tensions between the two sides. Borne and her cohort are the latest in a string of top European officials to visit Algeria, Africa's top natural gas exporter, in search of alternatives to Russian energy supplies since the start of the war in Ukraine.

Algeria's Sonatrach signed a \$4-billion oil and gas production deal with Italian, French and US majors in July, but experts have cast doubt over Algeria's ability to ramp up capacity in the short term.

In her interview with TSA, Borne noted that France does not depend heavily on natural gas, but said Paris wants to develop joint projects in the sector with Algeria "to increase the efficiency of its gas production capacity, which will increase its export capacity to Europe".

The European Union's energy commissioner Kadri Simson is also expected in Algiers on Monday and Tuesday. —AFP



This handout picture shows an angelim vermelho tree, the highest tree found in the Amazon rainforest, in the region of Jari River on Sept 17, 2022. —AFP

## Scientists reach tallest tree ever...

Continued from Page 1

But the enormous angelim vermelho remained elusive until the Sept 12-25 expedition, when researchers traveled 250 km by boat up rivers with treacherous rapids, plus another 20 km on foot across mountainous jungle terrain to reach it. One person on the 19-member expedition was bitten by what the team doctor believes was a poisonous spider.

But it was worth it, says forest engineer Diego Armando Silva of Mapa Federal University, who helped organize the trip. "It was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen. Just divine," Silva, 33, told AFP. "You're in the middle of this forest where humankind has never set foot before, with absolutely exuberant nature." After camping under

the massive tree, the group collected leaves, soil and other samples, which will now be analyzed to study questions including how old the tree is - at least 400 to 600 years, Silva estimates - why the region has so many giant trees, and how much carbon they store. Around half of the weight of the region's giant trees is carbon absorbed from the atmosphere - fundamental in helping curb climate change, says Silva.

But despite its remoteness, the region's giants are under threat. Angelim vermelho wood is prized by loggers, and the Iratapuru reserve is being invaded by illegal gold miners infamous for bringing ecological destruction, says Jakeline Pereira of environmental group Imazon, which helped organize the expedition. "We were so thrilled to make this find," says Pereira.

"It's super important at a time when the Amazon is facing such frightening levels of deforestation." Over the past three years, average annual deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has increased 75 percent from the previous decade. —AFP

## Iran state TV hacked amid...

Continued from Page 1

Anger has flared since the death of Amini on Sept 16, three days after she was arrested by the notorious morality police for an alleged breach of the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women. "Join us and rise up," read another message in the TV hack claimed by the group Edalat-e Ali (Ali's Justice). It also posted pictures of Amini and three other women killed in the crackdown that has claimed at least 95 lives according to Norway-based group Iran Human Rights.

Another 90 people were killed in Iran's far southeast, in unrest on Sept 30 sparked by the alleged rape of a teenage girl by a police chief in Sistan-Baluchestan province, said IHR, citing the UK-based Baluch Activists Campaign. One Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps member was killed Saturday in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province, and a member of the IRGC's Basij paramilitary force died in Tehran from "a serious head injury following an armed attack by a mob," IRNA said - in killings that raised the death toll among security forces to 14.

Iran has been torn by the biggest wave of social unrest in almost three years, which has seen protesters including university students and even young schoolgirls chant "Woman, Life, Freedom". "Videos coming out from Tehran indicate that there are so many protests, in every corner of the city, in small and big numbers," said US-based campaigner and journalist Omid Memarian on Twitter.

In Amini's hometown Saqez, Kurdistan, schoolgirls chanted and marched down a street swinging their hijab headscarves in the air, in videos the Hengaw rights group said were recorded on Saturday. Gruesome footage has emerged from the state's often bloody response, spread online despite widespread internet outages and blocks on all the

## International

# Jailed Duterte critic held hostage during deadly breakout attempt

## Two prisoners shot dead by a sniper, third prisoner shot in the head

MANILA: Jailed Philippine human rights campaigner Leila de Lima was briefly taken hostage Sunday during an attempted breakout by three detained militants who were shot dead by police, authorities said.

The incident happened at the national police headquarters, where de Lima, a former senator, has been held for more than five years with other high-profile detainees. A police officer handing out breakfast was stabbed with a fork by an inmate, who then freed two others from their cells.

inmates were members of the militant group Abu Sayyaf, which has been accused of kidnapping and beheading several foreigners. De Lima did not appear to have been the target, Azurin told local radio station DZBB.

"They saw her as an ideal cover. Their intention really was to escape," he said. De Lima was unhurt, Boni Tacardon, her lawyer, confirmed to AFP. "She was brought to the hospital for the standard medical check-up," Tacardon said. "But based on the information given to us by our staff who's with the senator now, she appears OK."

### Calls to free de Lima

De Lima, an outspoken critic of former president Rodrigo Duterte and his deadly drug war, is due to appear in court on Monday. She has been behind bars since 2017 on drug trafficking charges that she and human rights groups have called a mockery of justice and payback for going after Duterte.

Since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr took power in June, there have been renewed calls from diplomats and rights defenders for de Lima to be released. The latest incident underscored the need for her to be "freed immediately", said Carlos Conde of Human Rights Watch.

Marcos tweeted that he would speak to de Lima "to check on her condition and to ask if she wishes to be transferred to another detention center". But Tacardon said de Lima did not want to be transferred.

For now, de Lima and her defence team were considering their options, including the hospital inside the national police headquarters. Before her arrest on February 24, 2017, de Lima had spent a decade inves-



MANILA: Former Philippine senator and human rights campaigner Leila de Lima (C) leaves after attending her hearing at the Muntinlupa Trial Court in Metro Manila. — AFP

tigating "death squad" killings allegedly orchestrated by Duterte during his time as Davao City mayor and in the early days of his presidency.

She conducted the probes while serving as the nation's human rights commissioner, then from 2010 to 2015 as justice secretary in the Benigno Aquino administration that preceded Duterte's rule. De Lima won a Senate seat in 2016, becoming one of the few opposition voices as the populist Duterte enjoyed a

landslide win.

But Duterte then accused her of running a drug trafficking ring with criminals inside the nation's biggest prison while she was justice secretary. De Lima lost her bid for re-election to the Senate in May and Duterte stepped down in June. The lawyer and mother of two has been held in a compound for high-profile detainees, rather than one of the Philippines' notoriously overcrowded jails. — AFP



### 'Detention facility returns to normal'

Two of the prisoners were shot dead by a sniper, Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos told reporters. The third prisoner ran to de Lima's cell. He tied up and blindfolded the 63-year-old before a police officer shot him in the head, Abalos said.

De Lima said the inmate held her at knifepoint and threatened to kill her. She credited the police with saving her life. "Being so near death has only made me value life even more," she said in a statement. Police said the situation inside the detention facility had "returned to normal" and an investigation was underway.

Police chief General Rodolfo Azurin said the three



NA KLANG, Thailand: People take part in a Buddhist ceremony to call the souls of the children, who were killed by a former police officer in a mass shooting in a nursery, home from the nursery outside the site in Na Klang in Thailand's Nong Bua Lam Phu province on October 9, 2022. — AFP

## Thai nursery massacre families pray to free children's souls

NA KLANG, Thailand: Mourning families knelt Sunday outside a Thai nursery where their children were murdered, performing a Buddhist ceremony to put their souls at rest. Sacked police officer Panya Khamrab killed 36 people — 24 of them children — on Thursday in a gun and knife rampage in northeastern Nong Bua Lam Phu province, in one of the kingdom's worst-ever mass killings. Saffron-robed monks led prayers for the dead Sunday on a second day of ritual mourning at a temple close to the nursery in Na Klang district, a quiet farming area torn apart by Thursday's bloodshed. Earlier, families wept as they knelt outside the nursery in a ceremony to help release their children's souls. Some clutched their children's portraits, beloved toys and favourite food, which they placed outside the compound as offerings.

Around a low fence surrounding the single-storey, pink-roofed nursery where just a few days ago youngsters played happily, piles of flowers built up. The sweet aroma of incense scented the air as the assembled crowd, including many well-wishers from the close-knit local community, bowed their heads in prayer, a low crackle of thunder echoing in the distance.

Officials solemnly carried children's treasured possessions out of the nursery to return to families-

favourite blankets and much-loved toys, each carefully placed in name-tagged bags. "When I see the tears of the families, I just feel very sad... I can't describe it. I feel really bad (about) what's happened in my hometown," Rutt, 57, told AFP after joining her fellow villagers in supporting the bereaved.

The carnage began when the attacker forced his way in during the children's nap time at about 12:30 pm (0530 GMT) on Thursday, opening fire with his own legally owned 9mm pistol and slashing with a knife. Afterwards, the 34-year-old went home to murder his wife and son before taking his own life, police said, ending the rampage at about 3:00 pm. Most of the victims died from knife injuries or gunfire, and relatives told AFP of the horrific wounds inflicted on their little ones.

### King's support

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, who was due to join prayers Sunday evening, has ordered a swift investigation and police have said they expect to interview about 180 witnesses in the coming days. Panya was sacked as a police sergeant earlier this year for drug abuse and locals say they suspected he was a methamphetamine addict, although preliminary tests found no drugs in his system.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn met survivors and relatives at a hospital late on Friday in a rare public interaction for the monarch, who is officially regarded as semi-divine. The king said he "shared the grief" of the families and pledged to support them. The attack stunned Thailand and caused horror around the world. On Saturday, the Thai community in Melbourne, Australia, held a candlelit vigil to mourn the victims. — AFP

## 'Man-eater' tiger that killed nine shot dead in India

NEW DELHI: Indian police have shot dead a tiger dubbed the "Man-eater of Champaran" that killed at least nine people, in a major operation involving 200 people including trackers on elephants, officials said Sunday. The big cat had terrorised locals on the fringes of the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Champaran in eastern India, killing at least six people in the past month including a woman and her eight-year-old son on Saturday. Even before the two latest kills, authorities had designated the tiger, reportedly a male three or four years old, as a "man-eater", meaning that it could be shot.

Earlier attempts to tranquillize the animal had failed. "Two teams went into the forest on two elephants on Saturday afternoon and the third one waited where we thought the tiger would exit-and we fired five rounds to kill it there," local police chief Kiran Kumar told AFP. With local villagers beating tin containers, it took about six hours for the team-with eight shooters and about 200 forest department officials-to complete the operation, Kumar said. Officials said that large sugarcane fields made it easier for the tiger to stay hidden and attack local villagers and their livestock.

The victims included a 12-year-old girl dragged from her bed on Wednesday night, reports said. Locals in the impoverished villages around the reserve in Bihar state stopped going out in the evening after the tiger's first attack maimed a teenager in May.

But "despite the lurking fear of tiger, it was not possible for us to confine ourselves in our homes as we needed to feed our cattle," Ram Kisun Yadav, a local villager told the Hindustan Times newspaper.

Locals celebrated after the animal was finally shot. "It was a sleepless night for the whole village. We kept beating tin containers to shoo away the tiger if at all it was hiding near our village," villager Paltu Mahato told the Hindustan Times.

Conservationists blame the rapid expansion of human settlements around forests and key wildlife corridors for animals like elephants and tigers for an increase in man-animal conflict in parts of India. Nearly 225 people were killed in tiger attacks between 2014 and 2019 in India, according to government figures.

More than 200 tigers were killed by poachers or electrocution between 2012 and 2018, the data showed. India is home to around 70 percent of the world's tigers and the tiger population was estimated at 2,967 in 2018. — AFP



YANGON, Myanmar: Buddhist devotees visit Shwedagon pagoda to mark the full moon of the Thadingyut festival in Yangon on October 9, 2022. — AFP

## Thousands throng to Shwedagon to mark festival of lights

YANGON, Myanmar: Thousands of Buddhist devotees thronged Myanmar's Shwedagon Pagoda to mark the full moon of the Thadingyut festival on Sunday, some offering prayers for a country plunged into turmoil by last year's coup.

The three-day festival marks Buddha's descent from heaven and is normally marked by riotous fireworks displays, with candles and colourful lanterns lighting up streets and homes. Early morning crowds lined up in commercial hub Yangon to pray at the towering, gold-plated Shwedagon pagoda, Myanmar's most important Buddhist site. Local chronicles say it contains strands of the Buddha's hair.

Crowds packed in shoulder-to-shoulder to file up escalators and ascend the pointed structure that dominates the skyline of the country's largest city. Inside the main complex crowds shuffled along in gentle circumambulation, some stopping to take selfies, light candles or burn incense.

Others stood aside to say quiet prayers. "We haven't come here for years and so we left home early to avoid crowds but there were already many people at the pagoda," said a man from Yangon's Thone Gwa township. He did not want to give his name.

"I think people are struggling in their daily lives and they wanted to come out from home." The country has been in turmoil since the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government in 2021, with fighting continuing across many regions and the economy in tatters.

To mark Thadingyut last year the junta announced an amnesty for hundreds of protesters detained since the coup, sending families rushing to prison gates and sparking joyful reunions across the country. The junta has so far not announced any amnesty to mark this year's three-day festival, which ends on Monday. "I pray for people who are displaced," one woman told AFP amid the slowly-moving crowds, asking not to use her name. "I want to see our country at peace but all I can do on this full moon day is to pray." — AFP

## Thousands in US join abortion rights protests

WASHINGTON, United States: Thousands marched in cities across the United States on Saturday to protest the Supreme Court's overturning of the federal right to abortion and to urge voters to turn out in a Democratic "blue wave" in next month's key midterm elections. In Washington, a crowd of mostly women chanted "We won't go back" as they marched. They carried posters calling for a "feminist tsunami" and urging people to "vote to save women's rights." "I don't want to have to go back to a different time," Emily Bobal, an 18-year-old student, told AFP.

"It's kind of ridiculous that we still have to do this in 2022," she said, adding that she is concerned that the conservative-dominated high court might next target same-sex marriage. "The majority of us are ready to get out and fight for democracy and fight for people's bodily autonomy, women and men," said Kimberly Allen, 70. With Democrats battling to maintain their narrow control of Congress, the midterm elections could have a decisive impact on the future of such rights, she said. Several marchers wore armbands or



NEW YORK, United States: Demonstrators hold signs during a rally to defend abortion access and codify Roe v Wade into law, in Foley Square in New York City. — AFP

scarves of green, a color symbolizing abortion rights.

Others wore blue—the color of the Democratic Party—and carried huge flags and banners calling for a symbolic "blue wave" of voters to go to the polls on November 8. A few counter-protesters made their presence known, some of them urging the crowd to "find Jesus Christ," while others shouted that "abortion is murder." They were met with boos. Similar rallies

took place in cities including New York and Denver, Colorado.

"The #WomensWave is coming for EVERY anti-abortion politician, no matter where they live," Rachel O'Leary Carmona, executive director of the nonprofit Women's March organization, said on Twitter. She urged people to elect "more women" as well as male candidates who support abortion rights.—AFP

MONDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2022

# Business

## Political paralysis hampers economic growth in Iraq

### Iraq's foreign exchange reserves total a colossal \$87 billion

**BAGHDAD:** A year since Iraq's last elections, it remains without not only a new government but a budget too, obstructing much-needed reforms and infrastructure projects in the oil-rich but war-ravaged country. Iraq has raked in huge revenues from oil exports this year, but the profits are locked up in the central bank's coffers, which have amassed a colossal \$87 billion in foreign exchange reserves.

The government can't invest that money without an annual state budget—which Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhemi is not authorized to submit to parliament in his capacity as caretaker.

"Infrastructure projects require years of steady financial planning by government," said Yesar Al-Maleki, Gulf analyst at the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES). "The political situation has caused a massive disruption that has further weakened Iraq's poor standing with investors."

Iraqis voted on October 10, 2021 in an early election triggered by a wave of protests that began two years earlier, condemning endemic corruption, rampant unemployment and decaying infrastructure. The country has been mired in a seemingly impenetrable political deadlock since then, with rival Shiite factions in parliament vying for power and the right to select a new prime minister and government.

The impasse pits the powerful cleric Moqtada Sadr, who wants snap elections, against the Iran-backed Coordination Framework, which has been pushing to appoint a new head of government before any new polls are held.

#### 'Highly volatile'

Tensions boiled over on August 29, and more than 30 Sadr supporters were killed in clashes with Iran-backed factions and the army in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone, which houses government build-

ings and diplomatic missions. "The situation remains highly volatile," the United Nations envoy to Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, told the Security Council on Tuesday.

"Too many Iraqis have lost faith in the ability of Iraq's political class to act in the interest of the country and its people." While the World Bank has offered projections of average annual growth of 5.4 percent between 2022 and 2024, it has also warned of the many challenges ahead.

"Further delays in government formation and in the ratification of the 2022 budget could restrict the use of the country's revenue windfall from oil," it said in a report issued in June, stressing that "new investment projects are put on hold". Without a budget for 2022, the government is bound by the provisions and rates set out in the 2021 budget, meaning public spending is extremely limited.

An emergency finance bill totaling 25 trillion Iraqi dinars (about \$17 billion) was approved by parliament in June to ensure gas supplies and purchase grain for "food security".

#### 'There's money and gold'

But the ongoing deadlock hinders "the creation of opportunities for economic growth", Mazhar Saleh, the prime minister's financial adviser, told AFP. Still, some gas flaring projects launched by the oil ministry together with foreign companies are "moving at a slow pace", economist Maleki said.

A \$10-billion contract signed last year with French giant TotalEnergies is still in its early stages.

"The government is working to accelerate the work and remove obstacles" for the project, which includes processing facilities for flared gas and a solar power plant, said a source close to the project.

Former finance minister Ali Allawi, who had pre-



**NASIRIYAH, Iraq:** Iraqi graduates from Dhi Qar governorate demonstrate in its major city, blocking the Zaytoon bridge on Aug 23, 2022, to demand the removal of officials they accuse of corruption, and the assignment of fresh graduates in governmental positions. — AFP

pared a reform plan that never materialized, blamed the "political framework" for obstructing progress. "The government's plans and programs were always constrained by the need to have broad agreement from a fractured political class," said Allawi, who resigned in August. Much of Iraq's population of 42 million—a third of whom live in poverty, according to the United Nations—is left hanging.

Thousands of people took to the streets last

week to mark three years since the October 2019 anti-government protests. Amin Salman, who retired after a career in the army, had joined them. His two sons are unemployed and Salman, in his 60s, receives a monthly pension equivalent to \$274.

"There are billions in Iraq. There's money and there's gold," he said. "But the politicians only worry about their own parties and their own pockets." —AFP

## Britain downplays threat of winter energy blackouts

**LONDON:** Britain, currently battling a cost-of-living crisis, on Friday downplayed fears of energy blackouts this winter, insisting the lights will not go out despite an ominous warning from power operator National Grid.

Households face possible rolling three-hour power cuts if gas imports run extremely low, National Grid warned Thursday in a worst-case scenario that it conceded was unlikely.

Nevertheless, the threat of winter blackouts—similar to those seen in the early 1970s—was splashed across newspaper front pages on Friday. Britons are reportedly rushing to buy warm thermal underwear, thick blankets and onesies in case of a cold snap and to avoid turning up the thermostat in the colder months ahead. But Prime Minister Liz Truss, already under fierce pressure over her debt-fuelled tax-cutting budget, insisted the UK has "good energy supplies". Yet the premier, who froze electricity and gas prices to combat soaring bills in last month's controversial budget, stopped short of guaranteeing no blackouts.

#### Tackling energy crisis

"We have taken decisive action to support households and businesses with their energy costs—and we're working to make sure the United Kingdom is never in this position again by tackling



**LONDON:** British households face possible rolling three-hour power cuts if gas imports run extremely low, National Grid warned Thursday in a worst-case scenario that it conceded was unlikely.

the root cause of the energy crisis," Truss tweeted. "That means producing more energy here at home."

Britain is looking to ramp up nuclear power, as well as renewables like offshore wind, as it further diversifies its energy supply in reaction to Europe's crisis. The PM added that she held further talks Tuesday on expanding nuclear power, while the government is also examining possible long-term agreements with gas suppliers to get better prices. "Together, we will get through this winter, grow our economy and secure our energy independence for the future," the premier concluded. The UK does not import Russian gas but it is still

heavily impacted by the rocketing price on world markets after Moscow invaded Ukraine in February.

Truss has meanwhile ruled out an official energy-saving campaign to encourage less consumption this winter. "Ministers are not launching a public information campaign and any claim otherwise is untrue," a government spokesman said Friday.

The Times newspaper reported that the government had been readying a campaign that was blocked by Downing Street. European Union nations have already launched energy-saving initiatives this year to help them survive the winter without Russian energy. —AFP

## Along US Gulf Coast, huge gas plants jostle for space

**CAMERON, United States:** As war rages in Ukraine, and Europe thirsts for fuel, the liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry along the US Gulf Coast is preparing to expand—a distressing development to some nearby neighbors. "It's our life they took here," says Travis Dardar from the doorstep of his camper trailer.

An imposing LNG export terminal—a massive facility that receives and liquefies gas from pipelines, then transfers the LNG to ships for export—will soon loom next to his house, forcing him and his wife to move. Another plant is also planned where he fishes, imperiling his shrimp and oyster business.

"This is way more catastrophic than any hurricane," Dardar says, adding that people can rebuild after a hurricane. In this marshy coastal region between Texas and Louisiana, the proliferation of LNG export terminal projects has unsettled residents, who consider the plants to be a threat to their coast, their serenity and their way of life. "We don't know what they're going to do next. We know one thing: We can't live here," Dardar says.

#### The Ukraine fallout

Last March, a few weeks after the first salvos



**CAMERON, US:** The banks of the Calcasieu Ship Channel, which are eroding at an accelerated rate due to waves created by large ships, are seen in Cameron, Louisiana, on September 29, 2022. —AFP

of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, President Joe Biden pledged to increase LNG deliveries to Europe, which has traditionally been heavily dependent on Russian gas. US suppliers have exported 1,574 billion cubic feet (44.6 billion cubic meters) of LNG to Europe so far in 2022, a sharp rise from the 917 billion cubic feet (26 billion cubic meters) in 2020, according to the Center for Liquefied Natural Gas, a Washington-based trade group that represents the sector. The United States has become the world's largest

exporter of LNG, an industry centered around the energy-rich Gulf of Mexico, with its infrastructure and strategic location.

This area alone has five of the seven active US export terminals and 22 of the 24 projects submitted to the authorities for construction. This activity, in turn, brings many jobs, promises Charlie Riedl, executive director of the Center for LNG. As long as the terminal construction projects meet environmental criteria, the government should "authorize them without delay," he says. —AFP

## Biden moves to end legal limbo for US Big Tech in Europe

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden signed an executive order on Friday designed to protect the privacy of personal data transfers between the EU and the United States and address European concerns about US spying activity. The executive order provides a new legal framework for transatlantic data flows that are critical to the digital economy, the White House said.

The move by Biden is the latest attempt to end years of court battles in which activists in Europe have questioned the legality of the data transfers and thrown the EU operations of US Big Tech into jeopardy. "This is a culmination of our joint efforts to restore trust and stability to transatlantic data flows," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo told reporters.

"It will enable a continued flow of data that underpins more than a trillion dollars in cross-border trade and investment every year."

The EU's Justice Commissioner Didier Reynders hailed the executive order as a "significant step", though officials in Brussels warned that it was only the start of a process that could take months to reach a new data deal. US tech giants have faced a barrage of lawsuits from EU privacy activists concerned about the ability of US intelligence services to access the personal data of Europeans that use Facebook or Google for their internet needs.

Europe's top court has invalidated previous arrangements, known as equivalency deals, after hearing complaints that US laws violate the fundamental rights of EU citizens. The White House said the executive order addresses concerns raised by the Court of Justice of the European Union when it ruled that the previous framework known as Privacy Shield did not provide adequate protection.

#### Court battle 'likely'

Austrian privacy activist Max Schrems, whose legal campaigns brought down the previous pacts, said he would likely challenge the new arrangement. "We will likely attack (the deal) in court," he told AFP, putting the chances at "90 percent". "We need to first analyse it in detail, which will take several days," he said, adding that at first glance it seems the central privacy issues "haven't been resolved". Privacy Shield, struck down in July 2020, was the successor to another EU-US deal, Safe Harbor, which was itself torpedoed by a court ruling in 2015. Businesses have since resorted to legally uncertain workarounds to keep the data flow moving, with hope that the two sides could come up with something stronger in the long term. —AFP



Business

# US job gains slow slightly, but not enough to ease inflation worries

Biden sees sign of 'historic progress', but says 'more work to do'

WASHINGTON: US job gains slowed slightly in September, offering some good news for the Federal Reserve as it works to cool the economy, but official data released on Friday also showed wages continued to rise, underlining the challenge to tamping down rampant inflation. President Joe Biden, who has seen his approval erode in the face of surging prices, cheered the data as a sign of "historic progress" in the economy, even while he said there is more work to do to help American families.

But the central bank likely will want to see more evidence of slowing price increases, which have soared at the fastest pace in 40 years, before pulling back on its aggressive interest rate increases. And economists say another big hike remains likely next month.

The economy added 263,000 jobs last month, showing a steady slowdown from the blistering pace in 2020 and 2021, the Labor Department said in the closely-watched report. The unemployment rate slipped two-tenths of a percentage point to 3.5 percent. Biden said the gain brings the total jobs created since he took office in January 2021 to 10 million.

"Our job market continues to show resilience as we navigate through this economic transition we're in," he said in a speech at a Volvo plant in Hagerstown, Maryland. Following the rapid turnaround from the worst of the pandemic, "we have to move from historically strong economic recovery to a more steady, stable recovery," Biden said.

Wages still rising

But he stressed, "We need to bring inflation down without giving up all the historic economic progress that working class and middle class people have made." While the US president cheered the increase in wages caused by the strong labor market, that is of more concern for the Fed.

The report showed a 10-cent increase in average hourly earnings in the month to \$32.46. Over the past 12 months, average hourly earnings have increased by 5.0 percent, still high but a slowing from the pace seen over the past year. The central bankers are watching closely to see if wages continue to accelerate, which would fuel further inflationary pressures.

The Fed has raised the benchmark lending rate five times this year and said more tightening will be needed to get inflation down, but it acknowledges that the process could cause a painful economic slowdown. "A moderation in job and wage growth will be welcome developments for Fed officials. However, these data do not change the near-term course of monetary policy," Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics said in an analysis.

Fed officials in recent comments have made it clear that no single data report will change their trajectory since it will take time for inflation to get back down to the two percent goal, which will require more rate hikes.

Worker shortage?

Robert Frick, corporate economist



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo taken on August 17, 2022, a "We Are Hiring" sign is posted in front of a restaurant in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

with Navy Federal Credit Union, called the September data "a Goldilocks jobs report." He said it was "cool enough to make the Fed happy that the 'tight' labor market is loosening, and warm enough to satisfy most Americans looking for work, or looking to switch jobs for higher pay."

Jason Furman, a former White House economist, said only two "surprisingly low" inflation reports before the November 1-2 policy meeting could cause the Fed to pivot its stance.

"And while economic forecasting can be difficult, I'm reasonably confident the chances of that happening are precisely 0 percent," Furman tweeted. US employers continue to complain

that they have difficulty filling open positions, and the Fed wants to see signs of an easing in the tight labor market. The data showed notable gains in the leisure and hospitality sector and in health care, and a decline in government jobs. The unemployment rate, which edged up in August as more workers came off the sidelines to join the labor force, slipped back last month, and the participation rate was barely changed at 62.3 percent as the pool of available workers was about steady. Hurricane Ian, which caused massive devastation, especially in Florida, "had no discernible effect" on the data, which was collected before the storm made landfall. —AFP

## World facing '5th wave' of debt crisis: WB chief

WASHINGTON: The world is facing a "fifth wave of debt crisis," World Bank President David Malpass warned Friday, calling for more support for countries in distress. The pandemic forced many countries to take on more borrowing, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have warned that many are already facing or at risk of debt distress amid soaring global inflation and rising interest rates. "I'm worried about the debt levels, worried about the individual countries," Malpass told reporters.

"In 2022 alone, around \$44 billion in debt service payments from bilateral and private debt service have become due" in some of the poorest countries, bigger than the foreign aid flows the countries could hope for, he said.

"Right now we're in the midst of what I think is a fifth wave of debt crisis." Speaking days before policymakers gather in Washington for the annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank, Malpass called for "radically more transparency" from creditors and borrowers on the debt levels. He has long called for China, a major creditor to low-income nations, to be more open about the lending and more active in efforts to restructure debt, a process that has struggled to gain traction. —AFP



HEILIGENTHAL, Germany: Candidate of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) Bernd Althusmann (third right) and his wife Iris (third left) arrive together with their children Jessica Althusmann (second left) with dog Lucky, Jonas Althusmann (left), Tilda Althusmann (center), Antonia Brueser (right) and Smilla Brueser (second right) at a polling station in Heiligenthal, Germany, on October 9, 2022, during the state elections in Lower Saxony. — AFP

## German vote tests public mood amid energy woes

Scholz's coalition in Berlin of the SPD, the Greens and the liberal FDP.

"If the CDU becomes the strongest party in Lower Saxony, which is realistic, it will be a serious blow to the already divided federal government," he told the Rheinische Post.

Nuclear plant row

Opinion polls put the SPD at 31-33 percent in Lower Saxony, followed by the CDU on 27-28 percent. The gap has widened in recent days. A win would be a boost for Scholz's SPD after it lost the last two state polls to the CDU, in North Rhine-Westphalia and Schleswig-Holstein.

The Greens are tipped to win 16 percent, which would be their best showing yet in the state of 6.1 million voters. The far-right AfD is polling at around 11 percent, nearly double what it scored in 2017.

The FDP meanwhile is hovering at five percent, the threshold needed to enter into the regional parliament. A major bone of contention between the leading candidates has been the fate of Lower Saxony's Emsland nuclear power plant, one of only three still operational in Germany.

Althusmann has responded angrily to Berlin's decision to proceed with Emsland's planned shutdown this year, despite the need for energy diversification as the country weans itself off Russian gas and oil.

German Economy Minister Robert Habeck, from the traditionally anti-nuclear Greens, recently announced the other two plants will be kept on standby until April 2023, in a landmark U-turn.

Weil has backed Berlin's stance, saying Emsland was not needed to secure Lower Saxony's energy supply though he conceded that other regions may struggle when the colder weather hits. Although the SPD and CDU currently govern together in Lower Saxony, Weil has ruled out a repeat coalition. He would prefer teaming up with the Greens next. — AFP

BERLIN: Germans in the coastal state of Lower Saxony headed to the polls Sunday in a closely-watched regional election seen as a test for Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats amid an acute energy crisis. Latest surveys put Scholz's centre-left SPD slightly ahead of the conservative CDU party of former chancellor Angela Merkel. Anxiety about sky-rocketing energy bills has dominated the race in the northwestern region on the North Sea, reflecting the national mood.

Russia's war in Ukraine has sent energy costs soaring, pushing German inflation to a record-high of 10 percent in September and fuelling fears of a looming recession in Europe's top economy.

Lower Saxony's popular premier Stephan Weil from the SPD, eyeing a third term, said the election contest had been "the most difficult of my life". "Never have I seen so many question marks and worries on citizens' faces," he told WirtschaftsWoche magazine.

Weil, 63, has cast himself as a safe pair of hands in uncertain times and wants Lower Saxony, home to auto giant Volkswagen as well as most of Germany's wind turbines, to play a leading role in the green energy transition. He has also welcomed a controversial 200-billion-euro (\$198-billion) energy fund newly unveiled by Scholz to shield German consumers from price shocks.

Weil's main rival, state economy minister Bernd Althusmann from the CDU, says the massive support package lacks clarity. He accuses the federal government of being slow to take decisive action as Germans brace for a grim winter. The 55-year-old challenger has billed Sunday's vote as a verdict on



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## Business

# US judge halts Twitter-Musk case, sets Oct 28 deadline to close deal

## Order buys time for a potential reconciliation between two parties

NEW YORK: A US judge suspended litigation in the saga over Elon Musk's proposed \$44-billion takeover of Twitter, giving the parties until October 28 to finalize the on-again, off-again megadeal.

Delaware Judge Kathaleen McCormick, ruling on a Musk request to freeze the case that had drawn a biting retort from Twitter, said a trial originally scheduled to begin in 11 days could be rescheduled for next month if a deal is not finalized. "If the transaction does not close by 5 pm on October 28, 2022, the parties are instructed to contact me by email that evening to obtain November 2022 trial dates," McCormick said in the order.

The move buys time for a potential reconciliation between two parties that began squabbling as soon as Musk sealed an agreement in April to purchase the influential social media site for \$54.20 per share.

With an October 17 trial date on Twitter's breach-of-contract suits against Musk looming, the unpredictable Tesla boss did an about-face on Tuesday, reviving his \$44-billion takeover plan on condition the Delaware court halt the lawsuit against him. Twitter said Tuesday it expects to close the buyout deal at the \$54.20 price in a statement that did not address Musk's demands over freezing the litigation. Legal briefs filed earlier Thursday shed further light on prickly proceedings characterized by mutual distrust.

"There is no need for an expedited trial to order Defendants to do what they are already doing and this action is now moot," said a filing prepared by Musk's attorneys that alluded to his latest offer.

"Yet, Twitter will not take yes for an answer. Astonishingly they have insisted on proceeding with this litigation, recklessly putting the deal at risk and gambling with their stockholders interests."

The filing said Twitter had opposed a suspension on the "theoretical possibility" of lack of

financing for the transaction, adding that Musk has access to financing to close the deal "on or around October 28."

### 'Trust us' this time

Twitter refuted those arguments, noting that Musk's side had still not committed to a closing date and calling Musk's latest appeal "an invitation to further mischief and delay." Twitter attorneys said in a filing to the Delaware court. "Trust us," they say, "we mean it this time." Twitter lawyers said in a brief that described Musk as seeking an "indefinite" time frame to close the deal.

"The obstacle to terminating this litigation is not, as Defendants say, that Twitter is unwilling to take yes for an answer. The obstacle is that Defendants still refuse to accept their contractual obligations."

"Until Defendants commit to close as required, Twitter is entitled to its day in court to... prove Defendants' breaches so as to ensure complete relief in the event the closing should for any reason not occur," they said. Analysts say the litigation provides leverage to Twitter against the risk of another shift by Musk.

US media have reported that the talks are stuck in part on Musk's assertion that the deal is contingent on billions of dollars in debt financing by major banks.

Twitter "thought they had a deal before," said Adam Badawi, a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley. "So to actually accept something from (Musk), it's going to have to be as iron-clad as it possibly can." But experts were eyeing the latest court twist as beneficial for Musk.

"I think it's definitely an advantage to him. I mean, he obviously very much wanted to delay this," Ann Lipton, a law professor at Tulane University, told AFP.

But she noted the advantage would shift to Twitter should Musk not seal the deal by



WASHINGTON, US: In this file photo illustration, a phone screen displays the Twitter account of Elon Musk with a photo of him shown in the background, in Washington, DC. —AFP

October 28.

"If somehow that doesn't happen, I think that Twitter will have a stronger case that he's been acting in bad faith all along, which... justifies whatever equitable remedies would be appropriate for that," Lipton added. A serial entrepreneur made rich through his success with Tesla electric cars, Musk began to step back from the Twitter deal soon after it was agreed.

Musk said in July he was canceling the purchase because he was misled by Twitter concerning the

number of fake "bot" accounts, allegations rejected by the company.

Twitter, meanwhile, has sought to prove Musk was contriving excuses to walk away—simply because he changed his mind. Musk's potential stewardship of the influential social media site has sparked worry from activists who fear he could open the gates to more abusive and misinformative posts. Shares of Twitter, which surged on Tuesday's news of Musk's reversal, fell 3.7 percent to \$49.39. —AFP

## Stocks slump, dollar boosted by US jobs data

NEW YORK: Stocks slid and the dollar surged Friday after US jobs data showed only a timid slowdown in the labor market, setting the stage for further aggressive interest rate hikes.

Equity markets have taken a battering in the past couple of months, as the US Federal Reserve has made it clear it intends to continue to aggressively raise interest rates until soaring inflation is tamed, even if that means sending the economy into a recession. There was a brief rebound at the start of the week, when investors hoped data pointing to an economic slowdown would allow the Fed to "pivot," or slow down rate hikes. However, the jobs report shows the US labor market is still robust, with hiring in the US economy slowing only slightly in September, to a net gain of 263,000 jobs, from 315,000 in August.

That was more than the consensus forecast for a net gain of 250,000, sending equities lower and the dollar higher.

"Those hoping for a Fed pivot have been sorely disappointed with today's job numbers, which have confirmed that (the) US economy continues to rumble along quite well," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading platform IG.

"The latest bear market bounce has now begun to wilt as investors wearily return to expectations" of further Fed rate hikes. Futures markets show investors saw the report as boosting the odds that the Fed will again undertake a 0.75 percentage point interest rate increase in November.

Major US indices were in the red the entire day, with the broad-based S&P 500 finishing 2.8 percent lower. In Europe, Frankfurt fell 1.6 percent, and Paris shed 1.2 percent. London ended the day 0.1 percent lower.

"Investors are simultaneously fretting that the fall in the pace of hirings indicates a slowing economy, but also that the better-than-expected data shows that the jobs markets hasn't slowed enough to stop the Fed from hiking rates aggressively," said markets analyst Susannah Streeter at Hargreaves Lansdown brokerage.

The next data point that the Fed, and investors, will be scrutinizing is the consumer price index report next week. Elsewhere, oil prices jumped and were set for their biggest weekly gain since March after OPEC and other major producers led by Russia agreed to slash daily output by two million barrels. —AFP

## Chinese EV maker Nio takes on German auto titans

BEIJING: Chinese electric carmaker Nio launched in Germany on Friday, hoping competitive prices and an innovative battery swap system can help it take on world-renowned local auto brands.

The vehicle maker held an event in Berlin to mark the start of sales of its ES8 SUV and ETV models in Europe's biggest economy. Facing stiff competition in the home of well-known brands from Porsche to Mercedes-Benz, Nio hopes to get an edge over rivals with a system that allows batteries to be quickly exchanged. Instead of recharging their car, motorists can swap their drained battery for a fully charged one in a matter of minutes at an automated station.

"By 2025 we will be present in 25 countries and regions," chief executive William Li said in the German capital. The company plans to install a thousand such stations outside China—and mainly in Europe—by 2025. Nio president Qin Lihong, told German daily Handelsblatt earlier this month.

A station has just opened in Zusmarshausen, on a motorway between Munich and Stuttgart. The

## News sites dish out fake stories for Russia

BERLIN: A boy dies in a cycling accident in Berlin after street lights were turned off at night, as Germany faces an energy crunch following the shutdown of Russian gas supplies. At first glance, the story appears to be a genuine article from the country's top tabloid, Bild, and it was shared on Facebook. But investigations, including by AFP, found it was disinformation, part of a major campaign in which leading news sites—mainly in Germany but also other European countries—were initiated to spread pro-Moscow messages.

In late September, Facebook's parent company Meta took down what it called the "sprawling network" behind the campaign, which it said originated in Russia and focused primarily on Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. More than 60 sites impersonated legitimate news organizations, including in Britain, France, Italy and Ukraine, Meta said. According to researchers, among the impersonated media were Britain's Guardian, Germany's Der Spiegel and Italy's ANSA news agency. EU DisinfoLab—an NGO that also investigated the campaign—said the network's aims were "depicting Ukraine as a failed, corrupt and Nazi state" as well as "promoting Kremlin narratives on the Ukraine war". The network, operating since May, was also intended to spread fear among Europeans "about how sanctions against Russia will ruin their lives", said the group, with whom

"Petrol subsidy has been a recurring and controversial public policy issue in our country since the early eighties," Buhari told a joint session of the National Assembly in Abuja. "However, its current fiscal impact has clearly shown that the policy is unsustainable," he said. If the government goes forward with ending the subsidy it would add to the burden of Nigeria's consumers who are battling with the inflationary fallout from Russia's war in Ukraine and the end of the COVID pandemic. Buhari presented a record budget of 20.51 trillion naira (\$47.4 billion) for 2023, with spending up 18.4 percent from this year in nominal terms. But with inflation currently running at over 20 percent, and forecast at 17.16 percent for next year in



Chinese company wants to become "a serious competitor in the premium segment", said Qin. Nio launched in Norway last year, its first foray into Europe, and has so far sold just 750 vehicles there.

But experts believe it could represent serious

competition for more established rivals. "They will become, like Tesla, major competitors for German carmakers," said Ferdinand Dudenheffer, a German automotive expert. Nio is also set to launch this year in the Dutch, Swedish and Danish markets. —AFP

AFP cooperated in its investigation.

### German energy crunch

Linking punitive measures against Moscow to the impact on people's lives appeared to be the aim of the Bild article, which came online in August. Russia's move to slash gas supplies to Europe, believed to be in retaliation for sanctions, has hit Germany hard, prompting the government to unveil a controversial 200-billion-euro (\$198-billion) relief package last week. A series of other false articles have appeared in Germany, including one about a school in the northern city of Bremen being hit by an explosion as it sought to save gas, which appeared on a fake Der Spiegel website. Another purported to be about truck drivers blocking roads to protest EU policies on an imitated site of news outlet T-Online. In addition, a fake story appeared on an imitated Bild web page, claiming Ukrainian refugees set a house on fire after trying to burn a Russian flag.

German media first reported on the fake sites, before other researchers began to investigate. Investigations by AFP's Fact Check team showed the Bild article about the cycling accident, in which the boy was purportedly killed after riding his bike into a hole, to be falsified. A Berlin police spokeswoman said no such accident had occurred, telling AFP: "No young person has died in a traffic accident so far this year."

In the German capital, street lighting is the responsibility of the agency for the environment, urban mobility, consumer protection and climate action. An agency spokesman said the article was "definitely a false report", and they had not turned the street lighting off at night. Keeping streets lit to ensure traffic safety is a legal requirement in Berlin, and "is strictly observed", the spokesman said. And a spokesman for Bild confirmed the article was fake, adding:

the budget, there is unlikely to be much, if any change in real terms.

Buhari said Nigeria's economy is projected to grow 3.7 percent in 2023, up marginally from the 3.55 percent rate expected this year. Buhari warned that revenue shortfalls will continue to pose a threat to the country's fiscal viability. Nigeria's tax revenue has yet to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and has also been battered by the economic effects of the Ukraine war. The budget deficit is projected to be 10.78 trillion naira, said Buhari, which is just over half of planned spending.

Oil revenue is projected at 1.92 trillion naira, with non-oil taxes estimated to contribute 2.43 trillion naira, he said. Buhari said the budget expects oil-rich



"Unfortunately this happens regularly."

The false articles followed the same pattern. They appeared on websites that resembled those of genuine mainstream media, with a similar domain name. Paid ads or fake social media accounts then spread the articles, including on Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and Twitter. Meta described the campaign as "the largest and most complex Russian-origin operation that we've disrupted since the beginning of the war in Ukraine", and that it involved an "unusual combination of sophistication and brute force".

EU DisinfoLab—which named the campaign "Doppelganger"—said their investigation did not "lead to a formal attribution to a specific actor", but that elements pointed towards the involvement of Russia-based individuals. They noted some of the domain names were purchased through Russian web hosting provider Nic.Ru, and some videos were produced on computers with Russian-language settings. The time zone, GMT+8, of one computer suggests fake content could have been produced in the Russian region of Irkutsk and some of the articles look like those that appeared on Russian news site RRN World, according to EU DisinfoLab. —AFP

Nigeria will produce 1.69 million barrels per day (bpd) of crude, assumes an oil price of \$70 per barrel and an exchange rate of 435.57 naira to the dollar. Nigeria, a member of OPEC, has been unable to meet its quota of 1.8 million bpd because of a lack of production capacity and large-scale oil theft, hurting revenue and draining foreign reserves.

The budget must be approved by lawmakers. Nigerians go to the polls in February to elect a successor for Buhari, 79, who will step down after leading Africa's most populous nation for eight years. With Nigeria's economy flagging, its vital oil production at all-time lows, and insecurity a major problem, the next president faces a host of urgent issues. —AFP

## Nigeria to end petrol subsidy

LAGOS: Nigeria's Muhammadu Buhari confirmed plans to remove a costly petrol subsidy as he presented Friday his final budget as president that foresees deep revenue shortfalls. Despite being a major oil exporter, Nigeria imports the bulk of its petrol and a subsidy keeps the prices at the pump low for consumers.

While popular with Nigerians, the subsidy is costly, with the price tag estimated at \$9 billion this year.

## Lifestyle | Features

## Iranian singer appears in video for first time after release



A man watches a video of Iranian singer Shervin Hajipour, who was released in Tehran today after being arrested for his song in support of protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, in the Cypriot capital Nicosia. — AFP

Iranian pop singer Shervin Hajipour appeared Sunday in an Instagram video for the first time since his release after he was arrested over a viral song in support of protests over Mahsa Amini's death. The singer, who rose to fame for his song "Baraye", denied any links to any "movement or organization outside the country" and said his song was only meant to "express solidarity with the people". A wave of unrest has rocked Iran since the 22-year-old Kurdish woman died on September 16 after her arrest by the morality police in Tehran for allegedly violating the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

The street violence has led to dozens of

deaths, mostly of protesters but also members of the security forces. Hundreds were also arrested. Hajipour, a 25-year-old pop singer and songwriter, was arrested in late September after his song "Baraye" — "For" or "Because" in Persian — went viral. The song racked up 40 million views on Instagram before it was deleted after his arrest. He was released on bail on Tuesday, state media said. In his latest video, Hajipour sought to explain his recent absence to his two million followers, saying that since his song went viral, there were "some concerns over whether I'm affiliated to a certain movement or organization outside the country".

"Thank God this misunderstanding was

cleared and it is obvious that I wrote and sang this work only to express solidarity with the people who were critical of society's situation," he said. The video, where Hajipour appeared to be in the front seat of a vehicle recording the video himself, was also posted by local news agencies.

"Baraye" is composed of tweets about the protests and highlights longings people have for things lacking in sanctions-hit Iran or everyday activities that might land people in trouble with the authorities in the Islamic republic. "For the sake of dancing in the streets; Because of the fear felt while kissing; For my sister, your sister, our sisters," the song's lyrics say. In his video Sunday, Hajipour said: "I live in Iran and

want to stay here, live here and sing here and if I want to say something, or want to make criticism, I'd like it to be done here."

The singer also appealed to the authorities to take "a fatherly approach towards people who have similar situations as me," adding that he will not be holding "any interviews with anyone". Hajipour had posted a message on Instagram after his release, seeking to distance himself from politics. "I'm here to say I'm okay," he wrote, adding that "I would not swap this (country) for anywhere else and I will stay for my homeland, my flag, my people, and I will sing." — AFP

## Beatles' home city Liverpool to host 2023 Eurovision song contest

The Beatles' home city of Liverpool will hold the 2023 Eurovision song contest next May, the BBC announced on Friday, after Britain stepped in to host the event due to the war in Ukraine. "It's Liverpool, 13th May," said the BBC's Eurovision show presenter Graham Norton announcing the result live on television after the shortlist was whittled down to Liverpool or Glasgow. Singer Sonia Evans, who hails from Liverpool and came second for the UK in the 1993 contest, said she was "absolutely over the moon" by the choice. "We are going to have the biggest party ever," she said. "Liverpool has the music history of the whole world. It ticks all the boxes."

The northwestern English city was famously home to the Beatles as well as a host of other big names from Gerry and the Pacemakers to Frankie Goes to Hollywood. "A welcoming city with a proud musical heritage, Liverpool will put on an unforgettable show which celebrates the rich culture and creativity of Ukraine," tweeted British Prime Minister Liz Truss.

Ukraine had been due to host the contest after Ukrainian folk-rap group Kalush Orchestra in May won the Eurovision crown, on a wave of support for their country following Russia's invasion. The group beat 24 competitors in the finale in Turin with "Stefania", a rap lullaby combining Ukrainian folk and modern hip-hop rhythms.

"Please help Ukraine and Mariupol! Help Azovstal right now," frontman Oleh Psiuk appealed in English from the stage, referring to the port city's steelworks where Ukrainian soldiers had been surrounded by Russian forces for weeks. Britain's entrant Sam Ryder came second with his quirky song "Space Man". But despite protests



## Chagall painting stolen by Nazis to be auctioned in New York

A painting by Marc Chagall, which was among 15 works stolen by Nazis and eventually returned by France to the heirs of the affected families, will go on sale next month in New York, the Phillips auction house said Thursday. The 1911 oil on canvas, "The Father," set for auction on November 15, was purchased in 1928 by a Polish-Jewish violin maker, David Cender, who lost his possessions when he was forced to move to the Lodz ghetto.



This file photo dated June 11, 1952 shows Russian-born French painter Marc Chagall working in the Madoura studio in Vallauris. — AFP

from President Volodymyr Zelensky's government, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which runs Eurovision, in June ruled that Ukraine could not guarantee the safety of the more than 10,000 people involved in the production and a further 30,000 fans expected to attend.

"You'll do Ukraine proud"

"We did it!" said Liverpool Mayor Joanne Anderson on Twitter after the announcement. "Liverpool is honored to be hosting Eurovision 2023 on behalf of Ukraine... now begins the work on organizing the party." The BBC confirmed the semi-finals would take place in the city on May 9 and 11, with the grand final on May 13.

Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon tweeted her best wishes to Liverpool after Scotland's second city of Glasgow lost out. "Congratulations, Liverpool. Gutted for Glasgow, but no doubt you'll do Eurovision and Ukraine proud," she wrote. The government in Kyiv had originally vowed to fight the decision not to allow it to play host but later agreed to a UK-hosted event with a strongly Ukrainian flavor.

Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko said that after "several rounds" of discussion, the EBU had given assurances of an "extremely high integration of Ukrainian context and presenters". British prime minister Boris Johnson at the time said that it had been agreed with Zelensky that "wherever Eurovision 2023 is held, it must celebrate the country and people of Ukraine". "As we are now hosts, the UK will honor that pledge directly-and put on a fantastic contest on behalf of our Ukrainian friends," Johnson added.

Eurovision is the world's biggest live music event, taking in performers from across Europe and Central Asia as well as Israel and Australia. It will be produced in the UK by the BBC. In line with Eurovision rules, Ukraine is still guaranteed a place in the 2023 grand final along with the EBU's "top five" countries: Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The UK has previously hosted the contest eight times, including four times in London. The last time was in Birmingham in central England in 1998. — AFP

## Pink diamond sells for nearly \$58 million in Hong Kong

A rare pink diamond has sold in Hong Kong for nearly \$58 million, setting a record for price per carat paid at auction for any diamond or gemstone, according to Sotheby's. The 11.15-carat Williamson Pink Star on Friday fetched HK\$453.2 million (\$57.7 million), the second-highest price paid at auction for any jewel, Sotheby's added. The winning bid, by an undisclosed buyer from Boca Raton, Florida, was more than twice the estimated \$21 million sale price.

The stone was the second-largest pink diamond to be sold at auction. Pink dia-



monds are the rarest of the precious gems and the most in-demand on the global market. The world record for a pink diamond was set in 2017, when a stone known as the CTF Pink Star was sold in Hong Kong for \$71.2 million. Friday's sale "not only attests to the resilient demand for top quality diamonds in Asia, but a heightened awareness of the great scarcity of pink diamonds", said Wenhao Yu, chairman of jewelry and watches at Sotheby's Asia.

The Williamson Pink Star was named after two other pink diamonds: the record-setting CTF Pink Star and the Williamson Stone, a 23.6-carat diamond given as a wedding present to Queen Elizabeth II in 1947. Tobias Kormind, managing director of UK jewel retailer 77 Diamonds, said the "astounding" sale proved high-quality diamonds could still fetch major prices in a shaky economy. "Hard assets such as world-class diamonds have a history of performing well even in times of instability," he said. — AFP

## Kevin Spacey faces court over 1980s sex misconduct claim

Kevin Spacey was to appear in a New York court Thursday to face a civil lawsuit brought by US actor Anthony Rapp, who has accused the disgraced Hollywood star of sexual misconduct towards him when he was 14. The two-time Oscar-winning star of the stage, cinema and television — whose full name is Kevin Spacey Fowler — has disappeared from public view since he became one of the first performers to be caught up in the freshly minted #MeToo movement in October 2017.



US actor Kevin Spacey leaves the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. — AFP

Rapp, who currently stars in the "Star Trek: Discovery" series, turns 51 this month. He filed a complaint in September 2020 against Spacey for advances and an alleged sexual assault at a party in Manhattan in 1986. Rapp was 14 years old at the time, while Spacey — now 63 — was almost twice his age.

Spacey, who built his worldwide fame since the 1980s in movies such as "The Usual Suspects" and "American Beauty" and on the Netflix hit "House of Cards," has always denied allegations of sexual abuse. The #MeToo movement exploded in October 2017, when more than 80 women in the movie industry accused and ultimately brought down the previously untouchable producer Harvey Weinstein. At the end of the month, Rapp accused Spacey for the first time, in great detail, in an interview with BuzzFeed News. — AFP

## Pebbles, world's oldest dog, dies aged 22

Pebbles, a Toy Fox Terrier that held the record as the world's oldest dog, died earlier this week at the age of 22, according to Guinness World Records. Born on March 28, 2000, on Long Island, in New York state, the female terrier lived most of her life in to South Carolina, giving birth to 32 puppies over the years.

A team from Guinness World Records — which announced her death on Wednesday — had determined in May 2022 that Pebbles was the world's oldest living dog. Pebbles "sadly passed away of natural causes peacefully at her home surrounded by her family," her owner, Julie Gregory, wrote on Instagram.

According to Gregory, the pooch "enjoyed trying new foods" and "was pampered" during her life. She weighed in at four pounds. In 2012, Pebbles' veterinarian put the terrier on a cat food diet, which Guinness said in an article on its website contains more meat-based protein. From time to time, like on her 22nd birthday, Gregory would "allow Pebbles to indulge in treats like a stack of ribs." Pebbles died five months before her 23rd birthday. — AFP



This photo shows Pebbles the dog next to a Guinness World Record certificate for oldest living dog. — AFP

## Adidas puts partnership with Kanye West 'under review'

German sportswear giant Adidas said Friday it was reconsidering its partnership with Kanye West after the US rap star reportedly became disgruntled with how the brand was marketing his products. The artist now known as Ye has netted billions selling his Yeezy clothing range through the German company since 2015, but the collaboration had recently been dogged by tensions. "After repeated efforts to privately resolve the situation, we have taken the decision to place the partnership under review," Adidas said in a statement.

In a recent Instagram message cited by US media outlets, West had accused Adidas of arranging marketing events and bringing back older styles without his approval. He also said the brand had hired staff to work under him and organized a "Yeezy Day" without his involvement. West also sparked controversy this week when he was pictured wearing a "White Lives Matter" T-shirt at Paris Fashion Week.

The artist was associated with Nike for years but broke away in 2013, lending his name to Adidas as they launched their first Yeezy shoe together in 2015 — a partnership that went on to make him a billionaire. Along with Beyonce, Stella McCartney and Pharrell Williams, West's has been one of the top names used by Adidas to boost sales, especially online.



This combination of pictures shows Kanye West in Washington, DC and the corporate logo of German sports equipment maker Adidas in Herzogenaurach, southern Germany. — AFP

Announcing the review, Adidas did not mention recent tensions, but said its partnership with the rapper had been "one of the most successful collaborations in our industry's history" and was "rooted in mutual respect and shared values". West has made headlines in recent years for his psychiatric problems, controversial comments about slavery and support for former US president Donald Trump.

"White Lives Matter"

He was widely criticized for wearing the "White Lives Matter" T-shirt, which was also shown as part of his collection in Paris. The phrase "Black Lives Matter" became a rallying cry for protests against racism and police brutality sparked by the 2020 murder of George Floyd. Asked why he wore it, West said in a Fox News interview Thursday: "I do certain things from a feeling, I like, just channel the energy, it just feels right." The Chicago-born star was for years part of one of the world's most famous power couples thanks to his marriage to reality TV star Kim Kardashian. But Kardashian filed for divorce last year after US media reported the pair were living separately and dealing with "regular relationship issues". West and retail brand Gap also announced an end to a partnership last month, with the artist saying he had plans to open his own stores.

The announcement capped months of social media complaints from West, which included accusations that he had been left out of the creative process and criticisms of marketing delays. "GAP left Ye no choice but to terminate their collaboration agreement because of GAP's substantial non-compliance," wrote the artist's lawyer, Nicholas Gravante, in a letter. — AFP



## Kuwaiti wildlife photographer wins first place in Int'l Montphoto contest



**K**uwaiti wildlife photographer Muhammad Murad was awarded first place in Montphoto international nature photography competition in Spain. Speaking to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Murad mentioned that his photo, Domination, was awarded the first place in the Birds category during the concluding ceremony taking place last Saturday night, in town of Loret de Mar, Girona. The photo depicts a Lappet Faced Vulture

attacking 15 White Backed Vultures and taking their fallen prey for its own, Murad described.

Murad, whose career in photography began in 2015, added that he took the award winning photo in a nature reserve in South Africa where he hid from dawn until dusk for several days until he was able to capture this captivating moment. This is the second time Murad won an award in this contest, the first being in

2016 in Audience Choice category. Montphoto is a prestigious international nature photography competition, taking place since 1997 and includes categories of mountains, mammals, birds, nature landscapes and so on. The competition is considered a meeting point for amateurs and professionals as some 1000 photographers were participating in this edition with 11,200 photos. — KUNA

## Protesters glue hands to cover of Picasso painting

**T**wo climate activists glued their hands to the perspex cover of Picasso's anti-war painting "Massacre in Korea" in a Melbourne art gallery on Sunday, police, protesters and the gallery said. The painting emerged unscathed. The black-clad activists were shown with their hands pressed against the painting in a room of the National Gallery of Victoria in images shared on social media by the Extinction Rebellion movement. A man wearing a T-shirt with the Extinction Rebellion symbol-an hourglass in a circle-stood alongside them. On the ground at their feet lay a black banner reading "Climate Chaos = War + Famine".

"It is believed three protesters entered the ground level of the gallery before a man and a woman glued themselves to a protective covering of a Picasso painting," said a Victoria Police spokeswoman. The protesters-a 49-year-old woman from New South Wales and a 59-year-old man from Melbourne-were "removed from the painting" more than an hour after their action was believed to have started, the police spokeswoman said.

The pair, along with a 49-year-old Melbourne man, "have been arrested and are assisting police with their enquiries", she said. Police later said they had been released "pending further inquiries". The gallery said it had called the police and closed the exhibition to the public during the protest.

"The protesters' hands were safely removed from the perspex with no harm to the work," said a spokesperson for the National Gallery of Victoria. The 1951 work by Pablo Picasso "shows the horrors of war", Extinction Rebellion Victoria said on its Facebook page. "Climate breakdown will mean an increase in conflict around the world. Now is the time for everyone and all institutions to stand up for action!" the group said. The painting was being shown on the final day of the gallery's "The Picasso Century" exhibition. — AFP

## Al-Rasheed Street: One of Baghdad's iconic, heritage roads

**A**l-Rasheed Street stretches about four kilometers from Bab Al-Sharqi area to Al-Midan region towards Al-Rusafa district situated in the heart of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. The street was initially called Khalil Pasha Street in reference to Khalil Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Baghdad at the time, who then named it Jadde Si. Subsequently, the

British changed its name after the occupation of Baghdad to Al-Nasr Street and Hindenburg Street.

Then it was named after the monarchy in Iraq in the year 1938, currently Al-Rasheed Street is named after the Abbasid Caliph Harun Al-Rashid. Both sides of the street are lined with old heritage buildings and mosques, some of

which were built in the 1920s, such as Haydar Khana Mosque, Murjan Mosque, Syed Sultan Ali Mosque and the Hussain Pasha Mosque, as well as many old cinemas that were abandoned at the present time as the Al-Najah Cinema, Al-Watani Cinema, Al-Zawraa Cinema, and Al-Khayam Cinema. — KUNA



## Sports

# Young top scores as Hawks sweep Bucks in Abu Dhabi

## Explosive point guard makes seven three-pointers

ABU DHABI: Trae Young top-scored with 31 points to lead the Atlanta Hawks to their second win in three days over the Milwaukee Bucks in pre-season action in Abu Dhabi on Saturday. The explosive point guard made seven three-pointers in the first half alone as the Hawks went on to dominate the 2021 NBA champions 118-109. Bucks' two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo, who admitted he felt "rusty" after Thursday's game in Abu Dhabi, did not take the floor, much to the disappointment of the fans in attendance. Also missing was Hawks' new recruit Dejounte Murray, who had top-scored for Atlanta on his team debut in Game 1.

The Bucks trailed by five points early on but a Jevon Carter three-point shot saw them snatch the momentum as they inched ahead 17-15 and ended the first quarter up one point on the Hawks. Young put on a show for the crowd in the second quarter as Atlanta entered halftime leading 63-55. The Hawks picked up where they left off and extended their lead to 21 points by the end of the third quarter. Late in the fourth, the crowd began chanting, "We want Giannis", but the 'Greek Freak', who wasn't even suited up, would not oblige.

### 'Big load'

"It's one of the hardest parts about these special trips, coming to Abu Dhabi, and how badly everybody wants to see, not just Giannis, see all these players, there's so many great players on both teams, but obviously Giannis is special," said Bucks head coach Mike Budenholzer. "But the other night he played, I thought he put on an amazing performance. He's played a lot this summer with the Greek national team and played internationally all over the world and he carries a big load.

"So it's our job to sometimes be the bad guys and



ABU DHABI: Milwaukee Bucks' guard Pat Connaughton (center) is guarded by Atlanta Hawks' center Clint Capela (right) and Atlanta Hawks' guard Tyrese Martin (left) during the NBA pre-season basketball match between the Milwaukee Bucks and the Atlanta Hawks on October 8, 2022. — AFP

we have to try and keep him healthy and in a good place for a long, long season." Young was pleased to have improved his performance on Saturday compared to Game 1 and says Abu Dhabi served the team well in building chemistry with the new additions to the Hawks roster.

"I don't think I shot the ball really well last game. I knew I could have shot the ball better, I did that

tonight and that's what pre-season is for, to get back into it. We've got a new team so I'm here just learning my new team-mates and just trying to see where we're at," said Young. The NBA Games in Abu Dhabi were the organisation's first ever to be staged in the Gulf region and Arab world. Two sold-out nights saw a combined 23,000 people attend the games at Etihad Arena.—AFP

## Mariners advance with MLB record comeback

NEW YORK: The Seattle Mariners pulled off the greatest road comeback in Major League Baseball playoff history on Saturday, rallying from seven runs down to defeat Toronto 10-9 and eliminate the Blue Jays. After falling behind 8-1 through five innings, the Mariners scored four runs in both the sixth and eighth innings to pull level at 9-9. In the ninth, Seattle's Cal Raleigh doubled and Adam Frazier smacked a two-out double off a pitch from Toronto's Jordan Romano that drove in Raleigh with the deciding run. "Gave me one that was right there," Frazier said. "I had a clue what it looked like and what was coming. I got a look and was able to belt it."

The victory gave the Mariners a 2-0 triumph over Toronto in their best-of-three American League wildcard round series and sent Seattle into a best-of-five division series matchup against the Houston Astros that begins Tuesday in Texas. Only twice in MLB post-season history had a team fought back to win from seven runs down. In 2008, Boston beat visiting Tampa Bay 8-7 in the American League Championship Series, and in 1929, the then-Philadelphia A's rallied from an 8-0 hole to beat the visiting Chicago Cubs 10-8.

In the other AL wildcard series, Dominican rookie outfielder Oscar Gonzalez smashed a solo home run in the 15th inning off Corey Kluber to give Cleveland a 1-0 victory over Tampa Bay, eliminating the Rays 2-0. "It was incredible," Gonzalez said. "I knew how they were going to attack me so I was looking for that breaking pitch and I was able to execute." The Guardians, the youngest team in the major leagues, won their first playoff series since 2016 and will begin a best-of-five series against the New York Yankees on Tuesday in New York.

A combined 16 pitchers, eight for both clubs, delivered 39 strikeouts in the longest scoreless playoff game in MLB history. At Toronto, Teoscar Hernandez hit a two-run homer in the second inning and a solo homer in the fourth as the Blue Jays jumped ahead 8-1. But Carlos Santana had a three-run homer in the sixth to begin the comeback and J.P. Crawford smacked a three-run double in the eighth to pull Seattle even, setting up the ninth-inning drama.—AFP



TOULON: Toulon's South African wing Cheslin Kolbe jumps to grab the ball above Brive's players during the French Top 14 rugby union match between Rugby Club Toulonnais (Toulon) and Club Athletique Brive Correze Limousin on October 8, 2022. — AFP

## 'Driving force' Kolbe's quick-fire score helps Toulon to Brive romp

PARIS: Toulon head coach Franck Azema said Cheslin Kolbe is a "driving force" for the team after the South Africa winger made a try-scoring return from injury in Saturday's 47-0 French Top 14 hammering of Brive. Kolbe, who had been out since mid-July with a fractured jaw, scored after just 115 seconds as the three-time European champions moved up to second, six points behind league leaders Toulouse.

Brive's Paul Abadie was shown a red card just after the interval for a dangerous tackle on 28-year-old Kolbe, which the winger survived unhurt despite landing on his head. "When you're a player of his calibre and you don't make any concessions with your involvement, it's a driving force for everyone," Azema told reporters. "It's great to see, tonight he didn't see much ball, we have to give him

more," the Frenchman added. Kolbe started on the right wing after missing the opening five games of the season.

Less than two minutes after kick-off on the Mediterranean coast, Rugby World Cup winner Toulon beat two defenders with a subtle dummy to claim his first try since May. Toulon led 21-0 at half-time as Fiji centre Waisea Nayacalevu and Duncan Paia'aua, named in Samoa's November Tests squad this week, also scored. Abadie was sent for an early shower six minutes after the break before the home side crossed for four second-half tries. France captain Charles Ollivon, winger Aymeric Luc, Nayacalevu for a second time, and Italy No. 8 Sergio Parisse touched down.

Earlier, Kolbe's compatriot Cobus Reinach scored in his first league game back from a shoulder operation but Montpellier lost 26-13 at Castres in a re-run of last season's Top 14 final. Reinach, 32, who suffered the injury in April but played once for the Springboks last month, crossed in the first half before being replaced with half an hour to play. He was one of 12 changes by Montpellier head coach Philippe Saint-Andre after last weekend's home loss to Toulouse.—AFP

## Wales, Canada and Italy taste victory at Rugby World Cup

WHANGAREI: Keira Bevan landed a penalty in the 85th minute to seal a dramatic 18-15 win for Wales over Scotland at the women's Rugby World Cup, while Canada and Italy also tasted victory in Whangarei on Sunday. The first full round of matches at the tournament finished on a climactic note, as Wales held possession through 25 phases and earned a penalty, which replacement halfback Bevan calmly slotted before being embraced by team-mates. It was easily the closest match of the opening weekend, with Italy beating the United States 22-10 and Canada overwhelming Japan 41-5 earlier on Sunday.

It followed comfortable wins for tournament heavyweights England, France and New Zealand in Auckland on Saturday. Wales nearly paid heavily for their indiscipline, playing most of the final quarter with 14 players after prop Cara Hope and winger Jasmine Joyce were shown yellow cards. Scotland capitalized, recovering from their halftime deficit of 15-5 to come level at 15-15 through two late tries to winger Megan Gaffney.

Wales, who conceded 18 penalties to five in a nig-



WHANGAREI: Scotland's Megan Gaffney dives for a try to level the score during the New Zealand 2021 Women's Rugby World Cup Pool A match between Wales and Scotland on October 9, 2022. — AFP

gly affair, found some discipline and cohesion to march up the field in a compelling final passage to set up the win. Wales back Hannah Jones said relief washed over the players when Bevan slotted the winning goal. "Brilliant kick from Keira there. I had pure confidence, I knew she was going to get it

over," Jones said. "We've got to be disciplined for the next game, but brilliant shift from the girls, I can't fault them." Scotland will rue a poor goalkicking performance from five-eighth Helen Nelson, who missed all five shots at goal, including several from close range.—AFP

### News in brief

#### Stoke stun Championship leaders

LONDON: Sheffield United crashed to a surprise 3-1 defeat against Stoke as Phil Jagielka returned to haunt the Championship leaders on Saturday. Jagielka made over 300 appearances for United across two spells and is well into the twilight of his career. But the veteran centre-back reminded the Blades of his enduring class as he scored one and set up another, recording a goal and an assist in the same game for the first time in his career. The 40-year-old teed up centre-back partner Ben Wilmot to fire Stoke into an early lead. After the Blades leveled through Rhian Brewster's first goal since January, it was Jagielka who restored Stoke's lead. The evergreen Jagielka ended a rather longer wait for a goal, notching for the first time since April 2019.

#### Fritz wins Japan Open

TOKYO: Taylor Fritz beat his friend and US rival Frances Tiafoe in two closely fought sets to win the Japan Open on Sunday, saying he had to play his "absolute best" to win. Third-seeded Fritz claimed the title 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/2), and will break into the top 10 for the first time on Monday with a new ranking of eight. The 24-year-old described his victory as "really crazy", coming immediately after a week of Covid-19 hotel quarantine in Seoul that forced him to withdraw from the Korea Open. But his first words on court after winning were for fourth-seeded Tiafoe, also aged 24, who has been in the spotlight since he stunned Rafael Nadal to reach the US Open semi-finals earlier this year. "First off, I wanna congratulate Frances on a great week, I mean, he's been on fire recently, and I had to play my absolute best to beat him today," Fritz said.

#### Martinez overpowers Ancajas

LOS ANGELES: Argentina's undefeated Fernando Martinez retained the International Boxing Federation junior bantamweight title on Saturday, defeating former champion Jervin Ancajas of the Philippines by unanimous decision. Martinez defended the crown he took from Ancajas in February by judges' scores of 119-109, 118-110 and 118-110 in the championship rematch at Carson, California. "This was a validation of the first fight," Martinez said through a translator. "Definitely the training was very hard. I prepared really well." Martinez improved to 15-0 while Filipino southpaw Ancajas fell to 33-3 with two draws and 22 knock-outs. "I'm ready for anyone. My record shows I'm a champion," Martinez said.

#### Petro Luanda thrash Cape Town

JOHANNESBURG: Brazilian Tiago Azulao starred for Petro Luanda of Angola on Saturday as they won 3-0 at Cape Town City of South Africa to virtually clinch a CAF Champions League group place. The veteran captain and forward set up the first goal on 37 minutes for compatriot Gleison Moreira in the last 32 first leg. Azulao converted a 48th-minute penalty to double the lead and punished a Cape Town blunder to complete the surprisingly comfortable victory with a tap-in on 63 minutes. He also scored in each leg of a preliminary round victory over Black Bulls of Mozambique last month. Azulao, who joined Petro in 2020 from Cypriot club Olympiakos Nicosia, was the leading scorer in the 2021-2022 Champions League with seven goals.

#### Predators beat Sharks again

PRAGUE: Nino Niederreiter's two second-period goals handed the Nashville Predators a 3-2 win over the San Jose Sharks in their second season-opening clash in Prague on Saturday. On Friday, the Predators beat the Sharks 4-1 as the NHL started the season in Europe for the first time since 2019 following a break due to the coronavirus pandemic. Luke Kunin, traded to the Sharks from Nashville in the summer, opened the score 14:24 into the game with a close-range rebound of his own shot on a power play. Niederreiter leveled for the Predators 04:35 into an eventful second period with a rebound of Ryan Johansen's shot. But the Sharks took the lead back 10 seconds later as captain Logan Couture slammed Steven Lorentz's pass into Kevin Lankinen's goal.

#### MLS suspends Atlanta's Sosa

NEW YORK: Major League Soccer issued a three-match suspension to Atlanta United midfielder Santiago Sosa on Saturday and fined him an undisclosed amount for using a homophobic slur during a match. The 23-year-old Argentine midfielder uttered the remark on October 1 in Atlanta's match against the New England Revolution. Sosa will begin his ban on Sunday in Atlanta's final match of the 2022 campaign against New York City FC and miss the first two regular-season matches of the 2023 MLS season. "Atlanta United is aware of Santiago Sosa's use of offensive language during last week's match," the team said in a statement. "The club does not condone the use of harmful or disrespectful language towards any person. Santiago is extremely remorseful and personally apologized to the New England Revolution player. He has also requested additional resources from MLS' Players Association to grow from this incident." — From AFP

## Sports

# South Sudan's women breaking health taboos through football

## FIFA's 'Health and Education through Football'

**PARIS:** Female footballers in South Sudan are breaking down "taboo topics" relating to their personal health thanks to a pilot project organized in the young nation. "Girls and women's football, it's not just football, giving access to play the game, but it's really tackling some of these social challenges or taboo topics," Arijana Demirovic, the head of world governing body FIFA's women's football development, told AFP.

In South Sudan, girls "struggle quite a lot around the topic of menstruation, menstrual hygiene and also access to sanitary products," Bosnian-born Demirovic pointed out. FIFA estimate that 70 percent of women in the East African nation which gained independence in 2011 after six years of brutal civil war do not have access to hygiene products, preventing girls from regularly

attending school and practicing sports.

Demirovic and her team visited the capital Juba several times, holding workshops with members of the national team, and distributing hygienic products and kits. "We had to understand what they do for hygiene, what they know and what they use as traditional products," said the 33-year-old. "In Africa, too often young girls use inappropriate fabrics, mattress sponges or pieces of cutout fabric," Senegalese Yaya Helene Ndiaye, president of the NGO Kitmbaa, which accompanies FIFA in South Sudan, told AFP.

### 'Empowering girls'

"I was there from the first meeting," South Sudanese international midfielder Esther Luis, who plays for Munuki FC in Juba, told AFP. "We were

really happy that this type of project came to our country. I really appreciated it. In our culture, it's not always easy to talk about this kind of subject. "While most of my teammates understand that it's just part of life, in rural areas it can sometimes be difficult to talk about."

Through football "we can reach them," said 19-year-old Luis of girls who come from rural areas. "When their teammates explain it to them, they feel less embarrassed." Demirovic said she has been encouraged by the "positive feedback" that FIFA's 'Menstrual Health and Education through Football' project has received and its success in "empowering girls to take care of their own health". "A lot of the girls told us that they use the sanitary pads, it also solves a question of budget for their families," she said.

"They have shared information with their siblings."

She added: "They've seen quite a lot of benefits of it and seeing how some of these girls' lives have changed in a very positive way in a very short time. "Coaches from other member associations have also approached us, not necessarily having access to the sanitary products but really making sure that girls do get to have this education on their menstrual cycle and how it impacts them and their performance."

Demirovic added that NGOs working in South Sudan are already helping girls to produce reusable pads themselves. "In the future they could even produce them locally, at low cost, and this would also help them in terms of economic empowerment," she said. "That's a bit of a next step within the project to make sure that this type of initiatives are sustainable. "South Sudan is a positive example of what football can do". —AFP



## Special program for disabled kids

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Special Olympics and Society of Families of Disabled persons organized the fourth children's program with the participation of 80 children (aged 3-7) from 14 nurseries, kindergarten schools that care for the mentally disabled. The event was held in the presence of the National Director of Kuwait Special Olympics Rihab Buresli, Honorary Chairwoman of the Disabled Club and representatives of participating parties. Buresli said sports activity is very important to help mentally challenged children to practice sports. She lauded the support of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), which contributed to the success of the program. She also thanked Public Authority for Sport, Kuwait TV and all participants.



## Sixth round of Kuwait Premier Football League

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The sixth round of Kuwait Zain Premier Football League was characterized by draws. On Thursday, Al-Arabi Club drew 0-0 with Al-Sahel, which is at the bottom of the table. Arabi started the match in search of a goal, but all attacks were kept in check by Sahel's solid defense, and the first half ended goalless. Arabi in the second half kept possession most of the time, though Sahel created scoring opportunities in the latter part of the second half, but the nets remained unshaken as the referee blew the final whistle.

In the second match on Friday, Al-Nasr was able to snatch 3 points when they played Jahra and won 2-1. The goals of Nasr were scored by Mohammad Duham, while Jahra's goal was scored by Talal Al-Ajmi. Jahra scored first in the 21st minute and remained ahead in the first half. In the second half, Nasr was different as it started attacking better, and Duham was able to score the equalizer. In the 72nd minute, Duham scored the second goal from close range.

On Saturday, Kuwait drew 2-2 with Kazma in an exciting match. Kazma scored first in the 15th minute, while Kuwait scored the equalizer in the 26th minute, adding the second goal in the 42nd minute. Kazma substitute Omar Hubaiter succeeded in the 82nd minute to score the equalizer. The match between Qadisiya and Salmiya ended in a 1-1 draw. Qadisiya had several chances to score and win, but players' recklessness dominated their performance. Salmiya scored its goal very early, in the second minute. In the 33rd minute, Qadisiya defender Khalid Ibrahim scored the equalizer.

## Verstappen targets F1 domination after second world title

**SUZUKA:** Max Verstappen said he was capable of dominating Formula One for years to come after clinching his second straight world title at the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday. The Red Bull driver won a dramatic, rain-shortened race in Suzuka and claimed the championship when his nearest rival Charles Leclerc was relegated to third by a five-second penalty. The flying Dutchman said it was a "crazy feeling" to lift the trophy for a second time - then set his sights on ruling the sport for years to come.

"If I have a competitive car, I'm confident that we can keep this going," said the 25-year-old, who has won 12 of 18 races this season. "It also depends on what the competition is going to come up with. I really believe in this group and I really hope that in the coming years we can enjoy a lot more wins and potentially of course championships."

Verstappen was only informed he had retained his title midway through the post-race TV interview, and even the driver himself was not sure. Ferrari's Leclerc crossed the line second in front of Red Bull's Sergio

Perez, but he was hit with a penalty after squeezing Perez in the final chicane and being deemed to have gained an advantage by leaving the track.

"I made a mistake and tried to minimise it," said Leclerc, who led the championship early in the season. "Huge congratulations to Max and Red Bull. Max has been incredible and it's a title fully deserved." The amended result gave Verstappen an unassailable 113-point lead over Perez and made him only the third driver after Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel to clinch the title with four races to spare.

"I was told I was the world champion, we celebrated and then people told me 'no, you're still missing a point'," he said of the post-race confusion. "Eventually we had enough points so we were world champion again." The Japanese Grand Prix was staged for the first time since 2019 because of the pandemic, but the race got off to a chaotic start in heavy rain. Leclerc was quicker off the line than pole sitter Verstappen, who admitted he made "a terrible start", before the Dutchman regained the lead with a brave overtake around the outside of turn one. "It was very close but that's what people like to see," he said.

### Hamilton praise

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz spun out on the first lap and the Williams of Alex Albon broke down prompting a safety car. A red flag soon followed and

forced the drivers back to the pit lane for almost two hours. Verstappen resumed on a rolling start ahead of Leclerc and Perez and extended his lead with ease once the safety car dived back into the pits and track conditions began to improve.

"Congratulations to Max, he's done exactly the job he needed to do to win his second title," said seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who Verstappen pipped to the championship a year ago in controversial circumstances. Verstappen was 46 points behind Leclerc after three races but went on to dominate, winning 11 of the next 15 grands prix. And he is hungry for more. "I still want to try to win more races because with the car that we have now, you have to try to take advantage of that because you don't know if you're ever going to have that again in the years to come," he said.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner paid tribute. "Carrying that number one this year, he's done it with a lot of pride," he said. French driver Pierre Gasly reacted furiously after a frightening moment when he nearly hit a tractor on the track in rain and poor visibility early in the race. AlphaTauri's Gasly said he could have been killed by the vehicle, which was deployed to recover Sainz's car. It brought back painful memories of the tragic 2014 race at Suzuka, when another French driver Jules Bianchi died after colliding with a recovery vehicle in poor conditions. —AFP



## 34th Arab Basketball Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The 16th round of the 34th Arab Basketball Clubs Championship will kick off on Monday with four matches. Kuwait will meet Yemen's Mina by 7:00 pm, following a match between Bahrain's Ahli and Iraq's Dijla University (5:00 pm). Also, there will be a match between Kazma and



Widad Bufarik (Algeria) (3:00 pm), while the opening match will be by 1:00 pm between Egypt's Al-Ittihad Alexandria and Qatar's Gharrafa. The second half of the round of 16th will be played on Tuesday.

The conclusion of the preliminaries saw Al-Ittihad Alexandria lost to Kuwait 74-72, while Al-Ahli Egypt defeated Lebanon's Al-Riyadh 88-71. Bahrain's Ahli defeated Oman's Bashaal 68-62; Gharrafa beat Mina 78-73 while Jahra lost to Beirut 84-88. Meanwhile 16 clubs are participating in the third round of the 34th Arab Basketball Clubs Championship. The championship produced one of its surprises as Al-Sadd (from Qatar) defeated Kazma (Kuwait) 90-71 in third group.

Jahra (Kuwait) overcame Algeria's Widad Boufarik 75-63 in the fourth group. Beirut

(Lebanon) defeated Iraq's Dijla University 84-80. Jahra and Beirut now have 4 points while Widad and Dijla remain with 2 points from two losses (winner gets two points, loser gets one). Kazma's loss to Al-Sadd in the third group left Al-Sadd with four points, while Kazma now have five points. Oman's Bashaer and Bahrain's Ahli have 3 points each.

The match between Ahli Benghazi of Libya and Syria's Ahli Aleppo went to extra time. Libya's team won 79-71 - raising their points total to 4 in the first group, while Ahli Aleppo have 3. In the second group, Ahli of Egypt continued their run. They defeated Qatar's Gharrafa 108-59, followed by a decisive win by Lebanon's Al-Riyadh over Yemen's Mina 103-54. The winners now have 4 points each, while Gharrafa and Mina have 2.



## Japan win AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Japan became champions of the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022

that was held in Kuwait from September 27th until October 8th. Japan defeated Iran 3-2 in the final match that was held on Saturday. This is the 4th title for Japan as they won in 2006, 2012, 2016.

President of Asian Football Confederation Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa has lauded Kuwait for hosting a successful Asian Futsal Championship. He appreciated the efforts of Kuwait Association and the organizing committee. "After four years, we saw the return



of Futsal in Asia due to solidarity of member federations, and this is clear evidence that the game is in good condition and on its way to recovery," he said.

Sheikh Salman Al-Khalifa congratulated Japan for winning the Championship. He also commended the performance of Iran during the entire tournament. The match was up to expectations. Japanese closely defended all parts of the court, yet the Iranians were able to escape the Japanese tactic and

scored the first goal in the 15th minute. The goal was scored by Saeed Abbasi.

Japan did not take long before scoring the equalizer in the 16th minute. In the second half, Japan scored their second goal in the 27th minute. Iran tried to equalize but received the third goal when Abbasi attempted a pass in mid court, but it went into the empty goal by mistake in the 40th minute. Iran's second goal in the final minute did not matter as the match ended.

## Sports

# Militao takes Real Madrid top of La Liga, Atletico scrape win

## Correa's brace gives Atletico Madrid a win

MADRID: Eder Militao's early goal earned Real Madrid a comfortable 1-0 win over Getafe on Saturday to take them top of La Liga. Carlo Ancelotti's side lead Barcelona by three points, ahead of Celta Vigo's visit to Camp Nou on Sunday. Elsewhere Angel Correa's brace gave Atletico Madrid a 2-1 win over Girona, while new Sevilla coach Jorge Sampaoli earned a creditable 1-1 draw against third-place Athletic Bilbao.

Real Madrid secured their first clean sheet of the season in La Liga at the Coliseum as they took home the three points. "It's clear that we want to score more than one, two, or three, but keeping the clean sheet here gave us the win," said defender Dani Carvajal. "Winning by the minimum and keeping the clean sheet makes it more valuable not to concede." Karim Benzema did not train on Friday and was not included in Real Madrid's match-day squad. The club hope the French forward will be at full strength for the Clasico next weekend.

The striker failed to score in the two matches he has played since his return from a thigh injury and it didn't take Los Blancos long to move in front without him. Militao headed home from Luka Modric's perfect corner in the fourth minute. It was the ideal way for the Brazilian defender to celebrate his 100th appearance for the club. Borja Mayoral should have levelled against his former side but was unable to turn home Fabrizio Angileri's cross-shot as Getafe bit back after Madrid's intense start.

Madrid put together a slick team move before the break which ended with David Soria saving a Rodrygo header, before Vinicius Junior drew a penalty—or so he thought. The Brazilian was clumsily felled in the area by Luis Milla but VAR spotted the ball had gone out of play in the build-up. Madrid were foiled again before the hour mark when Rodrygo dinked the ball over Soria following a ricochet into

his path, but the goal was disallowed for offside. Getafe did their best to keep Madrid at arm's length, with Vinicius at his silky best on the ball, albeit too far from goal to do more damage.

With Rodrygo showing his talent too, it will be hard for Ancelotti to work out whom he might drop to fit Benzema back into the side. "The Clasico is still far away, we have another game (against Shakhtar in the Champions League), so I was able to rest players who were tired. Karim, (Ferland) Mendy, maybe others in Warsaw on Tuesday," said Ancelotti. "The team deserved to win here, we could have scored more, we kept a clean sheet. These are good things. We weren't as accurate up front but we're very satisfied. The team was much more solid, strong in duels, above all, in the air."

### Correa double

Argentine forward Correa was at his explosive best to help Atletico, fourth, recover from a chastening defeat by Club Brugge in the Champions League in midweek. "We are working to get higher up in La Liga, which is a complicated competition," said Correa. "The Champions League is coming next and we want to win to bring our fans happiness."

Antoine Griezmann started the game at the Metropolitan, amid reports in Spain that Atletico and Barcelona have settled on a transfer fee to make his loan move permanent. He played a pivotal role in Atletico's opener, with his clipped cross finished by Correa at the back post. Then the Argentine striker intercepted Girona goalkeeper Juan Carlos's pass early in the second half and stroked home his second. Rodrigo Riquelme, on loan from Atletico, pulled Girona back into the game with a deflected drive from distance against his parent club, but they could not find the leveller. At the Ramon Sanchez-Pizjuan, Sampaoli started his second stint at the Sevilla helm with an exciting battle against



GETAFE: Real Madrid's Brazilian defender Eder Militao vies with Getafe's Spanish goalkeeper David Soria (right) during the Spanish League football match between Getafe CF and Real Madrid CF on October 8, 2022. —AFP

Ernesto Valverde's third-place Athletic Bilbao. Sevilla came out flying and Oliver Torres slid home after little more than three minutes. Mikel Vesga leveled the scores with a long-

range drive in the second half. Sevilla remain 17th but under Sampaoli, who coached them in the 2016-17 season, they will hope to claw their way up the table. —AFP

## Milan level with leaders Napoli

MILAN: AC Milan bounced back from their midweek humbling at Chelsea by comfortably seeing off Juventus 2-0 on Saturday and moving level on points with Serie A leaders Napoli. Italian champions Milan showed no signs of a European hangover as they beat fierce rivals Juve in front of a packed San Siro thanks to goals either side of half-time from Fikayo Tomori and Brahim Diaz.

"We were timid in London... today we were more of a team and we worked really hard together. That's what we need to do in all our matches," said Pioli. Stefano Pioli's team are one of three on 20 points with Napoli and also Atalanta, who travel to Udinese on Sunday afternoon with the chance to claim the outright lead.

Milan sit third after a dominant display which should give them some cause for optimism ahead of Tuesday night, when they try to gain revenge on

Chelsea in Champions League Group E. For Juve it was yet another poor performance and result, a second league defeat of the campaign which leaves them in eighth, seven points off the pace. "I think there's little to say after a match like that," said Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri. "We played all right in the first half and then we capitulated. There were too many basic errors."

### Hernandez key

Theo Hernandez, who missed Milan's Stamford Bridge hammering, was key to Milan taking the lead. His challenge on Cuadrado led to a corner which the France full-back took, and Tomori lashed in his first goal of the season after Olivier Giroud's effort thwacked him in the chest. It was as much as Milan deserved.

Rafael Leao had already struck the post twice for the hosts, and although Juve did look menacing on the break they lacked the delicate touch of suspended Angel Di Maria. Dusan Vlahovic was particularly out of sorts and it was his poor pass which led to Diaz doubling the hosts' lead eight minutes after the break. Diaz pounced on Vlahovic's



MILAN: AC Milan's Spanish midfielder Brahim Diaz celebrates scoring his team's second goal during the Italian Serie A football match between AC Milan and Juventus at the San Siro stadium on October 8, 2022. —AFP

lazy ball and charged up the field on a lightning run, skipping past Adrien Rabiot and Leonardo Bonucci before forcing a powerful finish past Wojciech Szczesny.

Diaz was scooped up onto Leao's shoulders while the more than 70,000 fans packed into football's La Scala celebrated with the fervour of a crowd who knew they had as good as claimed the

points. Juve tried to fight back as Pioli switched things up ahead of the Chelsea rematch but the best they could muster was a Moise Kean shot which was deflected for a corner. Milan would have finished even more emphatic winners had Szczesny not done well to stop a marauding Pierre Kalulu from crowning a commanding display with his first goal of the season. —AFP

## Dortmund snatch draw with Bayern

DORTMUND: Anthony Modeste scored four minutes into added time as Dortmund fought back to snatch a 2-2 home draw with Bayern Munich on Saturday. Modeste, who has been heavily criticized for a lack of output since moving from Cologne earlier in the season, came off the bench in the 70th minute and set up a 74th minute goal for teenage forward Youssoufa Moukoko.

Modeste then headed in the equalizer at the last possible moment from a superb cross from defender Nico Schlotterbeck. Bringing his children onto the field immediately after the game, Modeste told Sky he had "copped plenty of criticism" since making the move to Dortmund. "I complained during the week that I wasn't getting enough crosses - that's why I was a little surprised (when Schlotterbeck's cross came towards me)."

There was no shortage of spite in the early stages of a fixture which has been increasingly fiery in recent years, with three yellow cards in the first 14 minutes including one to Jude Bellingham for a foul on close friend and former England age-group team-mate Jamal Musiala. Bayern were reduced to ten men in the 90th minute when Kingsley Coman picked up a second yellow for a challenge on Karim Adeyemi.

In the 33rd minute, Musiala cut the ball back to Leon Goretzka at the penalty arc and the midfielder - who spent six years at Dortmund's arch rivals Schalke - drilled in the first goal. After 53 minutes, a falling Musiala set up Bayern's second, skidding a pass to former Man City forward Leroy Sane who scored his fourth goal of the season. The home side saw a ray of hope in the 74th minute when Moukoko, 17, became the youngest goalscorer in 'Der Klassiker' history.

Modeste scuffed a golden chance to equalize in the 83rd minute, but he spared his blushes ten minutes later, securing Dortmund their first draw of the season. After the match, Bayern manager Julian Nagelsmann complained that Bellingham had not seen a second yellow card when he con-



DORTMUND: Dortmund's German forward Youssoufa Moukoko (2nd right) scores the 1-2 during the German first division Bundesliga football match between BVB Borussia Dortmund and FC Bayern Munich on October 8, 2022. —AFP

nected with Alphonso Davies' face in the first half. "There is a suspicion of concussion. That's not surprising, given there was a kick to the face," Nagelsmann told Sky.

Saying the draw was "a fair result", Nagelsmann turned the focus on his own side, saying "we could have closed it down, but we didn't." Dortmund manager Edin Terzic lauded his team's "deserved" draw, saying "we threw everything forward" and "needed every single person" to decide the match. Bellingham finished the game as captain for the third successive week, after Mats Hummels was subbed off at halftime.

### Leverkusen win on Alonso debut

Earlier on Saturday, Jeremie Frimpong scored twice to help Bayer Leverkusen to a conclusive 4-0 win over Schalke in Xabi

ing extra time. After the draw in Frankfurt, Italy coach Roberto Mancini said: "I knew that we'd get either England or France, but that's OK. It's a decent five-team group, no easy matches, all ones we can have a go at."

Italy will also play North Macedonia, the country which knocked them out of the World Cup in the playoffs in Palermo in March. "It's one of those matches that you get every now and again, and as we saw in Palermo we have to take every match seriously, even those that seem the simplest," Mancini told RAI Sport. France, who will defend their world title in Qatar, were drawn to face the Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland in Group B while Spain's oppo-

nents in Group A will include Scotland and Erling Haaland's Norway.

France have bad memories of playing the Irish, who they only beat to reach the 2010 World Cup finals thanks to what appeared to be a handball by Thierry Henry. "It's a pretty heavy group, a group with value," France coach Didier Deschamps said. "We'll have to win and be better than our opponents, as usual." Portugal and Cristiano Ronaldo, who will be 39 by the time the finals kick off, go into a Group J including Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iceland. Croatia, the losing World Cup finalists in 2018, are in Group D with World Cup qualifiers Wales as well as Turkey. —AFP

## PSG rescue point; Ramos sees red for 28th time

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain salvaged a point with 10 men as they drew 0-0 at struggling Reims on Saturday but still increased their Ligue 1 lead after Marseille lost 2-1 at home to last-place Ajaccio. Both PSG and Marseille rested starters with an eye on midweek Champions League games and their showdown next Sunday.

Marseille came a cropper, despite Dimitri Payet's 100th Ligue 1 goal. PSG escaped with a draw, despite Sergio Ramos' 28th career red card. PSG coach Christophe Galtier made five changes from the team that drew 1-1 away to Benfica in midweek and his side spent much of the first 40 minutes on the back foot. Reims pressed but struggled to create clear-cut chances while PSG were dangerous on the counter-attack.

Yehvann Diouf flew to his right to save a drive by Fabian Ruiz and then blocked a powerful shot from Kylian Mbappe, when the only one of the three PSG superstar strikers to start, broke clear after 33 minutes. Two minutes later, Marshall Munetsi spun in the PSG box but Gianluigi Donnarumma, the hero against Benfica in midweek, saved the low shot at full stretch. Four minutes before half time, Ramos argued himself into two quick yellow cards as PSG mobbed referee Pierre Gaillouste to protest a free kick against Marco Verratti.

"I know Sergio Ramos well, I am not convinced that the insult that came out was in the direction of the referee. It is a training-ground insult that you hear a lot on the field in Spain. The referee took it personally and sent him off," said Galtier Reims, who had collected six red cards, comfortably the most in Ligue 1 this season, struggled to exploit their advantage. Abner Zeneli drew a sharp save from Donnarumma at the start of the second half but then the home team ran out of steam.

Neymar came on and shot wide when clean through. The game ended with a string of fouls followed by bad-tempered confrontations as Neymar, Achraf Hakimi, who had come on in the 88th minute, and Mbappe, as well as Andrew Gravillon and Bradley Locko of Reims collected added-time yellow cards. "There was a lot of tension, I can't explain it," said Galtier. "On both sides, with a lot of duels, clashes, discussions. Neither team was in control."

Earlier Marseille crashed back to earth after crushing Sporting Lisbon 4-1 in midweek and lost for the first time in Ligue 1 this season. "We didn't imagine that we would remain unbeaten all season but it's certainly hard to lose at home to the last-placed team," said coach Igor Tudor, who said he was "very angry". Tudor made seven changes to the starting lineup that beat Sporting. His team took the lead after 15 minutes when Dimitri Payet converted a penalty after a handball by Ajaccio defender Cedric Avinel. —AFP



REIMS: Paris Saint-Germain's Spanish defender Sergio Ramos (left) receives a red card from French referee Pierre Gaillouste (right) during the French L1 football match between Stade de Reims and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on October 8, 2022. —AFP

## Italy to face England in Euro 2024 qualifying

FRANKFURT: Reigning champions Italy were drawn on Sunday to face England, the team they beat in the final last year, and Ukraine in qualifying for the 2024 European Championship. Euro 2024, hosted by Germany, will be Italy's chance to regain some pride after they failed to qualify for the World Cup finals which kick off in Qatar in six weeks' time.

Italy beat hosts England in a penalty shootout at Wembley last year after the match ended 1-1 follow-



DOHA: Photo shows a view of the Hilton Doha Hotel in the Qatari capital Doha, which will serve as the base camp for the Croatia national team during the 2022 World Cup. —AFP

## Hey big spenders: Qatar woos the rich with luxury World Cup

### \$4,000-a-night hotel rooms and \$26,000 for a 'head of state' suite

DUBAI: With deluxe match packages selling for thousands of dollars and five-star hotels doing a brisk trade, a sheen of glamour coats Qatar's World Cup despite football's working-class roots. A penchant for luxury in the energy-rich Gulf state, which has one of the world's highest GDPs per head, has rubbed off on an unusually high-end edition of a tournament for the masses. If you're able to spring \$4,950 for a VIP ticket to a group game, you can enjoy drinks, a six-course meal and entertainment at a lounge overlooking the halfway line at Lusail Stadium, north of Doha.

Those with bottomless budgets in the resource-rich region have attractive accommodation options too, with one third-party site offering \$4,000-a-night hotel rooms and \$26,000 for a "head of state" suite—with a 30-night minimum stay. Things are a little different for ordinary fans. Cheaper options include a steel bed in a shared room in the semi-desert near the capital at \$84 a night, or accommodation on docked cruise ships from \$179 to \$800.

Stadium crowds will include Qatar's migrant laborers, who were offered some tickets at 40 riyals (\$11) to watch a sport whose players and core supporters are traditionally blue-collar. According to Ronan Evain, executive director of Football Supporters Europe, the onus on "premium" experiences has left some fans cold. "It's clear that there's a focus on a type of premium tourism, but the vast majority that go to a World Cup are middle-class," Evain told AFP. "They're not the sort of people who can afford to stay on a cruise liner at \$5,000 a week."

#### 'Solution is to cancel'

The hordes of ticketless fans that usually descend on a World Cup will be reduced in number, as only ticket holders and up to three guests each can enter Qatar during the November 20 - December 18 tournament. Many supporters will stay elsewhere in the Gulf and board the estimated 100-200 World Cup shuttle flights a day from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Oman.

Even those options do not come cheap. In Dubai, an hour's flight away and expected to be a major destination, an official World Cup package costs \$1,500 for four nights in a shared room, including one return flight to Doha but no match tickets. The Qatar World Cup is at least compact, with all eight stadiums in and around Doha—eradicating the cross-country travel needed at previous editions such as Brazil 2014 or Russia 2018.

"The problem with the World Cup in Qatar is that there are very few alternatives," said Evain. "At a World Cup in Brazil or Russia, you can take a train, hire a car, stay 200 kilometers away or come just for the day of the match. "None of that is possible in Qatar. Either you can't find accommodation or accommodation is too expensive," he added. "People are looking for a solution and for quite a few people the solution is to cancel, because they can't afford this sort of budget."

#### High-end experiences

However, Sue Holt, executive director of Expat

Sport, the UAE agent for the official World Cup package provider, said there was a range of accommodation "to suit most budgets". The United States, Britain, France, Mexico, China and India were among the countries where fans were showing most interest in packages for the UAE, she said. "Sports tourists generally tend to be older and travel in groups, which can be families, friends or sporting groups," she said.

"Part of the appeal of this type of travel is that it is a collective, shared experience watching your favorite team or player together." These supporters "will include people who have never ventured to this region before", added Holt. According to Robert Mogielnicki, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, hosting the World Cup is about "prestige" for Qatar, a monarchy of just 2.8 million people, overwhelmingly expatriate workers.

"What the Qataris don't want to happen is get stuck with an oversupply of tourism infrastructure for a segment of tourists unlikely to be a regular, consistent presence in the country," he said, explaining the limited options. "I suspect that the Qataris will keep looking to attract wealthier tourists from elite circles," added Mogielnicki, who is also adjunct assistant professor at Georgetown University and George Washington University. "Lots of the momentum behind regional tourism projects, especially in Saudi Arabia, does seem to focus on high-end, luxury experiences these days." —AFP

## Real, Juve, Barca not giving up on Super League

MADRID: The main advocates of the Super League are not giving up. Real Madrid president Florentino Perez, defended the project last Sunday and was followed by his Juventus counterpart Andrea Agnelli and then Barcelona chief Joan Laporta. A court decision in 2023 will be crucial in determining the project's future.

"There are no football clubs among the ten richest entities in the world, we must be doing something very wrong in old Europe," Perez explained. Perez led a group of 12 major European clubs into the Super League project in April 2021 but it vanished a few days after it was announced after pressure from fans and authorities. The only clubs that have tried to keep alive a league that would be direct competition for the Champions League are Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus.

Perez compared European football with tennis. "What is the point of depriving the fans of the big matches? Nadal and Federer met 40 times. Nadal and Djokovic, 59, is it boring? Liverpool and Real Madrid have faced nine times in 67 years," he told the Madrid's members assembly. The Super League project came back to life in July, when litigation for an alleged abuse of a dominant position by UEFA was brought to the European Union Court of Justice, at the request of a Madrid judge to whom the Super League chiefs turned.

#### 'Healthy and beautiful'

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin responded to Perez. "Once again he has shown that his idea is to close everything off, without games against smaller teams," he told a news conference in Rome. On Thursday, in a letter to shareholders, Agnelli, reaffirmed his "commitment" to the project and proposed "establishing a direct link with sponsors who dare to take business risks, and control of economic resources."

On the same day, Barcelona presented their accounts and Eduard Romeu, their financial vice-president, said "considering the Super League again would be positive." That was followed by a Laporta interview with Sonora, reported by Marca, on Sunday. "A Super League would be an improved Champions League, with a better format, it would surely be the most attractive competition in the world," said the Barcelona president. However, Laporta said he would prefer not to have a closed format for the competition. "We have to have an open Super League, where there's meritocracy," he said. "I think that the big clubs always playing each other would be tiring," he added. —AFP

## Arsenal back to top of Premier League

LONDON: Bukayo Saka's double sent Arsenal back to the top of the Premier League with a 3-2 win over Liverpool that further dents the Reds' title aspirations. Liverpool are now 14 points adrift of the leaders after winning just two of their opening eight league games.

#### Scamacca magic

Gianluca Scamacca's delightful chip helped West Ham strike back from a goal down to beat Fulham 3-1 while Crystal Palace were 2-1 victors over Leeds on Sunday. Scamacca has scored six times in his last 10 games for the Hammers since a £30 million move from Sassuolo, but David Moyes' men were forced to come from behind at the London Stadium. Fulham were without talisman Aleksandar Mitrovic through injury but went in front after just five minutes when Andreas Pereira smashed in from a narrow angle.

Jarrod Bowen levelled from the penalty spot before half-time after Pereira brought down Craig Dawson in the box. Scamacca then produced a moment of magic as he lofted Lucas Paqueta's pass over the helpless Bernd Leno. The Italian international has displaced Michail Antonio as Moyes' first-choice striker, but the Jamaican came off the bench to secure the three points in stoppage time.

After winning just one of their first seven league games, back-to-back victories have lifted West Ham to within four points of the top six. Palace also came



LONDON: Liverpool's Brazilian goalkeeper Alisson Becker (left) and Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk (right) clash with Arsenal's Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus during the English Premier League football match on October 9, 2022. —AFP

from behind after falling behind to Pascal Struijk's early goal for Leeds at Selhurst Park. Ousmane Edouard headed in Eberechi Eze's free-kick to quickly level and Eze won the game 14 minutes from time with a fine low strike from Wilfried Zaha's backheel.

Arsenal are aiming to move back to the top of the table when they host Liverpool later at the Emirates. The Gunners fell two points behind Manchester City on Saturday after the champions thrashed Southampton 4-0. Liverpool are also in desperate need of a win as they trail City by 13 points after winning just two of their opening seven

Premier League games of the campaign. Manchester United are also in action later on Sunday when the Red Devils travel to Everton.

Manchester City swept to the top of the Premier League with a 4-0 rout of Southampton as Erling Haaland extended his incredible scoring run to 10 successive games, while resurgent Chelsea eased to a 3-0 victory against Wolves on Saturday. Joao Cancelo, Phil Foden and Riyad Mahrez all netted for Pep Guardiola's side before Haaland added his customary goal to seal yet another one-sided success at the Etihad Stadium. —AFP