

**2** Holy Quran memorization contest concludes with awards ceremony



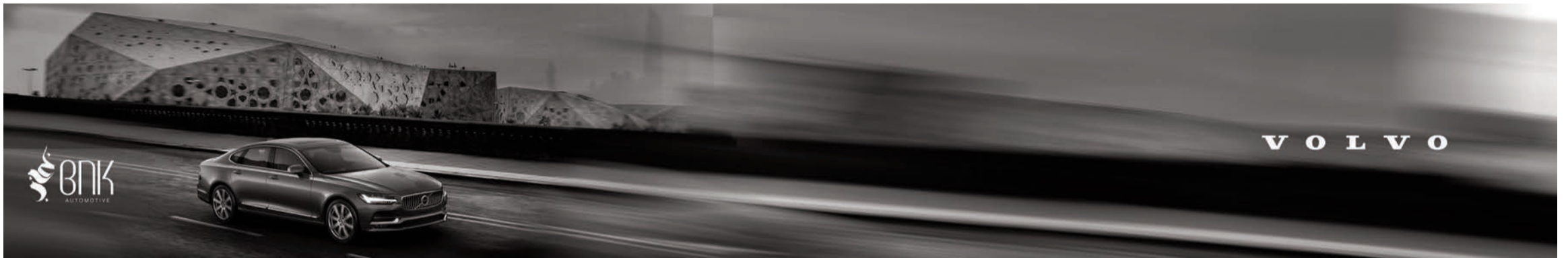
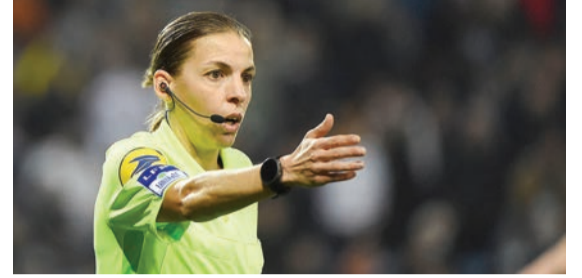
**5** Congress party elects first non-Gandhi head in 24 yrs



**11** Netflix gains subscribers after chilly start to year



**16** Trio of female referees set for World Cup history



## Assembly hails 'new era' after Deputy Amir speech

Ghanem congratulates Amir, Crown Prince, Speaker  
MP proposes replacement of all expat Assembly staff

Al-Majlis TV to only cover Assembly; old emblem returns  
Court confirms citizenship, deportation laws constitutional

### Deputy Amir receives chief auditor



KUWAIT: HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received on Wednesday at Bayan Palace head of the Audit Bureau Faisal Al-Shaya, who presented a report on examination of departments' annual accounts for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Lawmakers on Wednesday hailed the start of a "new era" as mentioned in a speech given by HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah a day earlier in parliament. Kuwaiti citizens have "responded positively" to HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince's speech that set in motion the start of the parliament's new legislative term, said National Assembly Secretary Osama Al-Shaheen after talks with the parliament's office members.

Shaheen referred to several decisions taken by the National Assembly's office at its first meeting, chaired by Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, including limiting Al-Majlis TV to only cover the work of the Assembly, its sessions, committees and deputies, and no other matters outside the workings of the parliament. It also decided to go back to the former emblem of the National Assembly, which is the official emblem of the state.

On some of the parliament's new decisions, Shaheen said MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri has been tasked with "studying the matter" of information and cyber security within parliament itself, while another contingent of lawmakers will be looking into legal cases concerning the parliament. The National Assembly has also decided not to hire any more staff until a reassessment of its hiring policies is complete, which includes more efforts to "nationalize" jobs within parliament, Shaheen added. It will also review appointments made in the past few years.

Former National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent congratulations to HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the inauguration of the new Assembly term. He also sent congratulations to National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun and members of the parliament's office and committees.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari had submitted a proposal on Wednesday to the Assembly office calling to replace all expatriate employees at the National Assembly with Kuwaitis, including legal advisors and other staff. He added advertisements should be published to invite Kuwaitis to work at the Assembly. Kandari has been leading calls to reduce the number of expats in government jobs and replace them with Kuwaitis.

MP Majed Al-Mutairi announced he will discuss with the HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah the situation of southern areas including Sabah Al-Ahmad, Wafra and Khairan, and the importance of providing services and a branch of Kuwait University and a college of applied sciences for residents. "The medical situation of residents of the fifth constituency is important, as it is not logical that a vast area from Sabah Al-Salem to Wafra has only one hospital in South Sabahiya. Therefore, we should restrict Adan Hospital only for Kuwaitis and South Sabahiya Hospital for expatriates," Mutairi said.

Continued on Page 6

### Divorce rates soar in Iraq as stigma persists

BAGHDAD: Just a year into her marriage, Manal became one of the tens of thousands of Iraqis every year who divorce in a deeply conservative nation where break-up rates have risen. For Manal, like many other women, the reason was clear - her husband's financial dependence on his family's business meant that "he couldn't take any decisions of his own". The 33-year-old was divorced eight years ago from her ex-husband, who is also her cousin and who worked for his father's appliance shop.

Not only did he depend on his family for money, but the couple also cohabited with her in-laws. "He wasn't financially independent, which caused family problems," she said. Her reasoning echoes that of tens of thousands of Iraqis, according to data published by the country's Supreme Judicial Council. Iraqi authorities cite wider economic difficulties, early marriages and infidelity encouraged by new technologies as other key drivers of divorce rates.

More than 73,000 divorces were pronounced in 2021 by the courts in the country of 42 million people, largely the same as the number in 2018. This is up from an average of just below 51,700 per year over the period 2004 to 2014, a decade that saw one in five marriages end in divorce, according to the council's website.

A study published by the Supreme Judicial Council on the causes of divorce cites "living with the spouse's family, leading in many cases to negative interference in the relationship", in tandem with "the spouse's financial dependence on his family". It also cites difficulties finding employment and "infidelities due to the Internet".

Continued on Page 6

### UK govt of Truss rocked as interior minister departs

LONDON: The UK's hardline interior minister Suella Braverman quit the government on Wednesday, heaping more doubt on the survival chances of Prime Minister Liz Truss after her right-

wing economic agenda unraveled. Braverman said she had resigned after using her personal email to send an official document to a colleague. While calling it a "technical infringement" of government rules, she wrote in her resignation letter: "I have made a mistake; I accept responsibility; I resign."

The tone contrasted with widespread criticism of Truss for failing to step down herself, after forcing her finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng to take the blame for a disastrous budget. Braverman said she had "serious concerns" that the prime minister was breaking manifesto promises.

Continued on Page 6



Suella Braverman

### Qatar gets Middle East's first pandas

DOHA: Qatar became the first Middle Eastern country Wednesday to receive Chinese giant pandas - Suhail and Soraya - who, in true Gulf fashion, took up residence in luxury air-conditioned quarters. Crowds of children and reporters watched as the four-year-old male and three-year-old female took their first steps in a temporary enclosure in a ceremony at the Al Khor park about 50 km north of Doha.

The Chinese government sent the animals as gift to mark the World Cup that starts Nov 20. China has not qualified for the event, but is a major customer for Qatar's natural gas. Suhail, who weighs 130 kg, and his female partner, who is 70 kg, must undergo 21 days quarantine following their arrival along with two keepers, said Al Khor's zoological director Tim Bouts. "In a few weeks, or in a month's time, they will be ready to be shown to the world," Bouts added. Authorities have not yet said whether a new Panda



DOHA: A child plays with a Chinese giant panda from behind protective glass at the Panda Park in Al Khor on Oct 19, 2022. —AFP

House, one of the biggest enclosures anywhere, will be ready by the time the World Cup starts. Suhail and Soraya will have their own separate quarters in the Panda House. China's ambassador to Qatar, Zhou Jian, said the new complex was "world class, magnificent and comfortable". "I believe that these two love-ly pandas will soon become the focus of love among the Qatari people, and superstars in the Middle East," he added. —AFP

### Lebanon power plant sparks cancer fears

ZOUK MIKAEL, Lebanon: After losing four relatives to respiratory illness, Zeina Matar fled her hometown north of Lebanon's capital where she says a decaying power plant generates little electricity but very deadly pollution. Thick black smoke sometimes billows from its red-and-white chimneys, leaving a grey haze in the air above the Zouk Mikael industrial district where the toxins remain trapped by a nearby mountain chain. Zeina, aged 40, says she lost her younger sister and a cousin to pulmonary fibrosis and that two of her uncles died of lung cancer years earlier.

They all lived near the plant where, experts and residents believe, air pollution means people are more likely to develop cancer and respiratory disease than anywhere else in the crisis-torn country. "We could die tomorrow," said Zeina, who has relocated to Lebanon's south to escape the plant's emissions.

A Greenpeace study found that the surrounding Jounieh area ranked fifth in the Arab world and 23rd globally for cities most contaminated by nitrogen

Continued on Page 6



# Kuwait Quran competition concludes

KUWAIT: Under the sponsorship of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the conclusion ceremony of Kuwait's Quran Memorization and Tajweed Grand Award was held on Wednesday.

His Highness the Amir deputized Head of the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, to attend the ceremony. The latter was welcomed by Minister of Justice, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Boosting Nazaha Affairs Abdulaziz Majed Al-Majed, the Undersecretary of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Chairperson of the Award Higher Committee Farid Amadi and members of the commission.

The minister of justice addressed the ceremony, highlighting the unique spiritual benefits of memorizing and reciting the Quran and congratulated the winners, urging them to be examples to be followed in their communities. Dr. Salmen Al-Zahrani, chairperson of the jurors, also addressed the ceremony noting the nation was blessed with Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the Quran that was revealed to the messenger.

He also expressed deep gratitude to His Highness the Amir, the Government and people of Kuwait for the efforts of holding the event. The Representative of His Highness the Amir handed over the awards to the winners. A memorial gift was presented for His Highness the Amir. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Senior officials attend the conclusion ceremony of Kuwait's Quran Memorization and Tajweed Grand Award. —Amiri Diwan photos



Head of the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, honors one of the judges.



Head of the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, honors one of the judges.



Head of the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, honors one of the participants.



Head of the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, honors one of the participants.



Head of the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, honors one of the participants.



KUWAIT: Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun receives Faisal Al-Shayea. —KUNA

## Speaker receives Kuwait's Audit Bureau head

KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly Ahmad Abdulaziz Al-Saadoun received on Wednesday President of Kuwait's State Audit Bureau (SAB) Faisal Al-Shayea.

Al-Shayea offered to Al-Saadoun SAB's report on examination of ministries and administrations' budgets and final accounts, as well as those of the affiliated bodies and independent departments, Al-Dustour News Network added in a statement Wednesday. He also offered a report on the most important financial indicators, and supervisory matters and developments of fiscal year 2021-2022. —KUNA

## 7-member team to probe price hikes of food products

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: The Union of Cooperative Societies told Kuwait Times that a seven-member investigation committee has been formed to follow up with food supplying companies the reasons that resulted in price hikes of some food products. The committee will follow up with three official parties to discuss the reasons for the price hikes that the suppliers provided to the union earlier, according to the President of the Union of Cooperative Societies Baddah Al-Dosari.

The investigation committee will check prices with the ministry of commerce, Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources and Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company to gauge whether suppliers' claims regarding the rate of price rises is truly affecting them. Dosari said the union called on Tuesday for an urgent meeting with all cooperative societies to set and negotiate prices of eggs, pointing out that 10 cooperatives out of 69 attended the meeting. Although the meeting made several decisions, the most important was the investigative committee.

"Recently, we had a meeting with suppliers, who claimed their losses are high and they can-

not provide the needed amounts of eggs due to the rise in prices of wheat and soya globally. Also, the ministry of commerce canceled subsidies on some materials, which caused them huge losses, they said." Dosari said, adding the suppliers claimed they got rid of more than 50 percent of chickens after they were unable to keep pace with the rise in prices. "We are working on effective steps to find a solution for suppliers. Meanwhile, if we cannot reach a final solution through these bodies, we will report this issue to the Cabinet to examine all the aspects of this issue in a transparent manner," he added.

"As we clarified earlier, we promise consumers to resolve the egg price issue in a couple of days. The union is trying to balance between consumers, cooperatives and local suppliers as well, who are a part of our economy and we don't want to cause any loss to them," Dosari said.

He said the union will resort to the option of directly importing eggs to ensure the availability of eggs to the consumers if the issue couldn't be resolved. He said the suppliers said they will keep providing the market with a small number of eggs, calling on consumers to rationalize consumption and only buy the needed amount until the issue is resolved.



Baddah Al-Dosari

## Oil minister calls meeting to discuss Kuwaitization

KUWAIT: Oil Minister Bader Al-Mulla has asked for a meeting with construction companies contracted to oil companies in Kuwait, as he sent warnings to these companies to increase Kuwaiti staff. "The minister wants Kuwaitis in construction companies to be at least 50 percent, and that employment must not be fraudulent.

Moreover, he wants Kuwaiti employees to take responsibilities in these companies in order to increase their experience in the technical oil sector, as these companies hire Kuwaitis without any actual work, which does not add anything to their experience," sources told Kuwait Times.

"The minister, who is specialized in law, is studying to prepare a new set of contracts which requires construction companies to hire Kuwaitis within a certain percentage, and have practical procedures on how to hire Kuwaitis and assess them under the supervision of oil companies that signed these contracts," sources added. "Private oil companies are mostly filled with expatriates, which does not correlate with demands to increase Kuwaitis in private companies and reduce staff in the government sector," sources added.

## Kuwait: No global stability amid proliferation

NEW YORK: The State of Kuwait believes that no world stability or peace could be created as long as the proliferation and flow of varied weapons, specifically nuclear ones, remain continued, said a diplomat Tuesday evening.

The remark was made by Kuwaiti Diplomat Attache Ahmad Salmeen while addressing a meeting of the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). "Today's world is experiencing various challenges and swift serious developments, mainly including growing regional and international tensions and nuclear countries going ahead with developing and brandishing their nuclear arsenal as well as their insistence on nuclear deterrence policies," he said.

Such challenges prove that nuclear non-proliferation system is in jeopardy, thus necessitating every effort to rid humanity of these weapons, he said, restating Kuwait's unrelenting stand on disarmament and international security issues. He underlined multilateralism as the optimum way to resolve the issues of weapons disarmament and international security, calling for mobilizing a genuine political will to buttress global efforts to promote the credibility of international conventions, specifically those related to the disarmament of nuclear and mass destruction weapons.

However, the Kuwaiti diplomat welcomed the



Ahmad Salmeen

entry of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) into force on in January 2021, and the first meeting of its states parties and signatories in Vienna. In this context, he stressed that this treaty does not contradict the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Rather, it is part of the process of completing the NPT's goals, he said. He emphasized that it is necessary to put in place the mechanisms of cooperation in the fields of peaceful nuclear uses and supporting non-nuclear countries' rights to peaceful nuclear uses. He also reaffirmed Kuwait's call for compelling the Zionist entity to join the NPT and subject all its nuclear facilities to the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), given that it is the region's only party that has not joined the NPT yet. Salmeen welcomed the successful holding of two recent nuclear-free Middle East conferences, chaired by Jordan and Kuwait respectively, where favorable outcomes and objective resolutions were reached. —KUNA

and vitamin D, as well as exercises that strengthen bones, she explained.

The society organized courses through which several primary care physicians are trained and qualified to establish osteoporosis clinics in primary healthcare centers, making it easier for patients to detect early signs of fragility, she pointed out. This step is crucial to prevent this disease, which may reduce fracture due to brittleness, she mentioned. World Osteoporosis Day is celebrated annually on October 20 to underscore the serious disease that causes problems for millions worldwide, she said.

The goal is to educate individuals about osteoporosis, which severely affects human bone health, its symptoms, methods of prevention and treatment, as well as to warn people of the causes that lead to the disease, she stated. It also aims to educate people about the dangers of complacency when infected, making them aware of needing to maintain strong bones, support patients with osteoporosis, and educate people about the importance of tests that are carried out to diagnose osteoporosis at an early stage, she noted. —KUNA

## MoH opens World Osteoporosis Day exhibition

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) inaugurated the awareness exhibition on osteoporosis at the Avenues Mall to educate the community about this silent disease that weakens bones and leads to fractures that may result in permanent disability or death.

This is part of Kuwait's participation to mark the World Osteoporosis Day, Head of the Kuwait Osteoporosis Society Dr Nadia Al-Ali said in a statement to reporters Wednesday after the opening of the exhibition. The seven-day exhibition includes awareness panels explaining the risk factors that may increase the possibility of fractures and ways to prevent osteoporosis through food rich in calcium, protein



Scan & Subscribe  
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961  
The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Tel: 24833199 Ext: 356-355-353



Local

# US official reaffirms commitment to strong relations with Kuwait

## Middle East remains a priority for Biden administration: Leaf

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf affirmed during her visit to Kuwait her country's commitment to strong relations with Kuwait, saying that this visit, which will include several countries in the region, is meant to reconfirm the agenda of US President Joe Biden for the Middle East and limit escalation of conflicts in a number of countries.

During a press conference on Wednesday, Leaf said the Middle East will always be in US' interest and priority. "The president has said repeatedly the US cannot and won't do everything alone, so we work in partnership with Gulf countries, Egypt, Iraq and others to fight and help the region come through the crisis. We have food security, climate change and health issues, and we must address these problems," she said.

Regarding the situation in Iran, she said: "Iran is a major contributor to regional insecurity; the problem is growing over time. It has been providing advanced weaponry and missiles and all sorts of defense technology. Iran poses the biggest threat to regional security and stability." Leaf affirmed that the State Department is leading efforts to pressure Iranian leaders to make them renounce their nuclear ambitions, noting that this effort is the US government's approach that includes allies and partners.

On Iran's ongoing protests that were sparked by the death of a young woman Mahsa Amini, Leaf affirmed that the Iranian government's actions are considered a suppression and violence against freedoms. "We support the Iranian people in their current cause. We want them to gain their freedom and choice in whether to cover their hair or not," she said.

Concerning the US-Palestinian relationship, she said: "Our priority is to resume and rebuild the poor



Barbara A Leaf



Dana Stroul



**KUWAIT:** (Left to right) Public Affairs Counselor at US Embassy Christy Watkins, Assistant US Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East Dana Stroul and Charge d'Affaires at US Embassy to Kuwait James Holtsnider during the press conference. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

state of relationship between the US and Palestinian leaders for the benefit of Palestinian people and their security. We have connected with senior levels of Palestinian authorities to encourage reconnecting. The US president has a deep commitment for Palestinians to have a state of their own."

Leaf revealed that the US had a different perspective from the OPEC+ group on reducing production, because the group's decision will raise economic pressures. "OPEC+'s decision to cut oil production came at the worst possible moment and will add to global inflationary pressure. The international community has just emerged from the pressures of the epidemic, and some countries are still suffering from the repercussions of the Ukrainian war, and we do not see the time for the decision to reduce production," she said.

Dana Stroul, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East, affirmed the importance of the US-Kuwait strategic partnership, revealing that both countries will exchange views on regional security challenges, including border security threats. "We are here in Kuwait to see the country's view on how we can develop our partner-

ship. Both sides agreed on the importance of continuing to advance the US-Kuwait defense partnership through joint training and regional cooperation to address shared threats," she noted. Stroul added: "Kuwait has been a generous host to many US forces, especially to fight Daesh, along with our partners."

She revealed that joint training and exercises are to be held to enhance the bilateral relationship and to make sure that both countries can work together in the event of a crisis. "Every single member of the

GCC is important, where there is a value placed in our relationship. Our goal is to work with GCC countries to share intelligence and information, and to make sure that our air forces, navies and armies can work together. We are committed to working together to face sea, air and land threats," Stroul said.

Leaf is visiting several countries in the Middle East such as Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman from Oct 11 to 22 to meet senior government officials and representatives of NGOs and civil societies.

## Workshops on cancer, obesity held in Kuwait

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Secretary General of the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh said the federation, in cooperation with Cancer Aware Nation (CAN), organized two workshops as part of the Pink October awareness program. The first workshop was held under the theme 'Updates in guidelines for women's cancers in Kuwait', during which several experts from GCC countries including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman were hosted to update these guidelines, which are updated every two years.

Dr Saleh spoke about the importance of presenting the guidelines correctly. "The number of women affected by cancers in Kuwait reached 856 as per the cancer register in 2018, 475 of which were Kuwaiti women, and 381 non-Kuwaitis. This indicates an increase in discovery of tumors among women, and this makes us responsible to continue renewing the guidelines. The cancer control committee of the GCC recognized their importance and a recommendation was issued to benefit from the efforts in the GCC. Doctors can find the best means of diagnosing and treatment according to each stage," he said.

The Gulf Federation for Cancer Control held another workshop online under the theme 'Updates in the relationship between obesity and most common cancers', during which several experts from Egypt and Kuwait were invited. The lecture focused on the types of obesity and the rate of its spread in the world, as Kuwait is fourth in obesity prevalence worldwide. WHO said in 2016 that 39 percent of adults have excess weight and 13 percent suffer from obesity, while 38.3 million children under five are overweight and obese, based on 2019 statistics.

The two-day workshop discussed the effects of obesity on medication and its role in complications. It also discussed the effect of obesity on various types of cancers and the role of medicinal nutrition in this field. He said a strong relationship was proven between obesity and many chronic diseases including tumors, diabetes, heart attacks, and liver and gallbladder diseases, in addition to cancers of breast, uterus and ovaries.



Experts pose for a photo on the sidelines of the workshop



Workshop in progress

Several recommendations were issued including the establishment of a scientific research center that includes GCC countries, have a general strategy to carry out awareness campaigns about the harms of obesity in which government and all

NGOs should participate in, and apply laws to positively reflect on changing current food patterns which lead to increased cases of obesity, starting from kindergarten. Dr Saleh lauded the support of CAN for these efforts for the sake of humanity.

## US Embassy launches 'Discover America Week'

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The Embassy of the United States of America to Kuwait announced on Wednesday the launch of "Discover America Week", where the embassy will organize events highlighting different aspects of American culture and expertise, including music, food, sports, technology, education and tourism.

In a press statement, James Holtsnider, Charge d'Affaires at the US Embassy to Kuwait, said: "We were doing Discover America since 2009, but for the last three years, due to the pandemic, we could not do it. This is a great opportunity to showcase American opportunities for Kuwaiti businesses and Kuwaiti opportunities for America to strengthen commercial ties."

Holtsnider affirmed that these activities are a great opportunity to put a spotlight on the strong US-Kuwaiti friendship. "There are a lot of business opportunities, especially technical investments, coming to Kuwait. We are working very hard to expand commercial ties as well as educate people in both countries to increase trade and explore areas that broaden and deepen ties," he said.

Holtsnider revealed there will be a lot of American brands. "We will be talking about opportunities in Kuwait. We will have a discussion on tourism with travel agencies and work very actively with visas, although Kuwait is doing well, as citizens can get a visa within a few days," he said. He indicated that after three years of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is a chance to remind people about opportunities in the United States, noting the Kuwaiti ambassador to the US has been very active and traveling around the US to talk about the opportunities in Kuwait for the US and vice versa.

The Discover America Week events will be held from Oct 22 to 29. It will include a 5K Fun Run, Huntertones Live, food shows by Chef Nasser, BBQ Night, American Car Show and a Harley-Davidson Ride event.

## Awqaf launches contest for Waqf Research

**KUWAIT:** Secretary General of Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation Saqer Al-Sejari announced on Wednesday the launch of the 13th International contest for Waqf Research under the patronage of His Highness the Deputy Amir and the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Al-Sejari said that the competition is part of the 16 coordinated projects being implemented by the Secretariat with several authorities worldwide, most notably the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah.

He noted that the competition aims to encourage the scientific research process by raising the spirit of scientific competition and highlighting the endowment system and making it a priority for researchers, individuals and institutions, stressing that the research topics presented need further study due to their significance and importance.

On his part, Representative of the Supervision Committee Dr Adel Al-Mutairat said that the number of participants reached 340 researchers from all over the world. Al-Mutairat noted that the prize pool for the contest reached \$45,000 (around KD 13,960) divided to three divisions, the 1st prize worth \$ 6,000 (around KD 1,858), 2nd worth \$5,000 (around KD 1,548) and the 3rd worth \$4,000 (around KD 1,240). Al-Mutairat said that competitors can find more information about the tournament on [www.awqaf.org.kw](http://www.awqaf.org.kw). —KUNA

## MoE to reopen probe in teacher 'hair cutting' case

**KUWAIT:** Head of the parliamentary education panel MP Hamad Al-Matar has contacted the education ministry regarding a teacher who has been accused of cutting a student's hair in order to find out the facts, after the teacher said she was wrongfully accused. "The accused expatriate teacher has filed a grievance as a result of an investigation which found her guilty of allegedly cutting a student's hair after students said the teacher constantly threatened to cut students' hair if they do not follow instructions," sources told Kuwait Times.

The teacher said the accusations made against her are not truthful and she did not threaten or do anything that violates educational rules, and asked to reopen the investigation. Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational area sent its report to the undersecretary of the ministry to relieve the teacher from her duties. The report showed that the teacher was hired locally.

Meanwhile, instructions have been given to proceed with employment of GCC citizens, stateless residents (bedoons) and children of Kuwaiti mothers after they passed their interviews and were accepted after approvals. These procedures have lately stalled. The Undersecretary for General Education Osama Al-Sultan notified the management department the importance of finishing procedures and sending lists to the department in order to publish employment decisions, especially since their grades are available and there are no obstacles to their employment.



## Young writers

## State of kindness

By Layan Abdullah Al-Qenaici

**K**indness is the act of giving without waiting for anything in return. To be kind with a word, a gift, a smile, a compliment, a hug, or even just opening the door for the person coming right behind you. Be kindhearted to everyone in a calculated measurement.

Most importantly is to be kind to yourself, listen to your brain and heart's needs. Give yourself time, spoil yourself and always put yourself first with the rule of being kind to others.

Some may see kindness as a weakness but in the matter of fact being kind is one of the powerful strengths a person could ever have. Being kind to others may inspire others to be kind too!

## News in brief

## Kuwait braces for rains

**KUWAIT:** The Civil Defense Committee held a meeting on Wednesday in implementation of instructions by the commission chairman Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to prepare for forthcoming rainy season. Sheikh Talal Khaled is also the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior. Officials and personnel who took part in the meeting, headed by Director General of the Civil Defense, examined preparations to cope with prospected rainfalls and possible flash floods. They also examined readiness of State departments and mechanisms of response to help calls. —KUNA

## Kuwait oil price drops 77 cents

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait crude oil lost 77 cents during Tuesday's trading to reach \$92.66 per barrel compared with \$93.43pb the day before, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) said Wednesday. Brent futures also dropped by \$1.59 to \$90.03pb and West Texas Intermediate declined \$2.64 to \$82.82pb. —KUNA

## Zain Great Idea 7 first bootcamp kicks off

Great turnout from new entrepreneurs to learn most essential business skills



Great turnout from new entrepreneurs at the first bootcamp.



**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, kicked off the orientation meeting and first bootcamp session of its Zain Great Idea 7 tech startup accelerator program. The bootcamp witnessed great turnout from idea owners and new entrepreneurs to learn the most essential business and startup management skills from global experts and mentors.

Zain recently inaugurated the all-new season of its renowned tech startup accelerator program in collaboration with Brilliant Lab. The program continues its mission to enrich the tech startup ecosystem in Kuwait and further push it forward towards expansion into the MENA region.

Zain's main headquarters in Shuwaikh hosted the program's orientation meeting and first bootcamp session, attended by many eager and enthusiastic new entrepreneurs who are starting their startup careers. The first bootcamp continues for four days and covers some of the most essential topics that are crucial for every new startup owner, including establishing startups, building teams, creating a brand, attracting investors, developing products and services, and much more.

The first session was mentored by Alharith Alatawi, the cofounder and Chief Executive Officer of onegcc, an employment platform focused on matching job seekers with job opportunities based on their skills and personalities. onegcc recently raised \$2.5 million in its last fundraising round.

Along with onegcc, Alharith is also a cofounder in Level Z, the first tech startup factory in the MENA region with its first startup Skiplino, an intelligent cloud-based queue management system with 1,500 clients globally. Both onegcc and Skiplino have been named as one of the top 15 innovative startups in the Middle East by Forbes in their latest Forbes Innovators edition.

ZGI aims at taking entrepreneurs towards the best experiences that bring them sustainable growth, not only to help grow their businesses,

but grow themselves as well. Zain always strives to leverage on its partners ecosystem to connect its entrepreneurs with venture capital firms and business partners to help them put a steady first step in the business world.

Last year, Zain celebrated 10 years of Zain Great Idea as one of the most successful projects under the umbrella of its Innovation and Entrepreneurship strategy. Investments in ZGI startups are well over KD 6 million (\$20 million) to this date. 30 percent of ZGI alumni now own thriving and active businesses to this day across local and regional markets, and 40 percent of these businesses have raised capital.

Throughout a decade, ZGI has empowered, trained, and invested in over 1,500 passionate Kuwaiti and Arab young people. Zain learned a



Applying to  
ZGI 7 sessions  
continues at  
[zaingreatidea.com](http://zaingreatidea.com)

lot from previous seasons and heard what ZGI alumni had to say about how to further refine the program year after year. And so, this year the company is offering greater flexibility and more freedom for every participant to take part in the sessions and programs that best suit their schedule and unique business needs.

For example, some relatively advanced entrepreneurs have already finished preparing the most essential parts of their businesses and have no need to take part in the bootcamp that covers the essentials and basics of building startups. So, this year, they have the chance to skip this session and



save their time for other more advanced sessions that are more suitable to their needs and level.

This year, ZGI will also focus on regional expansion through unique programs held throughout MENA like Riyadh, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Cairo. These programs are set to cover crucial topics like establishing and accelerating startups, communicating with investors and funds, building teams and brands, one-on-one consultancy sessions, enriching innovation, challenges facing entrepreneurs in today's markets, local and regional success stories, and much more.

ZGI 7 is also set to offer a new win-win concept that serves both entrepreneurs and fresh graduates. Zain will host a special career fair-like event that links ZGI participants with students and graduates of various studies. The entrepreneurs will have an invaluable opportunity to introduce their businesses, attract local talents, and build their future teams, while graduates get a chance to be a part of the next big success story.

Zain strongly believes in the crucial role played by private sector organizations in supporting social and economic sustainability projects. The company is committed to printing a positive impact through all its activities, and this has led it to embrace the most influential topics in the community, perhaps most importantly the support of youth, entrepreneurship, and innovation, not only in Kuwait, but across the entire region.

## National Guard undersecretary receives officials

**KUWAIT:** Acting National Guard Undersecretary Major General Faleh Shujaa on Wednesday received Lt General Olivier Rittmann (NATO Defense College) and head of the military cooperation in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Major General Majid Jahangeer.

Maj Gen Shujaa has conveyed greetings from head of the National Guard Salem Al-Ali to the NATO official. While discussing important military issues with the visiting official, he also discussed with him ways to increase cooperation and need to exchange expertise in security and military services.



Mohamed Haris with Dr Matar Hamed Al-Niadi

## Director of Lulu Hypermarket visits UAE Embassy

**KUWAIT:** The Director of Lulu Hypermarket, Kuwait, Mohamed Haris called on the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Kuwait, Dr Matar Hamed Al-Niadi at the UAE embassy in Kuwait on October 17.

The meeting touched on various topics of mutual interest in addition to identifying opportunities beneficial to both sides especially in the area of promoting business ties.

## Dollar stabilizes at KD 0.309

**KUWAIT:** The US dollar stabilized on Wednesday at KD 0.309, while the euro went up by 1.16 percent to reach KD 0.304 compared with Tuesday's rates. The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said in its daily bulletin the British pound went down by 0.62 percent to reach KD 0.350, as well as the Swiss franc by 0.231 percent to reach KD 0.311, while the Japanese yen stood at KD 0.002. The CBK publishes daily average exchange rates that do not necessarily reflect actual prices of the currencies' trade for the day. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Major General Faleh Shujaa (right) with Lt General Olivier Rittmann



KUWAIT: General Faleh Shujaa with Major General Majid Jahangeer and other officials.

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](mailto:art@kuwaittimes.com) in PDF format only.
- Kuwait Times reserves the right to retain the drawings for future use.
- Participants should include on the bottom of the artworks the following: Name, age, email address, phone number and school in legible font.



Strategic Partner







Nepal's wartime rape survivors demand recognition

## 'Shocking' UK report links poor care to death of 45 babies

# Congress party elects first non-Gandhi head in 24 yrs

## Kharge faces mammoth challenge of winning next national election

NEW DELHI: India's Congress party on Wednesday appointed an octogenarian ex-minister as its first president in 24 years not from the Gandhi dynasty, in an effort to reverse its apparent decline into political oblivion. Mallikarjun Kharge, 80, was elected by members to replace Sonia Gandhi as president of the once-mighty party that helped win India's independence from Britain 75 years ago.

The Indian National Congress governed India for decades after independence in 1947 but is now a shadow of its former self next to the electoral juggernaut of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "Today, India is facing challenges of inflation, unemployment and growing economic disparity and the ruling party's divisive agenda," Kharge told reporters during his first press conference as party leader. "We have to protect the constitution that is under attack and together fight the forces trying to finish our democracy."

The Gandhi family is not related to India's independence icon Mahatma Gandhi, but descended from the country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru was the father of prime minister Indira Gandhi, assassinated in 1984. She was the mother of Rajiv Gandhi, killed by a suicide bomber in 1991. The party was last in power nationally from 2004 to 2014 under prime minister Manmohan Singh.

The BJP thrashed Congress in the last two elections, with Modi deriding party president Rahul Gandhi - son of Rajiv

and Sonia - as an out-of-touch princeling and playboy. After the latest defeat in 2019, Rahul Gandhi resigned as party president and handed the reins back to his Italian-born mother Sonia, now 75, who was first appointed to the role in 1998.

Kharge, a former railways and labor minister who is from the low-caste Dalit community, was born five years before independence and is widely believed to have the backing of both Sonia and Rahul Gandhi. Rahul Gandhi said Wednesday that Kharge is now the supreme authority in the party and that he "will decide my role in the party". But despite stepping back, Sonia and Rahul Gandhi are expected to continue pulling the strings from behind the scenes.

Kharge, who is four months older than US President Joe Biden, now faces the mammoth challenge of winning the next national election, due in 2024, and contesting two state elections before the end of this year. Kharge faced off against Shashi Tharoor, 66, a former under-secretary-general of the United Nations who campaigned for "change" in the party. The successful author has been scathing of British colonialism and said in 2017 that Winston Churchill "has as much blood on his hands as some of the worst genocidal dictators of the 20th century".

Tharoor conceded defeat on Twitter and said that being Congress president was a "great honor & a huge responsibility", wishing Kharge "all success in the task". The party was reduced to just 52 seats in the 543-member lower house of



NEW DELHI: India's Congress party's newly-appointed president Mallikarjun Kharge receives a garland from his supporters after addressing a press conference on Oct 19, 2022. — AFP

parliament after the last national election, which was swept by the BJP with 303 seats.

Electing a non-Gandhi president showed that Congress was "weary of criticism from BJP and Modi", Rasheed

Kidwai, a fellow at the Observer Research Foundation and close watcher of the party for years, told AFP. He added that there was a "fair chance" that Kharge would turn around the party's fortunes. "He may be 80 but is in good

health and a workaholic. He meets party leaders about state and regional issues. He can provide a healing touch to the party ranks," Kidwai said. "But ultimately, in an electoral democracy what matters is winning elections." — AFP

## UN chief chides India on human rights record

MUMBAI: UN chief Antonio Guterres chided India during a visit Wednesday over its human rights record, which critics say has regressed under Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Since Modi came to power in 2014 in the Hindu-majority nation of 1.4 billion, campaigners say persecution and hate speech have accelerated against religious minorities, especially for India's 200-million-strong Muslim minority.

This is particularly the case in Indian-administered Kashmir since the Modi government in 2019 imposed direct rule on the restive Muslim-majority region where it has half a million troops stationed, activists say.

Pressure has also grown towards government critics and journalists, particularly women reporters-some have suffered relentless campaigns of online abuse including death and rape threats. "As an elected member of the Human Rights Council, India has a responsibility to shape global human rights, and to protect and promote the rights of all individuals, including members of minority communities," Guterres said in a speech in Mumbai.

Though he praised India's achievements 75 years after leaving British rule, Guterres also pointedly said that the understanding that "diversity is a richness... is not a guarantee". "It must be nurtured, strengthened and renewed everyday," he said.

Citing independence hero Mahatma Gandhi and India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru-both of whom have become hate figures for some in Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party-Guterres said their values need to be guarded by "condemning hate speech unequivocally".



MUMBAI: Handout photograph shows United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres (C) being greeted upon his arrival at the airport in Mumbai. — AFP

India must do this "by protecting the rights and freedoms of journalists, human rights activists, students and academics. And by ensuring the continued independence of India's judiciary", he said. "India's voice on the global stage can only gain in authority and credibility from a strong commitment to inclusivity and respect for human rights at home," he said, adding that "much more needs to be done to advance gender equality and women's rights".

"I urge Indians to be vigilant and to increase your investments in inclusive, pluralistic, diverse communities and societies," Guterres said. In February UN rights experts called for an end to "misogynistic and sectarian" online attacks against one particular Muslim woman journalist who was a fierce critic of Modi.

Media rights group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) places India at a lowly 142 in its World Press Freedom Index, saying that under the premier, "pressure has increased on the media to toe the Hindu nationalist government's line". — AFP

Tehran saying it wants talks with Ukraine. But the European Union said Wednesday it had confirmed that Iran has supplied the drones to Russia.

The Ukrainian military said Wednesday that it had shot down more than 220 Iranian-made drones in little more than a month, although a drone bombardment on the capital Kyiv on Monday left five people dead.

Nabila Massrali, spokeswoman for EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, said that the bloc had "gathered our own evidence" and would prepare "a clear, swift and firm EU response." EU diplomats told AFP there was work under way on Wednesday to draw up a list of Iranian individuals and entities linked to the drones who would be added to the bloc's sanctions blacklist.

The United States has charged that the drones, formally known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), violated UN Security Council Resolution 2231 of 2015 that blessed a now moribund nuclear deal. The resolution's ban on Iran's conventional arms sales expired in 2020, despite attempts by the then-US administration of Donald Trump. But the resolution still bans through October 2023 any transfers that could benefit nuclear-capable ballistic missiles unless there is permission from the Security Council. — AFP

## West pushes Russia at UN on Iranian drones in Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS: Western powers will raise alarm Wednesday at a UN Security Council session over Russia's attacks in Ukraine with purported Iranian drones, as the European Union prepared sanctions.

The United States, France and Britain requested the discussion, which will take place behind closed doors at the Security Council, diplomats said. Russia holds veto power at the Security Council and would be sure to kill any resolution. But the United States and France have warned that Iran is violating a Security Council resolution by arming Russia in its war in Ukraine.

Ukraine has for weeks reported attacks by Russia with Iranian Shahed-136 drones-unmanned aircraft whose warheads explode in kamikaze landings-and has moved to cut relations with Tehran. Iran and Russia have both denied the use of the drones, with



Advertisement for Kalyan Jewellers featuring three promotional banners:

- GET CASH BACK UP TO KWD 10 ON EVERY PURCHASE OF GOLD JEWELLERY WORTH KWD 500
- GET CASH BACK UP TO KWD 20 ON EVERY PURCHASE OF PRECIOUS / UNCUT JEWELLERY WORTH KWD 500
- GET CASH BACK UP TO KWD 50 ON EVERY PURCHASE OF DIAMOND JEWELLERY WORTH KWD 500

OFFER VALID TILL 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2022

WWW.KALYANJEWELLERS.NET | FOLLOW US ON: @KALYANJEWELLERSMIDDLEEAST



## International

# Hamas delegation in first Syria visit in decade as relations thaw

## 'This is a new start for joint Palestinian-Syrian action'

**DAMASCUS:** Hamas resumes Syria historic ties in Damascus visit Palestinian movement Hamas on Wednesday said it restored relations with the Syrian government after a visiting delegation held a "historic meeting" with President Bashar Al-Assad in Damascus.

The Islamist group, which controls the Gaza Strip, was long one of Syria's closest allies, in large part due to a shared enmity towards Zionist entity.

But it left Syria in 2012 after condemning the Assad government's brutal suppression of protests in March 2011, which triggered the country's descent into civil war.

"This is a glorious and important day, in which we come back to our dear Syria to resume joint work," Hamas chief of Arab relations Khalil al-Hayya told reporters in Damascus.

"This is a new start for joint Palestinian-Syrian action," he said after meeting with Assad along with other representatives of Palestinian factions.

Hamas and Assad have agreed to "move on from the past and look to the future," al-Hayya added. By restoring ties with Damascus, Hamas cements its role within the "axis of resistance" against its arch-enemy Zionist entity, analysts said, an Iran dominated alliance that extends to Lebanon's Hezbollah movement and Yemen's Huthi rebels.

Hamas' move formalises a rapprochement that has been underway for some time and comes amid fundamental changes in Middle East relationships, including the Islamists' long-time ally Turkey restoring full diplomatic ties with Zionist entity in August.

Wednesday's meeting with Assad "is in line with the broader rapprochement between Hezbollah and Hamas evident in Lebanon over the past year or more," said Maha Yahya of the Carnegie Middle East Center.

Al-Hayya said there was consensus among Hamas leadership and supporters over the resumption of ties with Syria—a move also backed by the Palestinian group's foreign sponsors.

"All the states we notified of our decision were welcoming and supportive of the move, including Qatar and Turkey, who encouraged us to take the step," al-Hayya said. Turkey supports rebels against the Damascus government in Syria's civil war, but has lately signalled a willingness to reconcile.

### 'Too early'

The two-day Hamas visit to Syria comes after the Islamist group signed a reconciliation deal with its Palestinian rival Fatah in Algiers last week, vowing to hold elections by next October in a bid to settle a 15-year intra-Palestinian rift.

Analysts say that the latest moves by Hamas come in response to Arab governments—the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco—normalising ties with Israel in recent years.

A Hamas leader told AFP that the group, which was headquartered in the Syrian capital before leaving the country, plans to reopen its Damascus office.

But it was "too early" to talk about relocating its headquarters to the Syrian capital, said the official



**DAMASCUS, Syria:** This handout picture released by the Syrian Presidency, shows Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad (2-L) receiving the leader of Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad, Ziad Al-Nakhala (R) Hamas chief of Arab relations, Khalil Al-Hayya (2-R) and secretary general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Talal Naji (L), in the capital Damascus. —AFP

who spoke on the condition of anonymity. The thaw between Hamas and Damascus was brokered by Tehran and Hezbollah, a senior Hamas source said.

For the past decade, Syrian officials had accused Hamas of betrayal.

In a 2013 speech, Assad had accused Palestinian groups he did not identify of treating the country

like a "hotel" that they leave "when conditions are tough" in a thinly-veiled reference to Hamas.

Hamas has its origins in the transnational Muslim Brotherhood, whose Syrian branch was one of the leading factions in the armed opposition after Syria's civil war broke out. Hamas officials have said they broke ties with the Brotherhood in 2017. —AFP

## French-German govt talks delayed as discord builds

**BERLIN:** Germany and France postponed a meeting set for next week between their governments until January as Berlin said that "more time" was necessary to find common ground on a slew of issues. The delay to the regular meeting hosted alternately by either cabinet exposed a growing rift between the two EU powers, and comes as Europe struggles to cope with an energy and cost-of-living crisis unleashed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz's spokesman Steffen Hebestreit would not be drawn on the topics that the governments were unable to agree on. But he acknowledged that "there are a number of different issues that we are dealing with at the moment... on which we have not yet reached a unified position."

Both sides therefore decided it was "sensible" to postpone the talks originally to be hosted by France to January. Scholz will nevertheless hold bilateral talks with French President Emmanuel Macron on the sidelines of the EU summit starting Thursday, Hebestreit said, adding that the pair may also meet next Wednesday in Paris.

France and Germany have often tried to present a united front in a myriad of crises, but over the last weeks, criticisms have spilled out into the open on issues ranging from energy to defence.

After Scholz's government announced a 200-



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz

billion euro (\$198-billion) support scheme to protect its businesses and consumers from runaway energy prices, Macron has warned the programme risked leading to "distortions" in the bloc.

Berlin has also been accused of blocking at the EU level a cap on gas prices which it fears would remove an incentive for consumers to save energy, thereby worsening the situation. France, however, which is suffering an electricity shortage because several of its nuclear power plants are out of service, has been pushing for the cap.

Berlin was meanwhile unhappy with Paris over a lack of support for its bid to revive the so-called Midcat gas project for pipelines linking Portugal, Spain, through France to Germany. On military issues, Germany's recent success in rallying 14 NATO members to join its air shield project has irked France which is eyeing a separate plan. —AFP

## 'Shocking' UK report links poor care to death of 45 babies

**LONDON:** A damning report Wednesday found that 45 babies who died at two British hospitals might have survived if their care had been up to standard, in the latest UK maternity scandal. Dr Bill Kirkup who led the official independent investigation described his findings as "stark" and "shocking".

"Had care been given to the nationally recognised standards, the outcome could have been different... in 45 of the 65 baby deaths" examined, he told reporters. Kirkup said there had been "failures of professionalism, of compassion and of kindness" at the hospitals run by East Kent Hospitals NHS Trust in southeast England.

"Women were not listened to... they were disregarded and that led directly to instances of harm" including baby deaths, he said. The doctor, who seven years ago published similar findings after probing baby deaths at another group of hospitals in north-western England, said lessons had once again not been learned. "On at least eight separate occasions over a 10-year period, the trust board (at East Kent) was presented with what should have been inescapable signals that there were serious problems. "They could have put it right. The first instance was in 2010 but they didn't. In every single case they found a way to deny that there were problems."

### 'This cannot go on'

The shocking findings about the state of some of

Britain's maternity services come on top of two other similar scandals and another probe that was announced in May. The East Kent investigation was sparked by the death of baby Harry Richford, who died seven days after he was born by emergency caesarean in November 2017.

An inquest into his death concluded that he died due to seven gross failings amounting to neglect. Kirkup revealed similar findings in 2015 after investigating maternity services at University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust.

Speaking ahead of the release of Wednesday's report, he said it was deeply concerning that the same problems seemed to be reappearing time and time again. "When I reported on Morecambe Bay maternity services in 2015, I did not imagine for one moment that I would be back in seven years' time talking about a rather similar set of circumstances and that there would have been another two large, high-profile maternity failures as well on top of that."

"This cannot go on. We have to address this in a different way. "We can't simply respond to each one as if it's a one-off, as if this is the last time this will happen. We have to do things differently."

The report follows another published in March that found over 200 babies could have survived if they had been given better care at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust in central England. Babies were stillborn, died shortly after birth or were left severely brain-damaged over a 20-year period from 2000 to 2019, according to that review. It found that nine of 12 mothers who died during the period could have had "significantly" better treatment, and others were made to have natural births when they should have been offered caesarean sections. The findings prompted an apology in parliament by the then Health Secretary Sajid Javid. —AFP

## UK govt of Truss rocked as interior...

Continued from Page 1

"Pretending we haven't made mistakes, carrying on as if everyone can't see we've made them, and hoping things will magically come right is not serious politics," she wrote.

Braverman spent just 43 days in the role of home secretary, and her departure is the latest crisis unleashed by the government's tax-cutting budget, announced last month. Despite the chaos, Truss vowed earlier Wednesday that she would not quit as she faced boozing lawmakers at her first parliamentary questions since abandoning her flagship plan.

Opposition Labour leader Keir Starmer asked the House of Commons: "What's the point of a prime minister whose promises don't even last a week?" Starmer mocked Truss by leading his MPs in chants of "Gone, gone!" as he read out a list of her dropped policies. "Why is she still here?" he concluded. Truss responded: "I am a fighter and not

a quitter. "I am someone who is prepared to front up. I'm prepared to take the tough decisions," she said.

But there was silence on her own Conservative benches as Truss issued her riposte to Starmer. The session took place less than 48 hours after new finance minister Jeremy Hunt dismembered Truss' tax plans in a humiliating blow. He sat at her side in parliament, nodding along to her responses. While castigating Truss for conducting "an economic experiment on the British public", Starmer said dismissively: "How could she be held to account when she's not in charge?"

At least five Conservative party MPs have already publicly called for Truss to be replaced. Polls show Truss's personal and party ratings have plummeted, with YouGov saying Tuesday that she had become the most unpopular leader it has ever tracked. A separate survey of party members found that less than two months after electing her as Tory leader and prime minister, a majority now think she should go. Labour has opened up huge poll leads over the ruling Conservatives, amid the recent fall-out as well as the worsening cost-of-living crisis, with inflation jumping above 10 percent on Wednesday on soaring food prices. —AFP

top of the often arduous battle to gain custody over their children, women are frequently exposed to "sexual harassment" by men who believe they have the right to make sexual advances towards divorced women, Edwar lamented. Some families even refuse to allow divorced women to work or go out freely, for fear of the "stigma" and what people will say. "As for men - socially, everything is acceptable. Today, he divorces, tomorrow he remarries."

But statistics show that this has left many women undeterred. "Courts have registered a rise in divorces, particularly over the past decade," a magistrate was quoted as saying in 2019 on the judicial council's website. A social worker who sifts through divorce cases filed in courts so as to try to re-establish common ground between couples likewise acknowledges that "divorce has become much more common".

Speaking on condition of anonymity at a Baghdad court, she said that "only in 10 percent of cases are we able to find a solution" and abandon the divorce proceedings. Manal now lives back in her parents' home and works for a feminist organization. —AFP

## Assembly hails 'new era' after Deputy...

Continued from Page 1

branded as sovereign issues and only the state can handle them. The petitions demanded to declare such laws unconstitutional, but the court rejected the petitions and confirmed that the laws are in line

## Lebanon power plant sparks...

Continued from Page 1

dioxide, a dangerous pollutant released when fuel is burnt. The environmental group's 2018 study singled out the Zouk plant, built in the 1940s, as well as cars on a busy motorway and privately owned electricity generators as the main causes of pollution.

The walls of Zeina's balconies in her old Zouk Mikael home are blackened by the smoke, and laundry she used to hang outside would be damaged by toxic chemicals emanating from the plant, she said. "Whenever they refill the station with fuel oil, we would close the windows," Zeina said. "The smell is unbearable."

Lebanon's economy has been in free-fall since a financial crisis hit late in 2019, with authorities now barely able to afford more than an hour of mains electricity a day. The Zouk Mikael plant, one of the country's largest, now runs at minimum capacity when it operates at all, but still its emissions are causing high rates of pulmonary disease, experts warn. Among them is Paul Makhoul, a lung doctor at the Notre Dame du Liban Hospital in Jounieh, who said he abandoned his local apartment after noticing a rise in respiratory disease among patients.

In 2014, he found that lung ailments had increased by three percent in patients living near the plant compared to the previous year, an annual rise he estimates has now doubled. "When I saw the results, I moved

with the constitution.

Also on Wednesday, the court of appeals sentenced former interior ministry official Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and former parliament election candidate Nawaf Al-Shallahi to five years in prison and fined them KD 1,360,000 each on money laundering charges. The suspects were found guilty of receiving bribes from a Bangladeshi MP currently jailed in Kuwait to issue work permits illegally in order to bring in labor and facilitate human trafficking operations.

from there," he said. "I fled." Makhoul mainly blames the type of fuel burnt at the Zouk Mikael plant, which he says is rich in sulfide and nitric oxide - carcinogenic chemicals that affect the respiratory system and the skin. Compounding the problem, he said, is the fact the seaside plant is located at a low altitude, with heavy smoke trapped in the densely-populated area by nearby mountains that overlook the Mediterranean.

Pictures went viral online last month of thick black smoke again billowing from the Zouk plant as it burnt low-quality fuel oil to produce just one hour of power that day. The energy ministry said the plant had been forced to use heavy fuel to "keep supplying the airport, hospitals and other vital institutions" with electricity. Since then, the plant has mostly operated at night. —AFP

"Sometimes, we wake up to a loud noise in the middle of the night" when the station kicks into action and burns fuel oil, said Zeina's 80-year-old aunt Samia, who still lives near the plant. Elie Beaino, who heads the Zouk municipality, said a second plant, built without authorization in 2014, runs somewhat more cleanly on higher-quality fuel or gas, but that it has stopped working as its operators cannot afford those higher-quality hydrocarbons. "Most residents want the power plants to close down," he said.

Lawmaker Najat Saliba, an atmospheric chemist, said residents near Zouk are at least seven times more likely to develop cancer than those of Beirut, citing a 2018 study she helped author for the American University of Beirut. She said the heavy fuel oil it uses releases harmful chemicals. "The solution is to import quality fuel oil and gas," she said, adding however that Lebanon cannot afford those fuels. "We have two options today," she said. "To switch the lights off at the airport and in hospitals, or to sit under a black cloud in Zouk." — AFP

## Divorce rates soar in Iraq as...

Continued from Page 1

Premature - often child - marriages are also a driver of divorce. A total of 4,092 adolescent girls were divorced in the two years to the end of 2021. Veteran feminist Hanaa Edwar also pointed to "financial pressure on families" as a cause. "This creates a psychological burden and problems," she said. And Iraq was not spared the surge in domestic violence that came with the coronavirus pandemic - though Edwar salutes women for increasingly finding the courage to leave. "There is an awareness among women that if violence persists in their lives and their children's lives, then it's better to divorce."

But in a deeply patriarchal society like Iraq, a divorced man and a divorced woman are not equal. On



## International

# Silent no more: Nepal's wartime rape survivors demand recognition

## After years of waiting for redress, they are now sharing their experiences

**KATHMANDU:** Beaten and raped by police officers as a child, Mira was among the many victims of sexual violence during Nepal's civil war—and is now one of the few to recount her ordeal. Guerrilla attacks and forced disappearances were daily facts of life on both sides of the Himalayan republic's decade-long Maoist insurgency. The conflict ended in 2006 with a peace deal that brought the rebels into government and promised justice for those who had suffered in the fighting. But 16 years after the war ended, civilian courts have handed down just two convictions for civil war-era crimes, while rape survivors are frustrated that their traumas have been met with official indifference.



### Victims of sexual violence during Nepal's civil war

After years of waiting for redress, they are now sharing their experiences in a demand for recognition. "They have failed to even mention our cases," Mira, who asked to use a pseudonym, told AFP. "The least they could do is recognize that these incidents happened." Mira was just 12 years old in 1999 when she was arrested for participating in a cultural outreach programme run by the Maoist rebels. She spent months

in custody, during which she said she suffered repeated rapes at the hands of officers who also beat her mercilessly.

"I was beyond recognition—my face was swollen, my body was swollen," she said. "My womb keeps hurting, my body keeps hurting. I still have to take medicines." More than 17,000 people were killed and many thousands more were forced to flee their homes before the 2006 peace deal. The settlement included the promise of impartial investigations of wartime atrocities. But it did not include provisions for survivors of sexual violence, who were less willing to report their experiences, and who were also left out of an interim compensation scheme for conflict victims.

"Incidents of rape had taken place during the 10-year war. The government must admit this, and address this," Devi Khadka, coordinator of the National Organisation of Conflict Rape Victims, told AFP. The civil war had just begun in 1997 when Khadka, then a teenager, was herself raped by security forces in custody, she said. She joined the Maoist insurgency, rising steadily through the ranks, and has served in parliament, but battled depression for years. "I stayed silent for a long time, for many reasons. But no one else spoke up. I felt I had to raise my voice for all of us," she said.

#### 'How will we punish them?'

Nepali society traditionally ties chastity to the honour of women and their households, and the stigma of rape often compels victims to keep silent. Already suffering from physical and mental trauma, those that do come forward are often ostracised by their families and

Amnesty International said it was "extremely disturbed by reports and images emerging from the explosions at Insein Prison... No one should die delivering parcels to their loved ones."

Inmates in Myanmar's jails often rely on friends or family for food and medicine supplies. Rights groups say hundreds of political prisoners are held in Insein, including former British ambassador to Myanmar Vicky Bowman and Japanese journalist Toru Kubota.

Hearings at a special court inside the prison compound were cancelled for the day after the blasts, according to a local lawyer who did not want to give their name.

#### Turmoil

Conflict has spiralled in Myanmar since the coup. Self-declared civilian "people's defence forces" (PDF) have sprung up to fight the junta, surprising the military with their effectiveness, some analysts say. Across the country, there are almost daily killings of low-level junta officials or anti-coup activists, with details murky and reprisals often following quickly.

While most of the violence has occurred in rural areas, Yangon has also been rocked by a spate of bombings. In July, a bomb blast near a shopping mall in the city killed two people and wounded 11.

An explosion near a bus stop in a busy neighbourhood in May killed one man and wounded nine people. The junta later said the bomb had gone off accidentally and that the victim had been in contact with PDF groups it has declared "terrorists".

More than 2,300 people have been killed in the military's crackdown on dissent since the coup and over 15,000 arrested, according to a local monitoring group. The junta blames anti-coup fighters for the deaths of almost 3,900 civilians. — AFP



**KATHMANDU, Nepal:** In this picture taken on June 17, 2022, coordinator of the National Organisation of Conflict Rape Victims Devi Khadka speaks during an interview with AFP in Kathmandu. — AFP

struggle to support themselves.

"What we need is support for our livelihood, for our health and for our children's future," said Reenu, who was raped by Maoist soldiers during the conflict. She added that the immediate needs of victims were a bigger priority than bringing perpetrators to justice.

"Many women don't even know who wronged them, so how will we punish them?" she asked. Nepal's two transitional justice commissions began operations in 2015 but have failed to resolve a single case, despite

receiving over 60,000 complaints of murders, torture and unexplained disappearances.

More than 300 cases of rape and sexual violence have been registered by the commission, but activists say the formal reports are a small fraction of the true total. Survivors are reluctant to come forward because the government has failed to "create a secure environment" for them to do so, said Mandira Sharma, a senior legal adviser for the International Commission of Jurists. "But these are serious crimes," she told AFP. "The state is obligated to take action against the perpetrator."

#### 'Scared to give us justice'

Critics say Nepal's truth and reconciliation process has been poorly designed from the outset and plagued by chronic funding shortfalls. It also lacks political support to proceed, with former Maoist rebels and political leaders among those blamed for presiding over wartime atrocities now in government ranks.

The finance minister in June announced a financial support programme for wartime survivors of sexual violence—the first compensation of its kind. But months after the announcement, not a single victim has received any money.

"The older this conflict gets, the more problems for women like me," a 33-year-old woman who said she was raped by security forces as a teenager told AFP. "The government is aware that women and children suffered sexual violence in the war," she said. "But it is scared to give us justice. What if their own people need to be punished?" — AFP

## Bomb blasts outside Myanmar prison kill 8

**YANGON, Myanmar:** At least two bombs exploded outside a prison in Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon on Wednesday, killing eight people and wounding 18. The Southeast Asian nation has been in turmoil since a military coup last year, with swathes of the country engulfed by fighting.

The bombs hit a crowd queuing to drop off parcels for inmates at Insein Prison, junta authorities said in a statement, without specifying the number of explosions. They blamed "terrorists" and said the dead included three prison staff and a 10-year-old girl.

The junta added that security forces had defused another "homemade mine" found nearby. One witness queuing at the parcel counter told AFP the first blast hit around 9:30 am (0300 GMT). "Then another two went off quickly. After that we heard shooting as well," said the witness, who requested anonymity.

"I saw some people bleeding. The glass around the counter was all shattered." According to another witness, security forces locked down the area around the sprawling colonial-era prison after the explosions. Pictures in local media purporting to capture the aftermath showed what appeared to be blood stains on the floor around a counter, and shattered windows behind.

There was no claim of responsibility. A junta spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.



**YANGON, Myanmar:** File photo shows an entrance of Insein prison in Yangon. Multiple bomb blasts outside a prison in Myanmar's commercial hub Yangon killed eight and wounded 18 people. — AFP

## Climate change puts a billion children at 'extreme risk'

**THE HAGUE, Netherland:** Some one billion children are at "extremely high risk" due to climate change harms, a rights group warned on Wednesday, adding that youths' living standards failed to improve in the last decade.

The KidsRights index, based on figures supplied by UN agencies, also said more than one-third of the world's children, some 820 million, were currently exposed to heatwaves. Water scarcity affected 920 million children worldwide, while diseases such as malaria and dengue affected some 600 million children, or one in every four, Dutch NGO KidsRights said.

The KidsRights Index is the first and only ranking that measures how children's rights are respected annually, ranking Iceland, Sweden, and Finland as the best for children's rights and Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Chad as the worst, out of 185 countries. Of the top three nations, only Sweden's ranking changed from the previous year, moving to second from fourth place. Marc Dullaert, founder

and chairman of KidsRights, described this year's report as "alarming for our current and future generations of children."

"A rapidly changing climate is now threatening their futures and their basic rights," he said. "There has been no significant progress in the standards of children's lives over the past decade and on top of that their livelihoods have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic," Dullaert added.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on children, who were unable to get food or medicine due to disruptions and the closure of clinics, leading to some 286,000 under the age of five years dying as a result, KidsRights said. For the first time in two decades, the number of child labourers has risen to 160 million, representing an increase of 8.4 million over the last four years, said the KidsRights Index, which is compiled together with Rotterdam's Erasmus University.

KidsRights highlighted Angola and Bangladesh, saying the two countries significantly improved their scores in regards to children's rights. Angola has more than halved its under-five child mortality, while Bangladesh has reduced the number of underweight children under five years by almost half.

But the report also slapped Montenegro for low vaccination numbers, ranked 49 on the index. The survey uses UN data to measure how countries measure up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. — AFP

## Pulitzer-winning photographer stopped from flying to US

**NEW DELHI:** Indian authorities have prevented an award-winning photographer from flying to the United States to collect her Pulitzer Prize, the latest of several Kashmiri journalists barred from leaving the country.

Sanna Irshad Mattoo was one of four journalists working for Reuters news agency that took home the prestigious award for feature photography this year. The 28-year-old has won plaudits for documenting life in Indian-administered Kashmir, a disputed and highly militarised Himalayan territory home to a decades-old insurgency. Mattoo was stopped by immigration authorities at New Delhi airport late Tuesday and prevented from boarding while two of her colleagues were permitted to leave the country. She later tweeted a picture of her ticket that was stamped "cancelled without prejudice".

"I don't know what to say... this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for me," Mattoo, who is also a fellow of the prestigious Magnum Foundation, told AFP. "Only I was stopped without any reason and the others were allowed to go. Maybe it has something to do with me being a Kashmiri."

Tuesday was the second time this year that Mattoo was prevented from leaving India. In July she was stopped in a similar manner at the same airport

while on her way to Paris for a book launch and photography exhibition. India has sought to entrench its control of Kashmir, which is also claimed in full by neighbouring Pakistan and which has been a constant source of tension between the nuclear-armed archrivals. Thousands have been killed there since the start of a rebellion against Indian rule in 1989, and more than half a million troops are permanently stationed in the region.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government stripped the territory of its limited autonomy in 2019, severing internet connections for months and detaining political leaders to forestall an anticipated backlash.

Foreign journalists have been barred from Kashmir and local reporters based in the territory say they have come under pressure to tone down their work.

#### 'Arbitrary and excessive'

Several other Kashmiri journalists have also been prevented by authorities from travelling abroad in the past three years. Independent journalist Aakash Hassan, a regular contributor to the Guardian newspaper, was not allowed to board a flight from New Delhi to Sri Lanka for work in July.

He told AFP that months later, he has still received no information from authorities as to why he was denied permission to travel. "Given the pattern, it looks like it only happens to Kashmiri journalists," Hassan told AFP. The decision to prevent Mattoo from leaving was "arbitrary and excessive", Beh Lih Yi of the Committee to Protect Journalists said in a statement. She called on India to cease "all forms of harassment and intimidation" against journalists working in Kashmir. — AFP

## HK court allows UK trial lawyer for Jimmy Lai

**HONG KONG, China:** A Hong Kong court on Wednesday allowed a veteran British lawyer to represent jailed pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai at his upcoming national security trial despite opposition from city authorities. Lai and a group of executives from the now-shuttered Apple Daily newspaper are being prosecuted for "colluding with foreign forces", an offence under a new security law China imposed on Hong Kong to stamp out dissent.

The trial is set to start in December and last for 30 days. Lai's legal team had wanted him to be represented by Tim Owen, a London-based lawyer, but the application was opposed by both Hong Kong's secretary for justice and Bar Association.

On Wednesday Jeremy Poon, chief judge of Hong Kong's High Court, ruled in favour of allowing Owen to represent Lai. "It is clearly in the public interest to admit an overseas specialist as eminent as Mr Owen so that the court will have the best assistance to tackle the formidable task at hand," Poon wrote in his judgement.

Lawyers from common law jurisdictions are able to work within Hong Kong's legal system, particularly for cases where their specific expertise may be required. Owen is a king's counsel—a senior trial lawyer in Britain—and a member of the international firm Matrix Chambers. He has previously worked in Hong Kong's courts including as a lead defence lawyer for British banker Rurik Jutting who was convicted of murdering two women. He also represented a police officer who appealed a conviction for assaulting a democracy protester in 2014.

The parties opposed to Owen's appointment argued Lai's national security trial was not especially complex and that the British lawyer would not "add a significant dimension". But Poon disagreed. "This case will be of immense importance to the development of local jurisprudence on the application of the National Security Law and the protection of the freedom of expression," he wrote. Lai, 74, is one of Hong Kong's best-known pro-democracy activists. He faces up to life in prison if convicted. He is already in jail for taking part in an illegal protest. For years, his Apple Daily tabloid newspaper was scathing in its criticism of China's Communist Party and openly supportive of democracy.—AFP



Sam Rainsy

## Cambodia sentences exiled opposition figure to life

**PHNOM PENH, Cambodia:** Cambodia sentenced exiled opposition figure Sam Rainsy to life imprisonment on Wednesday for allegedly attempting to cede territory to a foreign entity, according to a court ruling. The case related to the politician's promises to protect the rights of the country's indigenous people, who continue to face discrimination mostly over land rights. A document from the Phnom Penh Municipal Court — seen by AFP — said Rainsy had been "sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of attempting to hand over a part of national territory to a foreign entity" in 2013. The court also stripped him of all political rights, it added.

It relates to a 2013 meeting between Rainsy and a leader of the US-based Montagnard Foundation, which works to protect the rights of indigenous minorities in Vietnam. A video posted by an anonymous Facebook account in 2018 appeared to show him pledging to uphold the rights of Cambodia's indigenous people.

Rainsy and the Montagnard Foundation's then-leader Kok Ssor also signed a document with three articles from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on minorities' self-determination rights. But Cambodian authorities accused him of treachery, and of attempting to give land to foreigners. Montagnard people are a mostly Christian ethnic minority group that lives in Vietnam's mountainous Central Highlands region. Rainsy has lived in France since 2015 to avoid jail on a number of convictions he says are politically motivated, including a 25-year sentence passed in March last year.—AFP



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2022

# Business

## Biden to release 15m barrels from US oil reserves: Official

### Release in response to price hikes linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden will announce Wednesday he's putting the final 15 million barrels on the market from a record release of US strategic oil reserves, with more releases possible if energy prices spike, a senior US official said. The new tranche of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve will be "completing the 180 million barrel release authorized in the spring," in response to price hikes linked to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a senior US official said Tuesday.

The order, which Biden will announce in a speech, means the president will be "making clear that the administration is prepared to undertake significant additional... sales this winter if they are needed due to Russian or other actions disrupting global markets," the official added.

The decision to make the biggest ever dip into the emergency oil reserves—usually kept for responding to situations such as hurricane-related shutdowns at oil refineries—was Biden's gambit to calm energy markets and shield the world's biggest economy from Ukraine war shocks.

Major energy exporter Russia was hit with US and European sanctions soon after it invaded Ukraine in February, causing turmoil on markets. In addition, the Kremlin has threatened to use its leverage over energy supplies as an economic weapon against the West, which supports Ukraine's fight to repel the invasion. For Biden there are serious domestic concerns, with gasoline prices at one point averaging more than \$5 a gallon, causing nationwide anger. While prices have since moderated, inflation remains the biggest factor driving

Republican hopes of defeating the Democrats in November's midterm legislative elections.

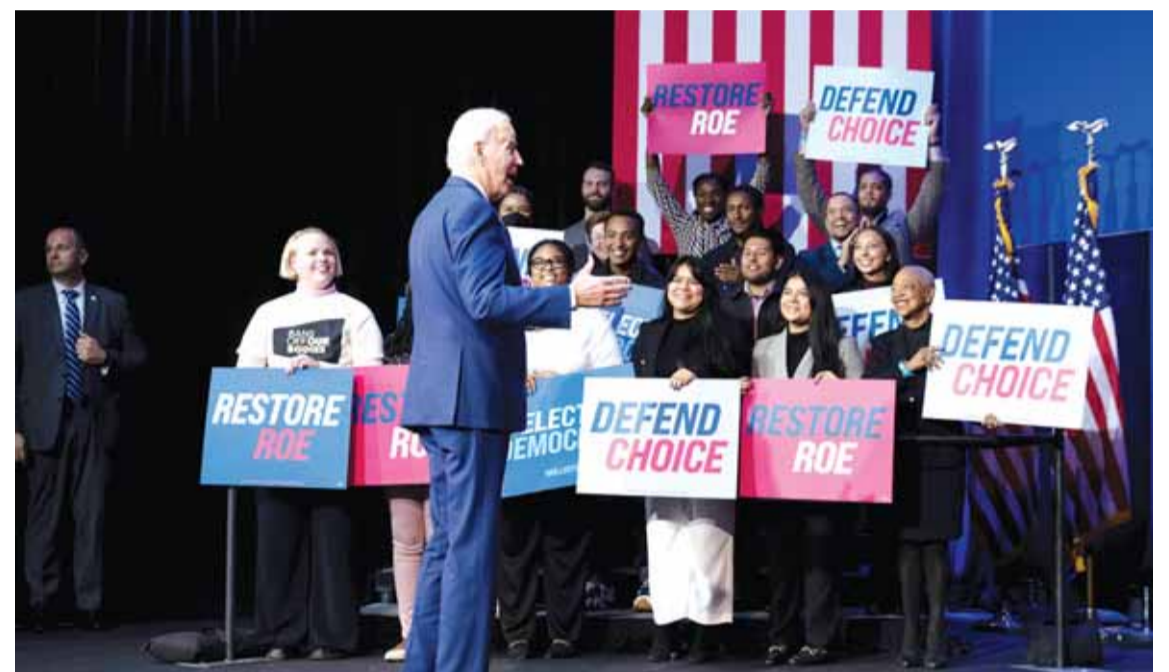
#### Reserves in good shape

The senior official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, stressed that the Strategic Petroleum Reserve was not being used irresponsibly. At the same time as announcing the 15 million barrel draw-down for delivery in December—and flagging the possibility of more to come—Biden is highlighting a plan to refill the reserve as soon as prices hit around \$67-72 a barrel, the official said.

This is "an important signal for producers that the SPR will be part of helping to moderate and stabilize price flows, not only when prices are going high but when prices are going low," he said.

The reserve, meanwhile, remains in good shape, the official said, with more than 400 million barrels. "That is still a large amount" and allows for "additional opportunity... if we need to do more sales."

The official described the SPR use as a "brilliant" bridge out of a crisis moment, playing "an incredibly constructive role through a very challenging time period." However, with "additional volatility" expected from Russia and production levels still not back to pre-COVID pandemic levels, stability is "not quite there yet." Asked whether the United States could take the more radical measure of curbing fuel exports—something that would help tamp down domestic prices but hurt foreign buyers, including in allied countries—an official declined to confirm or deny. "We're keeping all tools on the table," the official, who also spoke on condition of



WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden delivers remarks during a Democratic National Committee (DNC) event at the Howard Theatre in Washington, DC, on October 18, 2022 — AFP

anonymity, said.

But with the midterm vote just three weeks away, Republicans are seeking to paint Biden as a manipulator of the oil reserves in order to win support for his Democrats. The move is not an effort to steady

markets, "it's a bid to try and save his party from getting walloped in the Midterm elections," House Republican Byron Donalds tweeted, adding that "Biden's mismanagement of our strategic oil reserves is a dire threat to national security." —AFP

## Truss budget fiasco shows power of the markets

LONDON: British Prime Minister Liz Truss's humiliating budget U-turn shows how markets can wield influence over government fiscal policy. The premier on Monday shredded her tax-slashing budget after it sparked markets chaos over rocketing state debt, as traders questioned the government's credibility on public finances.

Truss was elected last month on a tax-cutting platform and her astonishing reversal prompted talk of a rebellion within the governing Conservative party. The furore "is a rather extreme example of how markets react when a change in policy does not appear to be credible", said economist Antoine Bouet at French economic forecaster CEPII.

#### Not the first

The Truss budget is not the first time that world governments have failed to overcome the verdict of markets. Other examples include the pound's exit from the gold standard in 1931 and from the Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1992, as well as the Asian financial crisis in 1997, analysts say.

Britain's reversal has echoes of 1983 France, when socialist president Francois Mitterand switched to austerity in a major U-turn to restore market stability. Truss's flagship mini-budget on September 23 was aimed at boosting the recession-threatened economy and easing a cost-of-living crisis.

But her costly universal energy price freeze and tax cuts were financed by debt, fuelling fears of even higher inflation. That sent UK government bond yields rocketing and the pound collapsing to a record dollar-low on debt concerns. In reaction, the Bank of England launched an emergency bond-buying plan to help avert a financial catastrophe, while the International Monetary Fund urged a budget rethink amid a surge also in mortgage rates.

Three weeks later, Truss fired finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng and replaced him with Jeremy Hunt—who then axed most of the tax cuts, slashed the energy-price cap and warned of tough spending cutbacks. "No government can control the markets but every government can give certainty about the sustainability of public finances," Hunt said Monday as he took the axe to the budget.

#### 'Room for maneuver'

Bouet argued the markets did not dictate the political and economic policy, rather they reacted to it. "There is a large amount of room for maneuver for governments, provided they do not go completely off the rails," the economist told AFP.

The reaction would have been "on a smaller scale" if the UK had announced smaller tax cuts—or energy price assistance that was more targeted. The market response was "brutal" because of "major inconsistencies", Bouet said. Truss' budget was seen as adding to already sky-high inflation, which the Bank of England is struggling to bring down. The BoE is set to deliver a super-sized interest rate hike next month after UK inflation hit a 40-year high of 10.1 percent in September. Russ Mould, strategist at stockbroker AJ Bell, said the sheer size of bond and foreign exchange markets gave them a unique power



Britain's Prime Minister Liz Truss

to impact the UK economy.

#### No 'convincing plan'

"Financial markets can and will push governments around, especially if governments—or central banks—do something stupid," Mould told AFP. "Bond and currency markets are so large they can overwhelm almost anyone." Some have tried to take on markets, such as in 2012 when Mario Draghi—at the time head of the European Central Bank—vowed "to do whatever it takes" to save the euro.

Draghi helped avert a eurozone debt crisis, although the euro weakened significantly. "The EU debt crisis is a good example where markets lost confidence in debt sustainability in various southern European countries," noted analyst Kay Neufeld at research group CEBR. The Truss budget drama "showed what happens if you surprise markets—and don't have a convincing plan on how to pay" for costly measures. — AFP

## UK inflation jumps back above 10%

LONDON: British inflation jumped back above 10 percent in September on soaring food prices, official data showed Wednesday, with the country gripped by a cost-of-living crisis bedeviling the government. The Consumer Prices Index accelerated to 10.1 percent on an annual basis, up from 9.9 percent in August, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

The September rate matched the level in July and is the highest in 40 years as a result also of sky-high energy bills. "I understand that families across the country are struggling with rising prices and higher energy bills," Britain's new finance minister Jeremy Hunt said in a separate statement.

"This government will prioritize help for the most vulnerable while delivering wider economic stability and driving long-term growth that will help everyone."

The government has been rocked by chaos in markets in the wake of a budget that pledged tax cuts that would have been funded by state debt. Most of those measures have since been reversed, leaving Prime Minister Liz Truss fighting to save her job.

Following widespread criticism over the budget, Truss sacked Hunt's predecessor, Kwasi Kwarteng, after less than six weeks in the role. Analysts said Wednesday's data would put pressure on the Bank of England to keep raising its main interest rate by sizeable amounts. Capital Economics noted that the BoE could hike its rate by as much as one percentage point to 3.25 percent at its next meeting in November.

#### 'Most pressing problem'

Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor, said inflation was "the most pressing economic problem facing the Bank of England as well as the government."

"Without price stability, the cost-of-living crisis will continue to weigh on the economy by squeezing household budgets and dampening business margins." In a bid to help households, the government has capped domestic energy bills until April. However, the original plan was for a cap until late 2024, which Truss pulled earlier this week. Markets were left spooked that a budget of tax cuts and a costly energy-price cap would add massively to British debt that had already ballooned on government support during the COVID pandemic. Her budget sent the pound plunging to a record-low against the dollar and caused yields on government bonds to soar—forcing Truss into a huge budget U-turn that has calmed markets.

Following Wednesday's data, the pound was down against the dollar and euro, while London's FTSE 100 shares index steadied at the open. —AFP

## Ghana traders shut down to protest inflation

ACCRA: Traders in Ghana's capital Accra closed their stores and businesses on Wednesday in a three-day protest over soaring costs of living as the West African country battles economic fallout from the Ukraine war. Daily gridlock in Accra's Central Business District and in the biggest vehicle spare parts district was largely absent, with only street food vendors in front of the shuttered shops.

President Nana Akufo-Addo is under pressure over his economic management after reversing his position and entering talks with the IMF over a \$3-billion loan to shore up public finances.

Ghana faces a high debt load and inflation at a historic high of 37 percent in September, while the local cedi currency has plummeted against the US dollar. Kwesi Amoah, a spare parts dealer at Abossey Okai, a suburb of Accra, told AFP traders no longer issued pro-forma invoices because prices change within a day, sometimes within hours. "We understand these are tough times all over the world, but our neighbours in Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso are not suffering like us," he said.

The Ghana Union of Traders Association (GUTA) union said the move sent a signal to the government that they were frustrated over poor economic management. —AFP

## Tunisian bakers strike over unpaid subsidies

TUNIS: Thousands of Tunisian bakers began an open-ended strike on Wednesday to demand fees the state owes them for producing subsidized bread as the country faces a grave economic crisis.

The national bakery owners' union said some 3,200 of their businesses had closed, representing 95 percent of the North African country's state-backed bakeries. They are demanding payment of 14 months of overdue subsidies, adding up to around 250 million dinars (nearly \$78 million), the union said.

A further 1,200 bakeries that do not receive subsidies are functioning normally. Several dozen bakery owners staged a protest on Wednesday outside the headquarters of the UTICA business lobby group in the capital Tunis. "It's been more than a year that we've been paying from our pockets to produce bread, we've had enough," said Najib Mouhamadi, who owns a bakery employing six people in the northeastern province of Nabeul.

Tunisia is in the throes of a public finance crisis that has caused repeated shortages of subsidized flour, sugar and other basic goods. That comes years into a grinding economic downturn exacerbated by inflation that hit nine percent in August year-on-year. Last week, drivers in Tunis formed long queues at petrol stations as fuel deliveries fal-



TUNIS: Thousands of Tunisian bakers began an open-ended strike on Wednesday to demand fees the state owes them for producing subsidized bread as the country faces a grave economic crisis.

tered, stirring anger against the government of President Kais Saied who has installed one-man rule since staging a dramatic power grab in July 2021. Tunisia is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a \$1.9-billion loan that would also allow it to access international creditors, hitherto spooked by the country's CCC credit score from ratings agency Fitch.

The loan package, agreed to by IMF experts last week and expected to be approved by the lender's board in December, stipulates that the state gradually scrap the subsidy system and replace it with cash transfers to the neediest households. —AFP



## Business

# Hong Kong to 'trawl world for talent' in reboot attempt

## Lee's speech offers blueprint for reversing exodus of talent

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's leader unveiled plans to resuscitate the business hub's fortunes on Wednesday, hoping to lure back international expertise after an exodus of talent-but he vowed no let-up in a political crackdown that has transformed the city. John Lee, a Beijing-anointed former security chief, gave a debut policy speech that prioritized the revival of an economy mired in recession and maintaining security while recognizing that many had left a city that serves as a gateway to China. "Over the past two years, the local workforce shrank by about 140,000," he said. "Apart from actively nurturing and retaining local talent, the government will proactively trawl the world for talent."

The former British colony has lately undergone its most tumultuous period since its 1997 handover to China. Huge and sometimes violent democracy protests three years ago were followed by a sweeping clamp-down on dissent as well as some of the world's strictest coronavirus pandemic rules, many of which remained in place long after rivals reopened. The city, which only scrapped mandatory quarantine for international arrivals last month, has seen its deficit soar while the border with the Chinese mainland remains all but closed because of Beijing's strict zero-COVID rules.

### Talent office

Lee's speech offered his blueprint for reversing that downturn, including a talent scouting office, a HK\$30 billion (\$3.8 billion) co-investment fund to attract overseas businesses and rules to make it easier to hire foreigners. The city will give preferential treatment to "top talent", described as people who earn HK\$2.5 million or more annually and graduates from the top 100 universities around the world who have relevant work experience.

Even with investor-friendly measures, rebooting

Hong Kong will be tough. Lee took office in July at a time of rising global interest rates, fears for China's zero-COVID economy, uncertainty sparked by Russia's Ukraine invasion and dents in Hong Kong's business-friendly reputation. The reaction from investors and analysts was lukewarm.

Hong Kong's stock exchange, which has lost more than a quarter of its value since the start of the year, closed down 2.38 percent on Wednesday. "The government still lacks the sense of crisis and understanding of the actual situation," public affairs commentator Derek Yuen told AFP, saying Lee's policy focused more on Hong Kong being a gateway to China and less on being a truly international business hub. "Officials may be aware of the competition from within the region like Singapore but they don't understand what makes other countries tick," he added. Baptist University political scientist Kenneth Chan said there was little to reassure foreign talent about Hong Kong's core values.

"For a lot of people who are looking at Hong Kong... it's a new era with a lot of uncertain elements, mostly political elements. They have to think very carefully before making the move and commit," he told AFP.

### 'Stability is the prerequisite'

After nearly three years, Hong Kong is gradually moving away from its version of China's zero-COVID policy, which failed to keep out the virus and has left the city internationally cut off. Authorities have axed the unpopular hotel quarantine for incoming travellers and loosened some social-distancing rules.

But the pace of reopening still lags behind regional rivals such as Singapore-which has gone on its own charm offensive to lure talent and has roared back as a global transport hub. Overseas arrivals to Hong Kong, for example, cannot enter bars and restaurants for the



**HONG KONG, China:** Diners have lunch as Hong Kong's Chief Executive John Lee is seen on a tv delivering his first policy address in Hong Kong on October 19, 2022. — AFP

first three days and Lee's speech gave no details on a clear timeline to lifting all virus curbs.

Lee did stress that the government would press ahead with more national security legislation and possible new rules on "false information". "The development of Hong Kong allows no delay. Social stability is the prerequisite for our development, and we have to get rid of any interference," he said.

Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on Hong Kong in 2020 after democracy protests the year

before, flipping the city's once outspoken vibe. Most prominent local democracy activists either are in jail, are awaiting trial or have fled overseas while schools have been ordered to turn students into Chinese patriots. Lee's policy speech-which lasted two hours and 45 minutes-also included major infrastructure projects to boost the economy and plans to deliver more housing in a city with one of the world's least affordable property markets, something successive Hong Kong administrations have failed to tackle. —AFP



**BERLIN, Germany:** Empty shelves for certain products are seen in a Berlin supermarket on October 18, 2022. In the face of price increases imposed by food multinationals, some distributors choose to leave supermarket shelves empty. — AFP

## Empty shelves as German supermarkets resist price hikes

**BERLIN:** German shoppers are increasingly finding empty shelves where their favourite Kellogg's cereal, Mars chocolate bar or rice brand used to be, as supermarkets square off against major food companies over price hikes. "Dear customers: we are sorry to inform you that we can't currently offer all the products of our supplier Mars GmbH," reads a note in a sparsely stocked aisle at an Edeka supermarket in central Berlin. With German inflation running at a record 10 percent, supermarket giants are pushing back against what they see as unreasonable price increases by some of the world's best-known brands.

Food multinationals argue that their manufacturing costs have risen on the back of soaring energy and transport costs, in part because of the war in Ukraine. But retailers in Europe's top economy say they are protecting customers' purchasing power at a difficult time, and that price hikes of up to 30 percent in some cases are overblown. "Many international brands are trying to take advantage of inflation to charge excessive prices in order to increase their profits," an Edeka spokesman told AFP, calling Mars's price demands "unjustified".

Edeka and its rival Rewe, two of Germany's biggest supermarket chains, have stopped getting delivery of around 300 products from the Mars company, known for its Twix and Snickers bars, Ben's Original rice packets and Whiskas cat food. They have also used the supermarket showdown to push their cheaper, own-brand products as alternatives.

### Coca-Cola court battle

Mars for its part blames the "volatile context" and "inflationary pressure". Thomas Roeb, a retail expert at the Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences, said the battle of the brands was not new, and that items get pulled every year in spats between supermarkets and food companies. "But this time it has gone a little less unnoticed, because Edeka and Rewe are affected at the same time," Roeb told AFP. At the Edeka in Berlin the absence of pet food, a sector where Mars dominates, is particularly glaring.

In a nearby Rewe, the rice aisle is half empty. The cereal section is looking bare, too, after Rewe failed to reach a compromise with US company Kellogg's-which according to German media was asking almost 30 percent more for its popular breakfast food. Similar price wars are raging with other brands.

In some stores, tea and coffee products by Jacobs Douwe Egberts are missing from shelves. Discounters Aldi and Lidl aren't stocking Danone, the world's largest yoghurt maker.

Edeka and Coca-Cola are fighting out their row in court, with the supermarket appealing a recent ruling saying the drinks giant was within its rights to stop deliveries over the dispute.

### 'Tastes the same'

"Food, drinks and even hygiene products are missing," said Leana Kring, 24, outside a supermarket on Berlin's Karl-Marx-Allee boulevard. The supermarket woes add more strain for German consumers, who are already bracing for a grim winter amid high inflation and a deepening energy crisis following Russia's cutoff of gas supplies. The German economy, usually a driver of European growth, is forecast to tip into recession next year.

A Rewe spokesman told AFP that supermarkets don't want to see shoppers "unnecessarily penalised" during "these difficult times". But the retailers have also seized the opportunity to promote their store-brand products, which have grown in popularity as Germans try to watch their pennies. —AFP

## Stocks stumble as inflation concerns offset earnings

**LONDON:** Major stock markets stumbled Wednesday, as lingering concerns over sky-high inflation offset positive earnings. In a sign of the uphill struggle in the battle against soaring prices, UK inflation jumped back above 10 percent last month. London's FTSE 100 shares index steadied and the pound fell following the data-and as Britain's under-fire Prime Minister Liz Truss faced a grilling in parliament.

Foreign exchange traders were keeping tabs also on whether the dollar would reach 150 yen, which would be a fresh high for 32 years. Japan's currency is being hit hard as the country's central bank holds off from hiking interest rates, in sharp contrast to its peers the world over which are aggressively hiking borrowing costs to try and cool decades-high inflation.

Asian stock markets diverged after Wall Street ended higher for a second session running Tuesday, heartened by forecast-beating results from Goldman Sachs and Johnson & Johnson.

They came on the heels of better-than-expected reports from banking giants Citigroup, JP Morgan and Wells Fargo. Traders were given an extra boost by news that Netflix gained more than two million subscribers in July-September. —AFP

## CISCO gold sponsor of 9th e-Government Forum

**KUWAIT:** The "9th e-Government Forum" and its accompanying technology exhibition will begin next Sunday, 23/10. The opening ceremony commences at 6.30 pm at Al-Baraka Hall in Crowne Plaza Hotel.

This came in a press release issued by Cisco, the enterprise networking and security leader. CISCO unveiled its plan for a global, cloud-delivered, integrated platform that secures and connects organizations of any shape and size. The company is designing the Cisco Security Cloud to be the industry's most open platform, protecting the integrity of the entire IT ecosystem - without public cloud lock-in.

"With the complexity of hybrid work, continued acceleration of cloud adoption, and the ever-advancing threat landscape, organizations are looking for a trusted partner to help them achieve security resilience. We believe Cisco is uniquely positioned due to its scale, breadth of solutions and cloud-neutral business model to meet their needs," said Jeetu Patel, Executive Vice President and General Manager of Security and Collaboration at Cisco. "Cisco is already delivering upon key tenets of our cloud platform vision. We're excited to increase our innovation velocity to truly deliver on the vision of the Cisco Security Cloud."

The Security Cloud will provide an integrated experience for securely connecting people and devices everywhere to applications and data anywhere. With unified management, the open platform will provide threat prevention, detection, response, and remediation capabilities at scale. Cisco has been on the journey toward the Security Cloud for some time and is sharing additional progress with new innovations across its security portfolio.

### Secure access

Ushering in the next generation of zero trust, Cisco is building solutions that enable true continuous trusted access by constantly verifying user and device identity, device posture, vulnerabilities, and indicators of compromise. These intelligent checks take place in the background, leaving the user to work without security getting in the way. Cisco is introducing less intrusive methods for risk-based authentication, including the patent-pending Wi-Fi fingerprint as an

effective location proxy without compromising user privacy. To evaluate risk after a user logs in, Cisco is building session trust analysis using the open Shared Signals and Events standards to share information between vendors. Cisco unveiled the first integration of this technology with a demo of Cisco Secure Access by Duo and Box.

### Secure Edge

To radically simplify how organizations connect and protect users, things, and applications, anywhere, Cisco is excited to introduce Cisco+ Secure Connect Now, a unified Secure Access Service Edge (SASE) solution. Cisco+ Secure Connect Now is a turnkey offer available in several countries that allows customers to quickly deploy SASE and ease day-to-day operations through a cloud-managed platform. The as-a-service subscription is optimized for value and managed through a unified dashboard.



Jeetu Patel

### Secure operations

Cisco added a new Talos Intel On-Demand service offering custom research on the threat landscape unique to each organization. To help accelerate incident detection and response, Cisco announced enhancements to Cisco Secure Cloud Analytics with its ability to automatically promote alerts into SecureX and map those alerts to MITRE ATT&CK. This follows the general availability of SecureX device insights to aggregate, correlate, and normalize data about the devices in their environment, and the integrations of Kenna and Secure Endpoint to better prioritize vulnerabilities. Cisco also introduced the Secure Firewall 3100 Series, designed for hybrid work with a new encrypted visibility engine that uses artificial intelligence and machine learning to detect hidden threats.

### Simplification

Cisco is introducing simplification across the portfolio with the new unified Secure Client. Streamlining how administrators and users manage endpoints, half of Cisco Secure agents, including AnyConnect, Secure Endpoint, and Umbrella, will be unified by mid-year 2022, with additional agents to be added over time. This follows the new cloud-delivered Secure Firewall Management Center, which is enabled through the Cisco Defense Orchestrator and unifies cloud and on-premise firewall management.

CEO of ArcelorMittal Hamburg. But the energy bill has risen "seven-fold" since Russia's February invasion of Ukraine, he told AFP at the site, where activity was subdued and helmet-clad workers were spread out around the imposing 1970s steelworks. The steep price increase made it unaffordable to continue business as usual at the site, which on average consumes two terawatt-hours of gas and one terawatt-hour of electricity per year-enough to power a medium-sized city. Similar steps to curb production have been taken at other European sites operated by ArcelorMittal, the continent's biggest steelmaker.

In a September statement announcing the cost-saving measures, the company blamed the "exorbitant" rise in energy prices and weaker demand as the global economic outlook darkens.

Germany in recent decades managed to avoid the waves of de-industrialization that hit other European countries. Industrial production remains a pillar of the country's economy and accounts for around 22 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), compared with around 13 percent in neighboring France.

"Germany's business model in a nutshell is buying cheap energy from Russia, raw materials and intermediate products... make some outstanding cars and machines... and export them" to the United States and China, said LBBW bank economist Jens-Oliver Niklasch. "Now, some of the tiles on the roof are broken," he told AFP. —AFP

## Idled plants fuel German angst about de-industrialization

**HAMBURG:** The familiar plume of smoke no longer billows from one of the two chimneys at ArcelorMittal's massive steelworks in Hamburg's harbor. Soaring energy prices have forced operators to partially idle the plant, adding to fears that Germany's industrial companies, the backbone of Europe's biggest economy, are facing an existential threat. Germany is already bracing for a recession as the energy crisis triggered by Russia's war in Ukraine takes its toll, with the government on Wednesday forecasting a contraction of 0.4 percent in 2023.

But some economists say the long-term impact could run far deeper and see entire manufacturing sectors trim production or relocate to countries where running costs are lower, fundamentally reshaping Germany's industrial landscape. In Hamburg, the 530 workers at the ArcelorMittal steelworks have been placed on reduced hours since early October.

"Gas plays a crucial role in the (iron ore) reduction process" carried out at the plant, said Uwe Braun,



## Business

# Boubyan Bank records net profit of KD 49m for period ended Sept 2022

## Bank advances to become the 4th safest Islamic bank in region

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank has announced operating profits of approximately KD 79 million during the period ended September 2022, while continuing to allocate provisions amounting to KD 31 million, thereby recording net profits of KD 49 million; approximately at a growth rate of 52 percent compared with last year, with an earnings per share of 0.118 fils.

Adel Al-Majed, Boubyan Bank's Vice-Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer stated: "With the end of Q3 and as we head towards the end of another year, Boubyan Bank continues to score positive results that confirm the robustness of the strategy being adopted by the bank, which aims at domestic expansion while slowly and cautiously exploring foreign markets."

Al-Majed highlighted the most significant numbers recorded by the bank until September, where the bank's total assets grew by 6 percent to reach KD 7.8 billion and the total of customers' deposits grew by 7 percent to reach KD 5.8 billion, while the financing portfolio grew by 9 percent to reach KD 5.8 billion, and operating income grew by 9 percent to reach KD 153 million. Speaking of the bank's market shares, the bank's share of local financing increased generally to approximately 11.2 percent.

"Over the past years, Boubyan started its international expansion journey as it succeeded in completing the acquisition of the Bank of London and the Middle East, where Boubyan's current holding stands at approximately 71 percent, and then the bank announced the full launch of Nomo Bank in Kuwait and UK, as the first Islamic digital bank from London, which can offer its services to Boubyan Bank's customers and non-customers," Al-Majed added.

### More than 15 awards

Al-Majed also stated: "Over the past two years, the bank confirmed the strength and success of the strategy it has been adopting since many years, which highlighted the strength of the bank and kept it in the lead despite the fierce competition."

Boubyan Bank ended Q3, 2022 by receiving a record number of international awards from distinct and prestigious institutions such as Euromoney, MEED, and Global Finance.

The bank received more than 15 awards in various areas such as digital services, creativity and innovation, CSR, and SMEs' support. The bank was also named the World's Best Islamic Digital Bank for the eighth consecutive year by Global Finance. Al-Majed was also recognized this year as he was named "Arab Banker of the Year 2021", making him the first Kuwaiti banker ever to receive the highest recognition given by the Union of Arab Banks for excellent achievements in the Arab financial and banking business.

### The safest bank

Boubyan Bank managed to make a new accomplishment that adds to its recent achievements by advancing to the 4th rank in Global Finance's list for the Safest Islamic Financial Institutions in the GCC. This confirms the success of the bank's strategy and its robustness and resilience in the face of various crises. Al-Majed further added: "We take pride in all that in addition to the international recognition the bank received, especially that such is based on the reports issued by top financial rating agencies in the world. Additionally, such reports demonstrate - through evidence - the bank's ability to take all approved and internationally recognized technical and legal measures in order to maintain the robustness and consistency of the bank's assets."

Al-Majed: As we approach the end of this year, we are happy with our results which highlight our strategy from the very beginning



"Advancing to the 4th rank, compared with the 5th two years ago on the same list, is another step towards improvement and new achievements that bring us closer to our greater goal, namely, to become among top Islamic banks worldwide," he added.

Al-Majed went on to add: "This achievement is particularly important owing to the awarding entity, which is renowned for its fairness, strength, and reliance on numbers and confirmed reports. This further highlights the bank's success in its local expansion and well-studied expansion abroad through the acquisition of a controlling interest in the bank of London and the Middle East ("BLME") as well as the launch of NOMO, the first Islamic digital Bank."

### Serving various segments of customers

The bank continued offering the highest levels of service to customers, which led to many awards given to the bank in customer service. The most prominent of these awards was the "Best Islamic Bank in Customer Service" for the twelfth consecutive year since 2010 by Service Hero, the international consumer-driven customer satisfaction index.

Euromoney International has also named Boubyan Bank the Best Bank for SMEs in Kuwait in recognition for its achievements over the past years in supporting SMEs in addition to the bank's outstanding contribution to providing SMEs with a foothold in the local economy by offering them many services that cater for their business needs.

This award is very special since it is not only given at the Islamic banking sector's level only; rather, it is given at the level of the whole banking sector, hence, it is an achievement that confirms the bank's leadership position in the startups' scene. A thorough assessment was conducted by an international panel of judges, and the results reflect the distinction and leadership position enjoyed by the bank in SMEs' solutions in addition to the bank's contribution to the growth of their business by offering outstanding products and services to them and achieving high productivity levels to keep up with the latest developments as regards incentivizing the business scene.

Ever since the beginning, the bank's management chose to focus on SMEs, being one of the most influential sectors in the Kuwaiti economy, and as a main pillar for development and diversification of income sources. The bank's top management saw the necessity to support SMEs, diversify their access to more innovation and creativity, and incentivize their growth opportunities in addition to helping them explore various sectors and areas.

The Business Banking Department was specifically designed to offer smart banking solutions that understand the needs of SMEs, and to offer various exceptional benefits that help them manage many banking transactions smoothly and easily while giving them access to a great scope of user-



Boubyan Bank's new building

## Boubyan Bank's Key Financial Indicators

In KD million

Indicator	September 2022	September 2021	Growth
Net profits	49	32	52%
Operating income	153	141	9%
Customers' deposits	5,807	5,449	7%
Financing portfolio	5,814	5,313	9%
Assets	7,757	7,311	6%

friendly banking services which are available 24/7.

### Boubyan Bank Accelerator Program

This year, Boubyan Bank announced the launch of the training phase for projects and companies that qualified to continue their projects with Boubyan Accelerator Program, which was launched in collaboration with DIFC FinTech Hive.

Ten projects and startups were selected out of 250 entrepreneurs who applied to join Boubyan Accelerator Program ever since the announcement of its first launch in the State of Kuwait. The program aims at reinforcing Boubyan's strategy and its remarkable steps started years ago towards leading the future of the financial sector in Kuwait, and reinforcing its status as a leader in innovation, digital services, initiatives, and entrepreneurship.

For the second consecutive year, the bank supports CBK and KBA's Be Aware Campaign "Diraya" to spread awareness about many banking matters among citizens and

residents. This comes in line with the bank's CSR efforts.

Moody's, the international credit ratings agency, described Boubyan Bank as a role model to follow as an Islamic bank in Kuwait and the region, while stressing that numbers show that the bank is now ranked the third largest bank in Kuwait in terms of its market share, which exceeds 11 percent.

As a part of CBK's efforts towards improving regional payment systems, this year saw Boubyan Bank's successful participation in Phase I of the GCC cross-border payment system (AFAQ), making it the first local bank to join this system after completing all the necessary tests and procedures.

Boubyan Bank announced that the bank - in alliance with Zain Group and a group of other investors - intends to establish a digital bank under the umbrella of the Central Bank of Kuwait, and an application was already submitted for the establishment of this digital bank within the timeframe set by the Central Bank of Kuwait.

## Procter & Gamble earnings boosted by price hikes

NEW YORK: Procter & Gamble turned in another solid quarter Wednesday as it pointed to indications that consumers are mostly sticking with leading household brands despite higher prices.

The maker of Crest toothpaste and Bounty paper towels, P&G saw a slight dip in profits due to cost pressures as it trimmed its sales forecast because of the strong dollar. But results topped analysts' expectations as executives expressed confidence in the company's ability to navigate what they described as a "very difficult" cost and operating environment.

"When we look at the aggregate picture, we feel very good about the consumers' reaction to our price increases because we don't see any major trade down," Chief Financial Officer Andre Schulten said on a conference call with reporters.

Profits were \$3.9 billion, down four percent from the year-ago period, while revenues increased one percent to \$20.6 billion. The company said its lower profit margins were the result of higher commodity and input material costs, as well as increased freight costs and spending on package reinvestment initiatives. —AFP

## NBK organizes Masterclass on future of business

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) makes consistent endeavors to increase the efficiency of its employees with the best-in-class training programs and workshops, striving to keep pace with the latest developments and changes in the banking industry. In this context, the bank organized a masterclass titled "Business Recoded" delivered by Peter Fisk, the global keynote speaker and expert in innovation and disruption.

The Masterclass was attended by 70 managers from various groups and divisions across the bank and discussed the ways to explore how to lead for a better future, in addition to highlighting the intelligent technologies and innovation with sustainable impact. The global speaker familiarized the attendees with the ways of dealing with the megatrends in a changing international economic world and the use of advanced technologies and environment-friendly innovations.

Fisk highlighted the prerequisites of an innovation-friendly environment and the factors that encourage opening up to new ideas and exploring untraditional and innovative solutions that help overcome the challenges related to disruptive change in the workplace.

The Masterclass also presented case studies comprising hundreds of mega businesses and startups to learn about the innovative business model and strategies used by these incredible companies. It also covered the fundamentals, as well as the drivers of innovation and disruption in the workplace, in addition to ways to generate new ideas from inspiring figures around the world, who

successfully managed to redefine their businesses in an unprecedented matter and in a short time.

Fisk cited the world's most disruptive businesses and brands "Gamechangers", in addition to the experiences of several international industries to develop an innovative business model. He shed light on the ways to benefit from innovators and the need to develop a framework including inspiring goals for companies, ways to build "Ideas Factory" and to accelerate the implementation of ideas, in addition to how to create a better future for business.

Showing his book "Business Recoded", Fisk mentioned that the new generation of business "Gamechangers" are more disruptive and innovative. They are more ambitious, with stretching vision and enlightened purpose. They find their own space, then shape it in their own vision, and define them to their advantage. Most of all they have great ideas, describing ideas as "the new currency of success".

Peter Fisk is a keynote speaker, bestselling author and expert consultant. He is a professor of leadership, strategy, and innovation at IE Business School, and the Academic Director of IE Business School's flagship "Global Advanced Management Program". He is author of 7 business books including "Marketing Genius" and "Gamechangers".

Commenting on Fisk's Masterclass, Emad Al-Ablani, GM - Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said: "The development of managers has always been a top priority for NBK at the group level. The



Emad Al-Ablani



bank's training model enhances leadership capabilities, stemming from a consistent vision of the concept of leadership and what we expect from leaders. It also reflects the unique needs of leaders and is supported by rigorous scientific research to identify the knowledge and skills that form the core of effective and comprehensive leadership to meet staff training needs."

"NBK believes that leaders are the critical factor to create the environment and culture we strive for, a culture that allows our employees to unlock their full potential and thrive," he added.

Al-Ablani noted that NBK provides the training programs and the capabilities required in future leaders to be able to adapt, stimulate and empower others, and to be decisive at the times of uncertainty, as seen recently in the pandemic crisis.

It is worth mentioning that organizing such events comes in line with NBK's commitment towards the continuous development of its employees. NBK regards training and development as key and valuable investments that achieve mutual benefits for employees and the bank, and is ultimately translated into better customer service.

## Huawei nova 10 Pro: A leading example of charging technology

KUWAIT: Great battery life may not sound like the most attractive feature when it comes to making your next smartphone purchase. But it is arguably an essential feature for those who wish to get the most hours of usage out of their smartphones. This is especially true if you wish to move about freely without having to lug along a power bank everywhere you go.

After all, even the most coveted camera features are meaningless if your phone is unable to power up. Every generation of the Huawei nova Series strives to present an innovative piece of technology that has an

on-trend design, powerful cameras, and excellent performance. Huawei nova 10 Pro is a leading example of charging technology, which could be the performance hero you always needed.

### Sufficient battery

Those whose emotions are tied to the charge of the phone can finally say goodbye to battery anxiety. Building on the legacy of the Huawei nova Series, Huawei nova 10 Pro continues to achieve breakthroughs in charging and battery life. You can now get ready for your big day out while charging your phone. The 100W Huawei Supercharge Turbo means that your phone only requires 10 minutes to get from 20 percent to 80 percent and 20 minutes to get to a full charge. Coincidentally, this is the amount of time it may take for you to perfect your quick natural makeup look or make yourself a cup of coffee. Hey, two birds, one stone! You may activate the Turbo mode by connecting the phone to a power supply and tapping on the

charging icon. Huawei nova 10 too supports the 66W Huawei SuperCharge, providing a full charge within 38 minutes.

But even with a full battery, busy office schedules often mean back-to-back meetings and calls, which can be a big drain on the battery. However, with the 4500mAh large battery of Huawei nova 10 Pro, you can enjoy longer lasting battery life too. Should you be heading off to a karaoke session or a camping trip with friends, you can count on Huawei nova 10 Pro to be ready to snap pics or record videos and even keep yourself and your company entertained.

Fast charging and a big battery, coupled with Huawei's unique intelligent temperature control tech-



nology, bring you a better overall experience. With fewer things to worry about, you can enjoy using the phone endlessly, even on the busiest of days.

### Stay cool throughout it all

That aside, the Ultra-Generation VC Liquid Cooling technology intelligently allocates resources according to the temperature of the phone. On top of that, intelligent predictive thermal management technology provides enhanced safety in charging. For running more power-intensive software, the Ultra-Generation VC Liquid Cooling technology helps detect and dissipate heat spots on the phone's surface, maximizing its performance. Furthermore, adopting AI temperature sensing technology, Huawei nova 10 Pro is able to detect hot spots and send feedback to its temperature control centre to take the necessary steps to cool the surface down. Want to get the most hours of use out of your smartphone?





Inuit tattoo artist Kyra Kilabuk tattoos Micheline Kilabuk-Cote's temple in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada. — AFP photos



Inuit tattoo artist Kyra Kilabuk poses for a photo in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada.

# INUIT WOMEN'S FACIAL TATTOOS MAKE A COMEBACK IN ARCTIC

Inuit women in Canada's far north are bringing back a lost ancient tradition of facial tattooing that missionaries once declared "evil." Time-honored tattoos for Inuit women include V-shapes on temples, dots on cheeks and lines on chins. A tattoo artist uses a shiny needle to dot ink on the temple of Micheline Kilabuk-Cote, 37, a symbol depicting the close bond she has with her two sisters. Kilabuk-Cote is a civil servant in Iqaluit, the capital of the Nunavut territory. She said she has been "wanting to do this for a very long time," to reclaim her heritage and honor her mother, who died 19 years ago.

"I hadn't had a chance to really connect with her and her culture," she told AFP, explaining that her mother had been denied an opportunity to be tattooed. "This is for her." Strikingly visible on the chin, forehead and chest, such traditional tattoos were for a long time a means to transmit information about the life of a woman, her interests, or her status in the community. Some had their fingers and hands tattooed to honor Sedna, the goddess of the sea in Inuit mythology. Others on thighs indicated that they were mothers.

But the practise faced opposition from Anglican and Catholic churches who sent missionaries to the Arctic. They said "tattoos were evil," Gerri Sharpe, president of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, which represents Inuit women in Canada, told AFP. Bit by bit, the tradition faded. But a few years ago, an Inuit artist started a revitalization project after learning that the last traditionally tattooed Inuit woman was dying. Hovak Johnston traveled to northern communities to teach different techniques for Inuit women of all ages to get tattoos.

Public figures have also contributed to the art form's rise, such as Mumilaaq Qaqqaq, who at age 25 became the first Inuit woman with a facial tattoo to be elected to Canada's parliament in 2019. She served a single two-year term. Then in 2021, Shina Nova, an Inuit singer and influencer, posted videos of her tattoo session, viewed more than 40 million times on TikTok.

### Tattoos empowering

There's strong demand wherever there are Inuit, says Zorqa Qaunaq, who recently led a workshop with six

people in Iqaluit. The Inuit university program staffer does two tattoos a week at her home in the national capital of Ottawa-home to the largest population of Inuit outside of the far north. It mainly receives young people aged 20 or 30, but also a few teenagers. "It's healing and therapeutic," for some Inuit, she said. After leaving the north when she was young, the now 34-year-old said she felt "disconnected" from her culture. Getting a tattoo was a way of asserting her identity. "It's empowering to have my tattoos," she said.

Gerri Sharpe, 52, with markings on her fingers, wrists and face, echoed this sense of pride. "They are very significant and sacred," she said, adding that she showed off her tattoos to Pope Francis during his visit to Canada in July to apologize for abuses at church-run Indigenous residential schools. The pontiff made a stop in Iqaluit. "It was important for me to show him that we still had our tattoos, (that) they are still alive and well and being revitalized, that (the tradition) was not lost," she explained. — AFP



Inuit teens learn how to cook salmon over an open fire at a summer camp in Iqaluit, Nunavut, Canada.

## Netflix subscriber numbers re-ignite after chilly start

Netflix on Tuesday reported that it gained more than 2 million subscribers in the recent quarter, calming investor fears that the streaming giant was losing paying customers. The company said it ended the third quarter with slightly more than 223 million subscribers worldwide, up some 2.4 million, after seeing subscriber ranks ebb during the first half of the year.

Netflix shares shot up more than 14 percent in after hours trading to \$275 on the earnings news. "Well, thank God we're done with shrinking quarters," Netflix co-chief executive said during an earnings call. "We're back to the positivity; we've got to pick up the momentum." The turn-around in subscriber growth comes as Netflix is poised to debut a subscription option subsidized by ads in November across a dozen countries.

The new "Basic with Ads" subscriptions will be priced at \$6.99 in the United States—three dollars less than a no-ads basic option, Netflix chief operating officer Greg Peters said in a briefing. "The timing is great because we really are at



this pivotal moment in the entertainment industry and evolution of that industry," Peters said. "Now streaming has surpassed both broadcast and cable for total TV time in the United States."

Netflix is working with Microsoft on its ad-supported tier, and teams at both companies will likely need to be bulked up to handle the huge demand by advertisers, Peters said. "We're turning some folks away right now because we just don't have the marketing capacity to serve everyone," Peters said. After having shunned advertising since it started its streaming service, Netflix acquiesced as competition in the market intensifies and as consumers recoil from soaring inflation.

Rival streaming platform Disney+ is to

launch ad-subsidized subscriptions in December. With the launch of cheaper, ad-supported subscriptions, Netflix and Disney+ are expected to bite into the revenue of traditional television channels. "In directly acknowledging competition and using advertising, Netflix is adapting to the streaming landscape's new normal," said Insider Intelligence principal analyst Ross Benes.

### COVID 'logjam'

Netflix expects to add another 4.5 million subscribers in the final quarter of this year. "Although international growth continues, the US video streaming market is hitting its ceiling for subscribers," said Third Bridge analyst Jamie Lumley. "After periods of rapid expansion and

extraordinary spending, Netflix, Disney and their competitive set will soon be forced to focus on improving margins and cutting back on content spending." Netflix said in a letter to shareholders that it believes its competitors have been losing money as they invest heavily to win audiences.

Netflix reported a quarterly profit of \$1.4 billion on revenue of \$7.9 billion—a net income slightly less than in the same period a year ago when it brought in more money. Netflix plans to hold steady with spending some \$17 billion a year on content, said co-chief executive Ted Sarandos. "I feel better and better about that \$17 billion of content spend, because what we have to do is be better at getting more impact per billion dollars spent than anybody else," Sarandos said.

"Big shows that folks engaged with and talk about drive a lot of growth," Peters noted hits such as "Stranger Things" and "Extraordinary Attorney Woo" and pending releases of keenly anticipated films such as "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery." Netflix is also working to smooth out the show release rhythm that was disrupted by the pandemic, according to executives. "COVID got a lot of content jammed up," Sarandos said. "It will take several years to completely unwind the COVID logjam." — AFP

## Indonesia wants 'Java Man', art back from Dutch museums

Indonesia has asked the Netherlands to hand back at least eight art pieces and natural history collections that were acquired during the colonial era, including the remains of a landmark hominid known as "Java Man." Identified as the first-ever example discovered of a Homo erectus, a forerunner of anatomically modern humans, "Java Man" is the centerpiece of an important collection at the Naturalis museum in Leiden. It comprises a femur and most of a cranium, discovered on the Indonesian island of Java by Dutch anatomist and geologist Eugene Dubois in 1891-92, when Indonesia was still a colony of the Netherlands.

Asked about Jakarta's request, Dutch education and science ministry spokesman Jules van de Ven on Tuesday said Indonesia made the request "during the summer". Other pieces sought by Indonesia in the Dubois collection include the horse-riding reins of Prince Diponegoro, a Javanese royal who opposed Dutch colonial rule in the 19th century, and the so-called "Lombok treasure" of golden artefacts, the Dutch daily newspaper Trouw reported.

Ven said a government-appointed commission will start a probe in December and make recommendations to Dutch deputy culture minister Gunay Uslu, adding that he could not give a timeline for the work. Ven added the Dutch government had had "very constructive" discussions with their Indonesian counterparts. "Not only did we speak about returns, but also about cooperation in scientific studies and exhibitions."

The Naturalis museum told Trouw it "understood the Indonesian claim" but was surprised that Indonesia viewed objects of natural history in a similar vein as historical artifacts. The Java skull would not have been found if it wasn't for Dubois, it added. Indonesia's approach to its former colonial master follows that of African countries in pressing Britain, France, Germany and Belgium to return historic or cultural items that were looted during their rule. In recent years the Netherlands has finally started to grapple with the legacy of its colonialism in the former Dutch East Indies. The archipelago declared its independence in August 1945 after being under Dutch rule for three centuries. —AFP



(From left) Cast members British actor Jamie Flatters, British actor Kit Young, US-South African actress Charlize Theron, US actor Laurence Fishburne, US actress Patti LuPone, US actress Sofia Wylie, US actress Sophia Anne Caruso, US actress Kerry Washington and Malaysian actress Michelle Yeoh attend the premiere for Netflix's "The School for Good and Evil" at the Regency Village Theatre in Westwood, California on Oct 18, 2022. — AFP photos



NEW YORK: (From left) Krysty Wilson-Cairns, Nnamdi Asomugha, Malik Yoba, Noah Emmerich, Tobias Lindholm, Devyn McDowell, Alex West Lefler, Eddie Redmayne and Jessica Chastain attend Netflix's "The Good Nurse" New York screening at Paris Theater on Oct 18, 2022 in New York City.



## Lifestyle | Features



This aerial view shows the Moonstone mine in Doringbaai. With pink flamingos, white beaches and blue ocean waters, a stretch of South Africa's west coast has become a battleground between mining firms and environmentalists worried that diggers will raze the nature.— AFP photos

## Surfers, miners fight over S Africa's white beaches

To those who live here, it's like a little piece of heaven, boasting pink flamingos, white beaches and blue ocean waters. Yet this stretch of South Africa's west coast has also become a battleground, pitching mining firms against environmentalists fearful that one of nature's last wild treasures is being bulldozed away. Diamonds, zircon and other minerals have long been extracted in the sandy coastline near the Olifants river, which flows into the Atlantic about 300 kilometers north of Cape Town.

But plans to expand the mining have angered surfers, animal lovers and residents in this remote, sparsely populated region—and they are pushing back with lawsuits and petitions. "It's one of the last frontiers of the South African coastline where you can go and sort of lose yourself," said surfer Mike Schleich, 45, co-founder of a green campaign group, Protect the West Coast.

Mining companies say they bring much-needed jobs to the area and insist they abide by environmental rules. But locals contend the excavation, in which sand is extracted from beaches and the seabed and sifted for valuable minerals, is scaring off fish and tourists alike—and

shrinking rather than broadening employment opportunities. "If we are going to have sea mining, beach mining, land mining... where is the public going to have access to the coast?" questioned Suzanne Du Plessis, 61, a local resident and campaigner.

### Dolphins, seals and excavators

From off-shore diamond prospecting to the construction of a new harbor, several projects threaten to scar the area, a biodiversity hotspot home to dolphins, seals and succulent plants, according to Protect the West Coast. Campaigners secured a small victory in June, when the operator of a mineral sand mine that had gained government approval to expand its activities to 10 more beaches, committed to additional environmental checks.

This came on the back of a lawsuit brought by the Centre of Environment Rights (CER), another environmental group, that was settled out of court by the mine operator, Australian-owned Minerals Commodities. But activists remain wary. "CER is entitled to go back to court should the mine not comply with the provisions of the agreement," said CER's lawyer Zahra Omar.



A general view of a sign board prohibiting access to the Moonstone mine in Doringbaai.

The mine has already asked for more time to put together its biodiversity management plan, she said. Minerals Commodities legal counsel Fletcher Hancock said the company was committed to conducting its operations "in an environmentally sustainable and responsible way." Activists and locals feel the government has left them to fend for themselves. Two government ministries in charge of mineral resources and environmental affairs did not respond to requests for comment.

### Smaller catch

In Doringbaai, a small town a few kilometers south of the Olifants estuary, a once-pristine beach where people used to walk their dogs and enjoy the sunset to the sound of crashing waves is now being torn up by heavy machinery. Resident Peter Owies, 54, said locals were blindsided when mining started earlier this year. "It was quite a surprise and shock to us," he said. A meeting requested by the community to discuss the mining plans was never held, with the required consultation happening only online, said Du Plessis, the campaigner. Preston Goliath, a 46-year-old fisherman, said his catch had dwindled after the mining work began

and the same is true for dozens of others.

"Because they were pumping for diamonds... the fish moved away and our richest (fisheries) bank is now empty," said Goliath. Some residents want the beach mining to stop. But mine owner Trans Hex said all its environmental papers are in order, adding it has held mining rights for the area since 1991. With dozens more mining permits waiting for approval, Schleich of Protect the West Coast said he hoped the government would rethink its strategy for the region.

"There's a whole array of new industries that could have a profoundly positive effect on the people that live on that coastline like algae farming," Schleich said. "We've got to show them that there's a much better way. Activists here are optimistic, emboldened by victories scored elsewhere by environmentalists. On September 1, activists claimed victory in a court case against energy giant Shell - despite the government's support of the company - resulting in the ban of seismic exploration off the touristic Indian Ocean coast.— AFP



A general view of a sign with hiking trail routes in Doringbaai.

## Chemical hair straighteners 'may cause' uterine cancer

Women who frequently use chemical hair straightening products could face more than twice the risk of uterine cancer compared to those who never use them, according to a new study published Monday. The findings, published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, have particular relevance for Black women, who make up a majority of users of straightening products in the United States. Scientists lauded the work, calling for action even though more work is required to confirm the conclusions, in what is an understudied area of research.

Lead author Alexandra White, a cancer epidemiologist with the National Institutes of Health led the study, told AFP it grew out of her previous research that found a link between permanent hair dye and straighteners and breast and ovarian cancers. "We know that these straighteners contain many different chemicals, including endocrine disruptors, and we would expect them to have adverse health effects for hormone sensitive cancers," she said.

"That led us to extend our previous work, just focusing on uterine cancer." Uterine cancer accounts for three percent of all new cancers but is the most common cancer of the female reproductive system, with more than 65,000 new cases and 12,500 deaths are expected in 2022. The outlook is generally good if the cancer is caught early, but treatment often involves removing the uterus, which would preclude child-bearing.

The new paper relied on data from more than 33,000 US women aged 35-74 who took part in the Sister Study, which is led by the government and designed to identify risk factors for cancer and other conditions. Over the course of 11 years, 378 women developed uterine cancer, which primarily affects tissue lining the uterus called endometrium. Type 1, the most common form of the cancer, is thought to be linked to having too much of the sex hormone estrogen.

Women who reported using hair straightening products in the past year were almost twice as likely to develop uterine cancer compared to women that never used them, the researchers found. The link was stronger still for frequent users - defined as more than four uses in the past 12 months. These women had around 2.5 times the risk of developing the cancer compared to women who never used the products. No similar associations were found for other hair products including dyes, bleach, highlights, or perms.

### Brazilian blowouts

"The concern is that there are chemicals in these products that act essentially like estrogen in the body," said White, disrupting normal hormonal processes that could influence cancer risk. A second possibility is that some products include carcinogens, such as formaldehyde, to break

the bonds between keratin proteins in hair, which changes its structure and makes it straight.

Though the study did not specifically ask women what products they used, a particular keratin treatment known as "Brazilian blowouts" was popular at the time the women were enrolled for this study, between 2003 and 2009, though its use has decreased since. White said one of the strengths of the study was that it asked women about the products years before they actually went on to develop cancer, which limits the possibility of people misremembering or wrongly attribute their exposures.

But a key limitation was they weren't able to collect information on the types of straighteners used or specific brands, which would have further strengthened evidence. White said more lab work should be done to study the proposed ways the chemicals cause cancer, as well as more population studies that recruit racially diverse populations and capture information on brands.

A related commentary in the journal acknowledged some shortcomings, but said the study added to a "growing body of evidence" that "hair-straightening products are associated with hormone-related cancers in women," and called for evidence-driven policy changes. It added that the personal care product industry upheld Eurocentric "radicalized standards of beauty" and persistently failed to conform to being transparent about chemical constituents and formulations.— AFP



## Iranian greeted as hero after competing without hijab

An Iranian climber who caused a sensation by competing at an event abroad without a hijab was on Wednesday given a hero's welcome on her return to Tehran by supporters who raucously applauded her action. With Iran still shaken by women-led protests over the death of Mahsa Amini one month ago, Elnaz Rekabi flew back to a Tehran airport after the competition in South Korea.

In an Instagram post and comments at the airport, Rekabi has apologized over what happened and insisted her hijab - which all Iranian women, including athletes, must wear - had accidentally slipped off. But activists fear her comments were made under pressure from Iranian authorities, who were likely infuriated by her actions. "Elnaz is a hero" and "Well done Elnaz!" chanted dozens of supporters who gathered outside the Imam Khomeini International Airport terminal, clapping their hands and brandishing mobile phones to record the moment.

They continued to chant and applaud as a van and vehicle - one of which they presumed was carrying the climber - drove out of the airport through the crowds of people clapping above their heads. It was unclear where she was headed. Some of the women present were themselves not wearing the hijab. "A hero's welcome - including by women without the forced hijab - outside Tehran... Concerns for her safety remain," said the New York-based Center for Human Rights in Iran (CHRI).

### 'State propaganda'?

Inside the airport terminal, Rekabi was greeted by family members with her hair covered with a baseball cap and a hoodie although not a headscarf, before addressing state media with a mask pulled down on her face. "Due to the atmosphere prevailing in the finals of the competition and the unexpected call for me to start my run, I got tangled with my technical equipment and... that caused me to remain unaware of the hijab that I should have observed," she said.

"I returned to Iran peacefully, in perfect health and according to the predetermined plan. I apologise to the people of Iran because of the tensions created," she said, adding she had "no plan to say goodbye to the national team". Her comments were similar to those made on Tuesday in an Instagram post, in which she apologized for "concerns" caused and insisted her bare-headed appearance had been "unintentional". But the Islamic republic has been repeatedly accused by activists of coercing people into making statements of contrition on television or social media.



A woman looks at a screen displaying a video of an international climbing competition Seoul, South Korea, during which Iranian climber Elnaz Rekabi competes without a hijab, in the Cypriot capital Nicosia on October 18, 2022.— AFP

The British actress of Iranian origin Nazanin Boniadi, who is an ambassador for Amnesty International in the UK, tweeted that it was clear Rekabi had been "forced to make this statement by authorities that constantly use forced and televised confessions." Observers "should not be swayed by state propaganda", the CHRI said. Prominent exiled Iranian journalist Maziar Bahari described Rekabi's airport comments as a "forced confession". "You can see the fear in her eyes. She's just repeating what she's been told," he said. There has been no news from her or activity on her Instagram account since she left the airport.

Unconfirmed reports had already suggested she had been pressured by Iranian officials in South Korea. BBC Persian quoted an unnamed source as saying friends had been unable to contact her and the team had left their hotel in Seoul on Monday, two days before the scheduled departure date. Meanwhile news website Iran Wire said the head of Iran's climbing federation had "tricked" her into entering the Iranian embassy in Seoul and the federation chief had promised her safe passage to Iran if she handed over her phone and passport. The Iranian embassy in Seoul, however, issued a statement to AFP denying "all the fake, false news and disinformation regarding" her situation. The spokesperson for the UN office of the high commissioner for human rights, Ravina Shamdasani, said the UN was "closely following" the case and concerns were being raised with the Iranian authorities.— AFP



## Sports

# Harper, Schwarber power Phillies over Padres as Yankees advance

## Philadelphia Phillies defeat San Diego Padres 2-0

NEW YORK: Bryce Harper and Kyle Schwarber crushed home runs as the Philadelphia Phillies defeated the San Diego Padres 2-0 on the road in their National League Championship Series opener on Tuesday. Harper blasted a 368-foot shot into leftfield off Padres pitcher Yu Darvish to open the scoring in the top of the fourth inning at Petco Park. Schwarber then obliterated an inviting Darvish cutter in the top of the sixth inning to give the Phillies a 2-0 lead. San Diego, who upset the Los Angeles Dodgers in a raucous division series victory last Saturday, were unable to get their bats into the game in the face of a gem from Phillies pitcher Zack Wheeler.

Wheeler delivered seven scoreless innings with just one hit and eight strikeouts to lay the foundations for a crucial win against the underdog Phillies. Phillies closer Jose Alvarado had a nervous start to the bottom of the ninth inning, allowing Jurickson Profar and Juan Soto to get on base, before sealing the win with the outs of Manny Machado and Josh Bell in quick succession. The winner of the best-of-seven NLCS will meet either the New York Yankees or the Houston Astros in the World Series.

### Yankees advance

The Yankees advanced to an American League Championship Series showdown with the Astros after downing the Cleveland Guardians 5-1 earlier Tuesday. Giancarlo Stanton and Aaron Judge bagged home runs to give the Yankees a 3-2 series victory in a game that had been delayed 24 hours after rain washed out play on Monday. "We know we've got a big challenge now going to Houston but we look forward to it," Yankees manager Aaron Boone said after the win, paying tribute to the hitting of Stanton and Judge.

"When those guys are rolling it makes it challenging," Boone said. "For (Stanton) to get us off to that start in the first was huge." The Yankees were always in the driving seat Tuesday after jumping on starter Aaron Civale early on. Yankees pitcher Nestor Cortes



CALIFORNIA: Luis Garcia #66 of the San Diego Padres pitches during the ninth inning against the Philadelphia Phillies in game one of the National League Championship Series on October 18, 2022.—AFP

meanwhile stymied the Cleveland bats, allowing just three hits, one run, and one walk before departing after the fifth inning. Civale's rocky start saw Gleyber Torres walk before Anthony Rizzo advanced to first base after being hit by a pitch.

Stanton then stepped up to smash a line drive to right-center field for a three-run shot that left the Yankees 3-0 up. Josh Donaldson then singled on a ground ball prompting Cleveland skipper Terry Francona to yank Civale from the mound for Sam Hentges. Francona admitted later that pulling starting pitcher Civale in the first inning had been a tough call. "I felt terrible taking him out that quickly, but I just

didn't think we could give up any more," Francona said.

Hentges got through the remainder of the inning with no more damage but then saw Judge crush a home run into right field in the bottom of the second for a 4-0 lead. Cleveland pulled a run back in the top of the third when Jose Ramirez's sacrifice fly scored Austin Hedges. But Rizzo restored the Yankees' four-run cushion at the bottom of the fifth, singling to score Torres. "Every game is its own game. They beat us today," Francona said. "We pushed them about as far as we could and they came out and beat us today, so they get to move on and we don't."—AFP

## Blackburn go top of Championship

LONDON: Blackburn moved to the top of the Championship at the expense of rivals Burnley with a 2-0 win over Sunderland as Norwich were beaten 1-0 at home by Luton. Ben Brereton Diaz's left-footed curler put Blackburn in front before Scott Wharton headed in a second four minutes into the second half. The win lifts Rovers on to 27 points, two clear of Burnley and Sheffield United, although Jon Dahl Tomasson's side have played two games more.

Norwich also began the night with a chance to move top of the table but the Canaries are now without a win in four as with Carlton Morris haunted his old side with the only goal at Carrow Road. Kenny McLean's sending off 24 minutes from time did Norwich no favours as they were booed off at full-time. Victory moved Luton up to third and within a point of the automatic promotion places.

Only goal difference separates Swansea from the playoff places after producing a remarkable turnaround to beat Reading 3-2. The power went out at the start of the night at the Swansea.com Stadium, but once the lights returned it was Reading who were switched on, leading 2-0 after Yakou Meite and Tom Ince struck inside the opening 33 minutes. But Harry Darling halved the deficit before the interval and second half goals from Ollie Cooper and Jay Fulton lifted Swansea up to seventh.—AFP



MOENCHENGLADBACH: Italy's head coach Roberto Mancini (top right) supervises his players during a training session of Italy's national football team in Moenchengladbach, western Germany.—AFP

## Euro kings nursing World Cup wound

MILAN: Italy are still hurting as the European champions sit on the sidelines while the rest of international football's elite prepares to descend on Qatar for the upcoming World Cup. Roberto Mancini will once again have to watch the tournament on television as he begins another Azzurri rebuild while all eyes are on the Gulf.

And the determined coach of the four-time world champions is not hiding the hurt that missing out for the second time in a row has brought one of football's most important countries. "The World Cup is a cut that will bleed right to the end, we can only heal it by winning the next one," he said after drawing England in qualifying for Euro 2024.

Italy's pain has been doubled because Mancini had heralded their comeback to the pinnacle of the international game, creating a formidable team unit from the ashes of the 2018 World Cup qualification disaster. His arrival after the misery of Gian Piero Ventura's tenure which ended with play-off devastation at the hands of Sweden was like a ray of sunshine for a country plunged into darkness. The 57-year-old threw away the dusty old rule book which said Italy teams needed to be stodgy, cynical and disciplined, and built a team that didn't just win, but won with style.

Their triumph at Euro 2020 was supposed to be the

consecration of Italy's return to the top table, but instead the partying of the warm summer nights led to a hangover which dragged well into this year and past their shock play-off defeat to North Macedonia. By the time Italy were left shell-shocked by former Palermo man Aleksandar Trajkovski in his old stadium, back in March, a once cocksure 'Nazionale' were already badly off-form.

Mancini had led Italy to 13 wins in a row up to their Euro quarter-final victory over Belgium, during which time they scored 36 times and conceded just twice. But between then and the North Macedonia collapse they drew six times in nine matches with five of their 13 goals coming in one of their two wins, against Lithuania. And their displays afterwards hardly gave cause for optimism, thrashings at the hands of Argentina and Germany highlighting just how far behind Italy had fallen once more.

However there are still signs that Mancini has something to give, as recent wins over England and Hungary took them into the Nations League finals and suggested new players like Napoli forward Giacomo Raspadori might breathe some new life into a jaded squad. And that's just as well as Mancini's contract runs until after the 2026 World Cup and he has every intention of seeing it out. "I'm still young," Mancini said in March. "My aim is to win a European Championship and a World Cup, and for the World Cup we will need to wait a bit. "I like my job, I think I can still have fun and do something special with the boys."—AFP

of accepting seven million yen from a merchandise firm, which Japanese media named as Sun Arrow and said was licensed to sell soft toys of the cute Games mascots.

Three other people including ADK president Shinichi Ueno were also arrested on Wednesday. ADK Holdings said it was "extremely regrettable that we find ourselves in this situation, and we would like to apologize for the enormous trouble" caused by the arrests. "Since the investigation remains ongoing, we will refrain from disclosing details," it said, adding it would fully cooperate with authorities "to help resolve the case".

The latest arrest of Takahashi—a former advertising executive who served on the Tokyo 2020 board from June 2014 — reportedly brought the total sum of the bribes he allegedly pocketed to 196 million yen. He has previously been accused of taking bribes from publishing giant Kadokawa and another advertising agency, Daiko. The ballooning saga is not the first time questions have been raised over impropriety around the Tokyo Games. The former head of Japan's Olympic Committee, Tsunekazu Takeda, stepped down in 2019 after French prosecutors launched an investigation into corruption allegations linked to Tokyo's Olympic bid.—AFP

## Brazil eye 6th World Cup with European armada floundering

PARIS: With a month to go until the World Cup it is Brazil who have earned the tag of favorites as the South Americans seek to win the trophy for the sixth time while Europe's heavyweights are plagued by question marks about form and fitness. What happened in the past may be irrelevant, particularly in the first World Cup in the Middle East and the first to be played in November and December. But history might play a part as all of the Brazilians' last four World Cup triumphs came outside Europe.

If they crumbled under the pressure as hosts in 2014 and underperformed in Russia four years ago, they head to Qatar on a formidable run and with a strong squad not overly reliant on Neymar. He will still attract the most attention, but coach Tite has a formidable squad — from Alisson Becker in goal, to the steel of Fabinho and Casemiro in midfield, the pace of Vinicius Junior and the goal threat of Roberto Firmino and Richarlison.

"Brazil today are much more prepared and experienced. They don't depend on one player," Selecao legend Cafu recently told Globoesporte. "We have a team that will allow that player to stand out. I think Brazil look good and have a good chance of winning the World Cup." The big question mark surrounding Brazil, however, is that they have not been tested by leading European opposition since Belgium dumped Tite's side out of the 2018 World Cup in the quarter-finals.

### Messi's last chance

In contrast, Argentina pitted their wits against Italy earlier this year in London and the Copa America winners triumphed 3-0. The two-time world champions are also heading to Qatar in good shape, unbeaten in 35 games since losing to Brazil at the 2019 Copa America. Currently ranked third in the world, coach Lionel Scaloni does not have the same depth of quality as Brazil but there are enough good players to bring out the best in Lionel Messi, scorer of nine goals in his country's last three games. At 35, this is Messi's last chance to win a World Cup and that motivation could be powerful. "It is very likely my last World Cup, yes,"

Messi told ESPN recently. "We come into it with a well-equipped and strong squad, but anything can happen. Every game is so difficult and it is not always the favorites who win it."

### Can France defend title?

Just look at France in 2002, when a team led by an injured Zinedine Zidane went to South Korea as the holders and reigning European champions, only to crash out in the group stage without scoring a goal. Two decades on, Les Bleus are again the holders but all is not right in Didier Deschamps' squad. Kylian Mbappe has been distracted by reports he wants out of Paris Saint-Germain, while injuries are creating headaches. The all-action N'Golo Kante will miss the tournament and Paul Pogba is battling to get back to fitness after knee surgery.

Then again, Deschamps does have a strike pairing of Mbappe and Karim Benzema, the new Ballon d'Or. "I hope to be in the squad for Qatar, to go to the World Cup and do everything to win it," Benzema said this week. At least France will be there, unlike Italy who failed to qualify a year after winning the Euro. Form is an issue for England, who went six games without a win in a disastrous Nations League campaign and are also set to be without their rampaging right-back Reece James, one of their best players, due to injury.

It is not clear if Germany are really any better than the side that went out of Euro 2020 in the last 16, despite Hansi Flick replacing Joachim Loew as coach since then. The Netherlands are back but do they, or for that matter Belgium, really look like potential World Cup winners? Portugal are wondering if they need to faze out Cristiano Ronaldo and give more space to their younger attacking stars. It also remains to be seen if Spain have the defense or the attack to go all the way, and that leaves two other questions to be answered.

Can a European surprise package emerge, like Croatia in 2018? If so, then Denmark and Serbia may be worth watching. Alternatively, can Sadio Mane's Senegal go far on the back of winning the Africa Cup of Nations? As for Brazil and Argentina, by winning their groups they would be set on a course to meet in the semi-finals with the ultimate prize then within sight. Right now that looks plausible, but with domestic leagues in action right up to the World Cup much can change in the next few weeks.—AFP

## Tokyo Olympics bribery scandal widens with mascot allegations

TOKYO: A corruption scandal surrounding the Tokyo Olympics widened on Wednesday as a former Games executive was re-arrested on suspicion of taking bribes from two firms, one of which reportedly sold official mascot toys. Prosecution documents seen by AFP accused former Tokyo 2020 board member Haruyuki Takahashi of accepting 54 million yen (\$360,000) in bribes from a major advertising firm and a merchandise company.

It was the fourth time the 78-year-old has been arrested over the scandal, following allegations that he received a similar amount from a suit retailer that was an official partner of last year's pandemic-delayed event. Prosecutors alleged that Takahashi helped advertising giant ADK Holdings with a sponsorship contract and received 47 million yen "knowing it was meant to be thank-you money". They also accused him



PARIS: Brazil's coach Tite (center) leads a training session at Charlety stadium in Paris.—AFP



## Sports

# West Indies stay alive at T20 WCup as Ireland celebrate

## Windies storm past Zimbabwe; Ireland upset Scotland

**HOBART:** A fiery four-wicket spell from pace bowler Alzarri Joseph helped the two-time champion West Indies storm past Zimbabwe by 31 runs to keep their Twenty20 World Cup dreams alive on Wednesday, while Ireland upset Scotland. After being shocked by Scotland in their opening match on Monday, the West Indies had no margin for error if they wanted to stay in the hunt for a place in the Super 12 stage.

And they accomplished the feat at Bellerive Oval in Hobart with 10 balls to spare, dismissing Zimbabwe for 122 after setting them 154 to win. The dangerous Joseph was instrumental, taking 4-16 while Jason Holder chipped in with 3-12 to rescue them after another batting collapse after they won the toss and chose to bat.

"We are learning together and that's what's important," said West Indies skipper Nicholas Pooran. "Jason put his hand up as our most experienced bowler here so it's nice to see him performing the way he is. Alzarri Joseph, it's not just now but since the beginning of the year he's been our best bowler in T20 cricket." The victory means they meet Ireland on Friday with the winner going through to the next round when the big guns join the tournament, while Zimbabwe face Scotland in a

winner-takes-all tie.

Ireland stayed in contention with a stunning six-wicket upset of the Scots with George Dockrell and Curtis Campher starring in a 119-run partnership after they looked out for the count. Zimbabwe were without captain Craig Ervine who suffered a "mild asthmatic attack" before the game and the West Indies were aggressive early on. But they paid the price with Kyle Mayers (13) top edging Blessing Muzarabani to wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva, who was deputising as skipper.

Johnson Charles unleashed in the ninth over, hitting 6-4-4 off Ryan Burl to get the scoreboard moving before Evin Lewis (15) was out and Pooran (7) fell soon after. When Charles was comically run out for 45 in a mix-up with Rovman Powell, they were reeling. Zimbabwe kept the pressure on and Sikander Raza trapped Shamara Brooks lbw then caught and bowled Holder with the West Indies losing four wickets for 11 runs in 12 balls to leave them on 101-6. Powell (28) and Akeal Hosein (23 not out) threw the bat in a late flourish to ensure they set a competitive target.

### Great cricket

In reply, Zimbabwe slammed 18 in a nightmare

first over from Mayers. Undeterred, the Caribbean side made a breakthrough in the third over when Regis Chakabva dragged the ball onto his stumps off Joseph. Joseph took his second with a lightning delivery to remove Tony Munyonga and Sean Williams fell two balls later as the pressure began building.

Allrounder Raza slammed 82 off 48 balls in Zimbabwe's first match on Monday, but he was out for 14 and when Joseph came back in the attack he shattered the stumps of Richard Ngarava and Luke Jongwe to end any hope they had. In the earlier game, Scotland powered to 176-5 — the tournament's highest score so far on the back of 86 from Michael Jones — for what looked like a winning total.

When they reduced the Irish to 65-4 after 10 overs it looked all over. But Campher (69 off 32 balls) and Dockrell (39 off 27) came to the crease and unleashed some fireworks to steer them home against the odds with an over to spare. "Pretty special. I can't remember a more important partnership," said Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie after their highest ever successful run chase at a World Cup. "We have played some great cricket throughout the year, only to fall away towards the end, but credit to the guys for the partnership." — AFP



Alzarri Joseph of West Indies

## Things to know about World Cup host Qatar

**PARIS:** Qatar, the controversial host of the football World Cup, is a key US ally in the Middle East that is rich in gas and oil. Here are five things to know about the desert peninsula:

### Small but powerful

Qatar is one of the smallest Arab states with a population of 2.9 million, most of whom are foreign workers. The country was a British protectorate for 55 years until 1971. It has been ruled by a monarchy, the Al-Thani family, since the mid-19th century. The current emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, rose to power in 2013 after his father Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani abdicated. The country's first ever legislative elections were held in October 2021. None of the 26 women candidates won a seat in the 45-member Shura Council.

### Owner of the Shard

Qatar is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of liquefied natural gas. It has one of the highest per capita GDPs in the world at \$61,276 in 2021, according to the World Bank, two-and-a-half times that of Saudi Arabia. The Qatar Investment Authority, one of the biggest sovereign wealth funds in the world, has spent lavishly to snap up key landmarks and luxury brands in Europe, including Britain's luxury store Harrods, London's Shard skyscraper and France's Balmain fashion house.

### Showdown with Saudi

Qatar weathered a major diplomatic crisis and a three-and-a-half year blockade by its Gulf neighbors between June 2017 and January 2021 with only limited damage to its economy. Tensions had been brewing since the Arab Spring of pro-democracy movements, which Doha had supported but fellow Gulf monarchies had not. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties with Doha, accusing it of supporting terrorism and fostering close ties with their regional rival Iran — charges Doha denied.

Riyadh and its allies made a number of demands of Qatar in return for ending its isolation, including that it close down Al Jazeera, its pioneering pan-Arab news channel which was accused as acting as a megaphone for the Arab Spring protests, and end economic cooperation with Iran. Qatar rejected the demands and rode out the blockade, which was eventually lifted, under pressure from the United States, which sees both Saudi Arabia and Qatar as key allies.

### Spending big on Neymar

Qatar has poured billions of dollars into sports at home and abroad, snapping up France's leading football club Paris Saint-Germain in 2011, which famously spent a mindboggling 222 million euros to acquire Brazilian Neymar in 2017. Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) also owns Belgian first division club KAS Eupen and announced on October 10 that it will acquire nearly 22 percent of the Portuguese club Sporting Braga. The Gulf state has hosted a string of international sports competitions in order to try boost its global standing, including the Asian Games in 2006, the Asian Cup of Nations in 2011 and the world athletics championships in 2019.

### Skewed over rights

Ever since Qatar's shock win in the race to host the World Cup, the spotlight has been on its human rights record, particularly its treatment of migrant workers. Reports of high numbers of deaths and injuries on Qatar's giant construction projects — strongly denied by Qatari authorities — as well as accusations of punishing hours, grim living conditions and workers being deported for protesting unpaid wages have caused controversy. The Qatari government has responded to the criticism by introducing a minimum wage, dismantling a scheme that gave employers stringent controls over laborers and imposing stricter rules on working in the summer heat. — AFP

## Warriors thump Lakers in season opener

**LOS ANGELES:** Stephen Curry scored 33 points as the Golden State Warriors launched the defense of their NBA crown with a season-opening 123-109 rout of the Los Angeles Lakers on Tuesday. After being presented with diamond-encrusted rings and watching their championship banner being hoisted at a pre-game ceremony at San Francisco's Chase Center, the Warriors put on a dazzling performance to overpower LeBron James and the new-look Lakers.

The Warriors' pre-season had been overshadowed by a practice court bust-up that saw Draymond Green floor teammate Jordan Poole with a sucker punch — sparking what coach Steve Kerr described as the "biggest crisis" of his eight-year reign. But Golden State served notice they have already put the episode behind them with a commanding performance that suggests they are more than capable of mounting a successful title defense.

Significantly, Green and Poole played without any hint of lingering tension, notably when Poole engineered a lay-up for Green with a clever pass midway through the third quarter. The Lakers, in their first competitive game under new coach Darvin Ham, showed signs of being a more disciplined defensive unit, but ultimately were run ragged by the Warriors.

The 37-year-old James weighed in with 31 points



SAN FRANCISCO: Patrick Baldwin Jr #7 of the Golden State Warriors and Juan Toscano-Anderson #95 of the Los Angeles Lakers compete for a loose ball during the 3rd quarter of the game at Chase Center on October 18, 2022. —AFP

while Anthony Davis contributed 27 points with Russell Westbrook adding 19. But the Warriors were never seriously threatened after a trademark third-quarter eruption, outscoring the Lakers 32-19 to race to a 27-point lead at one stage. "The ceremony was an amazing celebration, to take time to reflect on what you accomplished, watching the banner go up, looking at the highlight tapes and all that," Curry said afterwards.

"It's really hard to turn the page and go and play

a game of basketball, but we figured how to do it. Now we can look forward to the rest of the year." James said the Lakers were still a work in progress. "We were what I expected — some great moments, some not so great moments," James said. "That comes from a team coming together for the first time. "Once we start getting on the same page, it will get better with time. But it was kind of what I expected — we had some good times, but some other times we weren't as good as I'd like." — AFP



Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia

## Bagnaia on brink of world title; MotoGP returns to Malaysia

**SEPANG:** Italy's Francesco Bagnaia can win his maiden MotoGP world championship crown this weekend when motorcycle-mad Malaysia hosts its first grand prix since 2019, as a thrilling title fight reaches its climax. The Ducati rider usurped Fabio Quartararo at the top of the standings on Sunday in Australia when the Frenchman crashed out, putting a huge dent in his hopes of retaining his title.

At one point during this topsy-turvy season, Yamaha's Quartararo enjoyed a gaping lead of 91 points on his rival. But Bagnaia now leads the championship by 14 points with two races left and can clinch the world title on Sunday if he wins at Sepang and Quartararo finishes fourth or lower. "I don't want to say now, I just want to be calm," the 25-year-old Bagnaia, who finished second last season in the title race behind Quartararo, said after finishing third at Phillip Island.

"We just focus on the next race, without thinking about the championship. Be smart." "Keep going, keep going, I don't want to think about the championship," the Italian added. The permutations are complicated, but Spain's Aleix Espargaro (Aprilia) and Italy's Enea Bastianini (Gresini Racing) are

mathematically also still in the title hunt.

Espargaro, though, has dismissed his hopes. "I think that in the last three races, we proved that we are not together as a team," Espargaro, third in the standings, said after coming a distant ninth last weekend in Australia.

"We are not at the level to fight for this title," Quartararo, 23, has been left to reflect on how — coupled with Bagnaia's form in the second half of the campaign — his defense has fallen apart. The title is now out of his hands going into Sepang and the season finale in Valencia, Spain on November 6.

Quartararo's last win came in Germany in June and the Frenchman has failed to score in the last two grands prix. Rival Bagnaia, meanwhile, has triumphed in four of the eight races since Germany to turn the title race on its head. And he has tasted success before at Sepang, taking the chequered flag in 2016 in Moto3. But Quartararo says the championship tussle could change yet again — and in his favour this time. "I feel that we can make two great last races. We need to be focused, work well and then we'll see," he said.

"We go to Malaysia with full motivation. I want to enjoy these last two races, that will be the most important, because when I enjoy the races, I know we can be fast." MotoGP is back in Malaysia for the first time since 2019 after recent races were cancelled because of COVID-19. Organizers are hoping that 170,000 spectators will turn out across three days of racing, starting with practice on Friday. Qualifying is on Saturday. —AFP

## Asia Cup no-show could 'split' cricket, Pakistan warns India

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistani cricket authorities hinted Wednesday they may pull out of next year's World Cup in India, a day after officials there said they would not send a team to the 2023 Asia Cup in Pakistan. Indian cricket board secretary Jay Shah — who is also president of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) — said Tuesday that India "can't" send a team to Pakistan, adding the tournament would be moved to a neutral venue.

This announcement caught Pakistan by surprise, with officials warning it could "split" the international cricket community. Despite being considered one of sport's greatest rivalries, India and Pakistan have not met on home soil in any version of the game since 2012, and only play each other in multinational tournaments on neutral grounds.

The two nations have fought three wars since being carved out of the subcontinent's partition in 1947 and are bitter political rivals. "The Asia Cup will be held at a neutral venue," Shah told reporters in Mumbai Tuesday following a meeting of the Board for Control of Indian Cricket (BCCI). "I am saying this as ACC president. We can't go there (to Pakistan), they can't come here."

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) reacted angrily on Wednesday. "The PCB has noted with surprise and disappointment yesterday's comments made by the ACC President Mr Shah with regards to shifting of next year's Asia Cup to a neutral venue," it said. "The comments were made without any discussion or consultation with the board of the ACC or the PCB, and without any thoughts towards their long-term consequences and implications." "The overall impact of such statements have the potential to split the Asian and international cricketing communities," the PCB added.

The Pakistan board said it has not received any official communication from the ACC, and noted that hosting rights for the 2023 Asia Cup had been given to Pakistan under Shah's leadership. "Mr Shah's statement of shifting of the ACC Asia Cup has clearly been made unilaterally," the PCB said, and called for an emergency meeting of the Asian Board "as soon as practically possible on this important and sensitive matter". The PCB said Shah's comments "can impact Pakistan's visit to India for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 and future ICC Events in India in the 2024-2031 cycle". — AFP



Sports

# Forest off bottom of Premier League, Zaha tames Wolves

## Zaha lifts Crystal Palace over Wolverhampton

LONDON: Nottingham Forest edged off the bottom of the Premier League by holding out for a 0-0 draw at Brighton as Wilfried Zaha gave Crystal Palace a 2-1 win over Wolves on Tuesday. Forest still have only one win on their return to the top flight for the first time in 23 years, but were grateful to escape the Amex with a point after Brighton dominated throughout. The Seagulls are still waiting for their first win under new boss Roberto de Zerbi and it was a familiar failing that cost Brighton as they missed a series of chances to claim the three points.

Leandro Trossard hit the bar in the first half, while Dean Henderson twice denied the Belgian international and made a fine late save from Pascal Gross. "I don't want to speak about the result as if it's unfair or unlucky," said De Zerbi. "We have to work on the last 20 meters for sure, to decide the best solution in the last 25 meters and to work on creating more solutions." Forest failed to muster a single shot on target but just a second clean sheet of the season was enough to lift Steve Cooper's men a

point above Leicester at the foot of the table. "It's progress," said Cooper. "If we take the game in isolation then we have to be happy with a point." Wolves remain just one point above the bottom three after blowing the lead at Selhurst Park. Adama Traore headed in Hugo Bueno's cross for just Wolves fifth league goal in 11 games this season just after the half hour mark. In all three of Palace's wins this season they have come from behind and the Eagles soared in the second half once Eberechi Eze nodded in at the back post from Michael Olise's cross.

Zaha completed the comeback when he coolly collected Odsonne Edouard's pass to slot past Jose Sa 20 minutes from time. Victory lifts Patrick Vieira's men up to 10th. "To perform in the Premier League this is part of the game, to show resilience and character. Nobody hid at 1-0 down," said Vieira. "We still have a long way to go. We have young players who need to learn the game. Everything wasn't perfect today, but we showed some good elements and can build on that." —AFP



BRIGHTON: Nottingham Forest's English midfielder Ryan Yates controls the ball during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Nottingham Forest on October 18, 2022. —AFP

## Falcao penalty snatches Rayo draw at Atletico as Sevilla hold Valencia

MADRID: Former Atletico Madrid striker Radamel Falcao earned Rayo Vallecano a 1-1 draw against his old side in La Liga with a 92nd minute penalty on Tuesday. Alvaro Morata's first-half strike seemed poised to help Atletico strengthen their grip on third place and keep close to leaders Real Madrid and Barcelona, but Rayo snatched a deserved draw.

After the break the hosts had their backs to the wall at the Metropolitan and weren't able to finish their chances on the break. The pressure eventually told when Jose Gimenez handled in the box. "We had good chances to score the second and kill the game off, but we didn't score," Atletico coach Diego Simeone told Movistar. "We've dropped two important points." The Rojiblancos broke the deadlock in the 20th minute when Antoine Griezmann won the ball high up the pitch and crossed for his strike partner Morata to finish consummately. The France forward was impressive again and seems to be returning to his best level.

Pathe Ciss headed wide from six yards early in the second half as Andoni Iraola's team battled to find the equalizer, and substitute Sergio Camello flashed a shot just past the post. The lively striker, on loan from Atletico, nearly set up Falcao to score but Ivo Grbic saved and Gimenez managed to hack the ball away. Griezmann fired home at the other end but the goal was disallowed for a tight offside and Matheus Cunha had a shot saved from a tight angle as Atletico rediscovered some attacking impetus.

However, when Gimenez handled a Rayo header in stoppage time they surrendered the three points. Falcao, who played for Atletico between 2011-2013, slammed the penalty into the top corner. "It leaves a bad taste in the mouth," grumbled Morata, after the referee checked the penalty incident on the pitchside VAR screen. "I don't understand anything. When things happen to us, they don't look at it and when we're defending in our box they look at everything." Elsewhere Ernesto Valverde's Athletic, now sixth, were unable to pull themselves back into the top four as they drew 2-2 at Getafe.



MADRID: Rayo Vallecano's Colombian forward Radamel Falcao (2nd-right) shoots and scores a penalty kick past Atletico Madrid's Croatian goalkeeper Ivo Grbic (center) during the Spanish league football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Rayo Vallecano de Madrid on October 18, 2022. —AFP

### Pulsating clash

Valencia captain Jose Gaya missed a late penalty amid a chaotic finale as Sevilla held the visitors to a 1-1 draw. Erik Lamela's 86th minute strike earned Jorge Sampaoli's side a creditable draw against Genaro Gattuso's relentless Los Che, in a pulsating clash at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

Sampaoli was not able to build on his first win since replacing Julen Lopetegui at the helm, but will be happy with a point as Valencia blew the chance to snatch all three in stoppage time. Edinson Cavani sent the visitors ahead with a firm header from Dimitri Foulquier's deep cross in the sixth minute. Valencia goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili made two stunning saves in quick succession to deny Rafa Mir, first twisting to tip over a vicious strike, then clawing away a header. Sevilla kept pushing in the second half and Nemanja Gudelj headed against the crossbar.

Both sides were guilty of heavy challenges but it created a chaotic, aggressive contest, amid which Sevilla eventually found a leveller through Lamela. The former Tottenham midfielder finished at the back post after a corner was flicked on. The drama wasn't over-far from it. Sevilla's Papu Gomez was sent off late on for hacking down Justin Kluivert just outside the area as he ran through on goal, but the red card was cancelled and shown to Kike Salas instead. The young defender had shoved over Thierry Correia in the moments after Gomez's foul when advantage had been played, so the referee awarded a penalty. However Sevilla had the last laugh when goalkeeper Bono tipped away Gaya's spot kick, delighting Sevilla's raucous support. "I have no idea what was going on at the end," admitted Sampaoli. "We could have won, and we almost lost, but I'll remember the conviction we played with, that was what Sevilla did best." The result leaves Sevilla provisionally 11th and Valencia in eighth. —AFP

## Fury at FIFA chief's kickabout after stadium tragedy

JAKARTA: Photos of FIFA's president laughing and high-fiving in a football match with local officials weeks after a stadium disaster killed 133 people in Indonesia sparked online fury in the country on Wednesday. More than 40 chil-

dren were among those killed in the stampede on October 1, one of the deadliest disasters in football history. Police had fired tear gas to quell a pitch invasion after a match in East Java. FIFA chief Gianni Infantino met Indonesian President Joko Widodo Tuesday in the capital Jakarta, the pair pledging to boost match safety and rebuild Arema FC's Kanjuruhan stadium to avoid a repeat of the disaster.

But on Wednesday morning the Indonesian football association, or PSSI, posted images on its Twitter account of Infantino playing a football match in Jakarta with its under-fire chairman Mochamad Iriawan. "Instead of playing soccer together, it's better to go to the homes of the

victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy together. They are more important," Indonesian actor Vito G. Bastian tweeted to his 1.9 million followers, gaining just under 20,000 likes.

"133 people have died. And, your president came here to play fun football and laugh? Why don't you just play fun football at Kanjuruhan? Shame on you, @FIFAcom," popular Indonesian football account PanditFootball tweeted to its 600,000 followers, in a post retweeted more than 4,000 times. The initial tweet by the PSSI, whose posts rarely get replies in more than double figures, was deluged with more than 4,000 replies, which were overwhelmingly negative. —AFP

## European football model 'unsustainable': Reichart

PARIS: The new CEO of the company promoting the Super League, German businessman Bernd Reichart, says European football must hold talks to reshape its future and warns it is "becoming unsustainable" under the current system. Reichart, the 48-year-old former boss of the RTL media group in Germany, was on Wednesday appointed head of A22 Sports Management. "European football needs an open and honest dialogue about its future," Reichart told AFP, 18 months on from the botched attempt at a breakaway 12-team Super League designed to supplant the UEFA Champions League.

"Football is facing problems which won't resolve on their own," he said. "European football is losing its undisputed leadership in global sports. European club football is not living up to its potential by not offering week after week the best sport on a global stage. "Young audiences have turned more and more to other entertainment alternatives." Reichart plans to reach out to an extensive range of football stakeholders including clubs, players, coaches, fans, media and policy makers.

"I think dialogue can take place, it's good there is consciousness that the (status quo) can change and clubs should be prepared to shape their own future and to consider what the new landscape could look like," he said. "Football can do better, clubs should be able to lead such a dialogue and be entitled to propose new alternatives, free from threats, sanctions or exclusion (from) competition as happened in the past." "The football ecosystem is becoming unsustainable, the pandemic has accelerated this trend, the system is broken," he added.

Launched by some of Europe's top clubs in April 2021, the Super League's plan to shake up European football fizzled out amid the fury of many supporters and the threat of political action. The prospect of a closed competition for Europe's elite angered fans in particular, but Reichart said a new approach meant that would no longer be the case. "One of our key messages is permanent membership is off the table, and we want to discuss on the basis of an open competition based on sporting merit." Three of the clubs—Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus—continue to campaign for the Super League. A dispute over an alleged abuse of a dominant position by UEFA is to be settled in early 2023 by the European Court of Justice. —AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Adaliya	22517144
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Khaldiya	24848075
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Kaifan	24849807
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shamiya	24848913
Chest Hospital	24849400	Shuwaikh	24814507
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Adan Hospital	23940620	Nuzha	22526804
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Qadsiya	22515088
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Dasmah	22532265
		Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733

Automated enquiry about the Civild card is 1889988

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, BERNARDINA PEREIRA holder of Passport No. P1092031 do hereby change my name to Bernardina (as Given name) Dias (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Bernardina Dias and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2420)

I, SIVANAGAMUNIAH GANGI holder of

Passport No. L6703205 do hereby change my name to SULEMAN (as Given name) SHAIK (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name SULEMAN SHAIK and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2421)

I, Md. Akhlaque @ Mohammad Ekhlauque S/o - Md. Gafoor @ Abdul Ghafoor R/O - Chhoti Chakla, Ward No-07, Po-Goasi, P.S-K. Nagar, Distt - Purnea Pin No-854303 (Bihar)

in my Passport Number (T2412941) my name has been written as Mohammad Ekhlauque S/o Abdul Ghafoor which is wrong while my correct Name is Md Akhlaque S/o- Md Gafoor. (C#2422)

I, Joyce Anthony Piedade holder of Passport No. R8665839 do hereby change my name to Joyce (as Given name) Fernandes (As Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name of Joyce Fernandes

and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2423) - 20-10-2022

I, Mohamed Aslam Abdul Rajack Jaheer Hussain holder of Passport No. M6102421 do hereby change my name to Mohammed Aslam (as given name) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Mohammed Aslam and I also undertake to carry out this change in all my documents. (C#2419) - 19-10-2022



## Female referees set for WCup history

### Qatar's glitzy World Cup - ready and expensive

PARIS: The approaching men's World Cup will be the first to feature female referees, with three women set to make history in Qatar while hoping that the focus remains on their job rather than their gender. France's Stephanie Frappart, Rwanda's Salima Mukansanga and Japan's Yoshimi Yamashita were included in the list of 36 referees selected by FIFA, while three more women will head to Qatar as assistant referees.

The trio of referees, as well as assistants Neuza Back of Brazil, Mexico's Karen Diaz Medina and Kathryn Nesbitt of the United States, will go to Qatar having already established themselves as officials in the men's game. On announcing the appointments, Pierluigi Collina, the head of FIFA's Referees Committee, insisted that "we clearly emphasize that it is quality that counts for us and not gender". For the 38-year-old Frappart, being selected for the World Cup seemed like a logical next step after a rapid rise to refereeing at the top level in Europe.

She was the first woman to referee in France's Ligue 1 in 2019, the same year she took charge of the women's World Cup final in her home country. Frappart also refereed the

#### 'Strong message'

Indeed she only became a referee after being persuaded by a university friend, who she said "half dragged me" to take charge of a game for the first time. Meanwhile Mukansanga, 34, was called up for the World Cup having become the first woman to take charge of a match at the men's Africa Cup of Nations in January this year.

The Rwandan once dreamt of becoming a professional basketball player but was already refereeing in the women's domestic league in her home country by the age of 20. Nevertheless, none of these six pioneers want their gender to be a talking point, and nor do they seek the limelight. "I am going to do everything I can to make sure that what is emphasized is the beauty of the football. I am not interested in power or control," Yamashita said in a recent interview with FIFA.com.

Meanwhile Frappart, who is appreciated in France for her diplomatic style as well as her firmness, insisted: "It is no longer about what gender you are. It is about your ability." Despite that, the fact these women are breaking new ground in the men's game at a World Cup taking place in



Stephanie Frappart

The palm tree-styled street lamps and neon office blocks that line the highway from the expanded international airport to central Doha will be an instant sign to the million-plus incoming fans that the first World Cup in an Arab nation is going to be a glitzy affair. But with Qatar's organizers desperate to convince the world of the event's lasting legacy - clouded by investigation and criticisms.

Qatar, with a population of just 2.8 million, is one of the world's wealthiest countries. And comparisons are unfair, according to Danyel Reiche, a visiting associate professor at Georgetown University Qatar who is leading a research project on the World Cup. "So much of the infrastructure spending was already part of Qatar's 2030 development plan and has just been brought forward for the World Cup," he said.

FIFA has lauded Qatar's preparations and the eight stadiums designed to highlight Arabic tradition and culture. "Together we will deliver the best World Cup ever, on and off the field," its president Gianni Infantino reaffirmed this week. Sitting in a cafe in the Souq Waqif tourist district, Yasmian Ghanem, a member of Qatar's golf team, said "supporters are going to have a lot of fun" in the state. Qatar's football fans are meanwhile nervously watching the national team's form. After so much spending many are desperate to see the host nation at least get past the group stage.

But the Asian champions are the lowest ranked side in their group - 50th in the world - against Netherlands, Senegal and Ecuador. The gala opening match against Ecuador (44th) is seen as an early must-win game as Qataris dream of repeating South Korea's feat of reaching the semi-finals when they co-hosted the tournament in 2002. Former Qatar coach Philippe Troussier said the team has only a "50-50" chance. — AFP



MEXICO CITY: FIFA trophy souvenirs are being sold in a street near the exhibition of the FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour, in Iztapalapa neighborhood in Mexico City. The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 will be held from November 20 to December 18, 2022, in Doha. — AFP

2019 UEFA Super Cup final between Liverpool and Chelsea, before officiating in the Champions League in 2020 and then the French Cup final last season. All that experience means Qatar will not faze her. "I am really moved because I didn't necessarily expect this. It doesn't get bigger than the World Cup," Frappart said.

Yamashita, who is two years younger than Frappart, has had a similar rise to the top of the men's game in Japan and became the first woman to referee an Asian Champions League match in 2019. She turned professional earlier this year, giving up her work as a fitness coach which she had previously continued on a part-time basis. Yamashita told AFP that refereeing at the World Cup "is a big responsibility but I am happy to have it", adding that she "never imagined" being handed such an opportunity.

Qatar—a country often criticised for its record on women's rights—is hardly insignificant. "FIFA and the governing bodies are putting out a strong message by having women referees in these countries," added Frappart, who hopes to be a role model for the next generation of female officials. "I am not a feminist spokesperson but maybe this can help move things forward."

#### Glitzy World Cup

The bill being paid by Qatar for the most expensive World Cup ever held is set to rise to fantasy levels in the one month left to the November 20 kickoff. Gleaming new stadiums that cost more than \$6.5 billion are ready, a driver-less metro system with a price tag of \$36 billion serves five of the eight venues.

seats to be donated to developing countries.

## Qatar's World Cup stadiums

DOHA: With one month to go until the opening game, AFP Sport runs the rule over the eight stadiums which will host matches at this year's World Cup in Qatar:

#### Lusail, Lusail Iconic Stadium (80,000 capacity)

Qatar's biggest stadium will host the final on December 18 as well as, amongst other matches, the first semi-final. Built in Lusail, a planned city for a population of 200,000 people situated 15 kilometers north of central Doha, there are plans for the stadium to be transformed into a community hub after the World Cup, with most of its seats being removed and donated elsewhere.

#### Al-Khor, Al-Bayt Stadium (60,000)

The venue for the opening game between Qatar and Ecuador on November 20, as well as the group-stage showdown between Spain and Germany and the second semi-final. It is constructed in the form of a Bedouin tent although there are plans for the upper tier to be removed after the competition. Situated on Qatar's north-east coast, around 35 kilometers from Doha, it is therefore beyond the reach of the capital's metro system, making it one of the harder venues to access for supporters.

#### Al-Rayyan, Education City Stadium (40,000)

Situated among university campuses in Al-Rayyan, just to the west of Doha itself, and reachable by metro, the stadium will notably host one of the quarter-finals. Its capacity will be reduced by half after the tournament with plans for the

#### Al-Rayyan, Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium (40,000)

The home of one of Qatar's most successful clubs, Al-Rayyan, the stadium has been built on the site of the old venue of the same name and is one metro stop beyond the nearby Education City. Located where the city meets the desert, its capacity will also be reduced by half after the tournament.

#### Doha, Khalifa International Stadium (40,000)

Built in 1976, it is the only venue which already existed before Qatar was awarded the World Cup, although it has since been transformed. Hosted the 2011 Asian Cup final and also the final of the 2019 Club World Cup between Liverpool and Flamengo. Will host England's opening clash with Iran.

#### Doha, Al-Thumama Stadium (40,000)

Situated to the south of central Doha, close to the city's Hamad International Airport, the stadium is built in the form of a gahfiya, the traditional cap worn by men across the Middle East. It will host one of the quarter-finals, while its capacity will be reduced to 20,000 after the World Cup.

#### Doha, Stadium 974 (40,000)

Built out of shipping containers on Doha's waterfront, the pop-up stadium will be completely dismantled after the World Cup. The number 974 is the international dialling code for Qatar but also represents the number of containers used for the stadium's construction.

#### Al-Wakrah, Al-Janoub Stadium (40,000)

Located south of Doha in the city of Al-Wakrah, the stadium's design was inspired by the traditional boats used for pearl diving and fishing. — AFP

