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# Constitutional court rejects petition to suspend polls

Cassation court upholds disqualification of four candidates • Election silence takes effect

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** The constitutional court rejected on Tuesday a petition challenging the legality of two emergency Amiri decrees related to the snap polls, and also rejected a demand to suspend the Sept 29 general elections. The rejection means that Kuwaiti voters will head to polls on Thursday as scheduled to elect a new 50-seat National Assembly, hoping to end decades of political disputes.

It also means that the constitutional court, the country's top court whose rulings are final, will not look into the petitions that claimed that the two Amiri decrees violated the constitution. The first decree stipulates that Kuwaiti voters will prove their residential address and therefore their electoral constituency with their civil IDs and not the citizenship document, as used to be the case in all 16 previous elections.

The measure came after a report showed that

some candidates transferred hundreds of voters from one constituency to another to boost their chances of winning. The second decree added all new residential areas to the five existing constituencies to allow residents to participate in the polls.

Kuwait enters into election silence on Wednesday, and authorities have called on the media not to publish interviews or any campaign materials of all candidates on Wednesday and

Thursday. Replaying interviews and other election material is also prohibited.

The court of cassation on Tuesday upheld the disqualification of four candidates for being convicted of political offenses. Around 15 candidates have been barred from contesting the polls for being convicted over criminal and political cases. This leaves 305 candidates in the fray for the 50 seats. Most political groupings have fielded candidates.

## News in brief

### Saudi Crown Prince named PM

**RIYADH:** Saudi King Salman issued on Tuesday a royal decree appointing Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia. In another royal decree, the King restructured the Council of Ministers, headed by the Crown Prince.



Mohammed bin Salman

### Rajaan's properties sold for KD 34m

**KUWAIT:** Justice Minister Jamal Al-Jalawi said the ministry has completed the sale of 42 properties belonging to former director of the Public Institution for Social Security Fahad Al-Rajaan and his wife Muna Al-Wazzan, 37 of them being empty lots. The estimated value of these sales is around KD 33.9 million, to be returned to the social security fund. Around KD 1.14 million was earlier recovered by selling his stocks and assets, which have been frozen since 2015. Rajaan, who died earlier this month, had fled to the UK with his family after facing accusations including embezzlement of public funds, betrayal of public trust and money laundering relating to when he was the head of PIFSS.

### China gifts pandas to Qatar

**DOHA:** China announced Monday that it will give Qatar two giant pandas to mark the World Cup being held in the Gulf state. China's ambassador to Doha, Zhou Jian, said that "Suhail" and "Soraya" would arrive in Qatar in October, ahead of the 32-nation tournament that starts Nov 20. "This is a gift presented by the 1.4 billion Chinese people for the Qatar World Cup, and will surely become a new symbol of China-Qatar friendship," the envoy said at a reception. — AFP

### Student killed over spelling mistake

**LUCKNOW:** Indian police are searching for a teacher accused of beating a low-caste student to death over a spelling mistake, officers said Tuesday, after suppressing violent protests triggered by the incident. Nikhil Dohre was struck with a rod and kicked until he fell unconscious by his high school teacher earlier this month after misspelling the word "social" in an exam, according to a police complaint by his father. The 15-year-old died from his injuries on Monday at a hospital in Uttar Pradesh state, and the accused has fled the area. — AFP

## Abe honored at controversial state funeral

**TOKYO:** Japanese and foreign dignitaries paid tribute to assassinated former prime minister Shinzo Abe at a state funeral on Tuesday that drew both mourners and protesters to central Tokyo. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida described the former leader as a "person of courage" in a eulogy, listing his achievements, including efforts to strengthen Japan's diplomatic ties. "I feel heart-breaking grief," Kishida said as he faced a photograph of Abe that was hung above a grand floral structure used to display his ashes, medals and the Japanese flag.

The decorative box of ashes had been carried by his widow Akie into Tokyo's storied Budokan venue, where a 19-gun salute sounded in honor of the slain politician. Abe was Japan's longest-serving prime minister and one of the country's most recognizable political figures, known for cultivating international alliances and his "Abenomics" economic

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TOKYO: A portrait of Japan's former prime minister Shinzo Abe hangs above the stage during his state funeral in the Nippon Budokan on Sept 27, 2022. — AFP

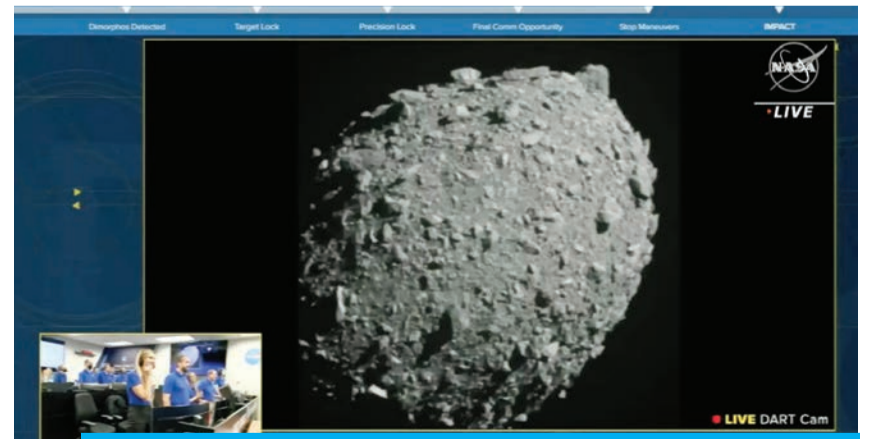
## NASA strikes asteroid with spaceship

**LAUREL, Maryland:** Bullseye: A NASA spaceship on Monday struck an asteroid seven million miles away in order to deflect its orbit, succeeding in a historic test of humanity's ability to prevent a celestial object from devastating life on Earth. The Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) impactor hit its target, the space rock Dimorphos, at 7:14 pm

Eastern Time (2314 GMT), 10 months after blasting off from California on its pioneering mission.

"We're embarking on a new era, an era in which we potentially have the capability to protect ourselves from something like a dangerous hazardous asteroid impact," said Lori Glaze, director of NASA's planetary science division. Dimorphos - a 160-m asteroid roughly comparable in size to an Egyptian pyramid - orbits a half-mile long big brother called Didymos. Never seen before, the "moonlet" appeared as a speck of light around an hour before the collision. Its egg-like shape and craggy, boulder-dotted surface finally came into clear view in

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LAUREL, Maryland: This screengrab made from NASA live feed on Sept 26, 2022 shows Dimorphos just before the DART impactor made impact with the asteroid, as watched by the NASA team at DART headquarters. — AFP

## In Dubai, poor get free bread from machines

**DUBAI:** With the cost of living surging, free hot bread distribution for the poor has been introduced in Dubai, a rich Gulf emirate where millionaires rub shoulders with hard-working migrants. The city of skyscrapers soaring above the desert, which imports almost all of its food, has been impact-

ed by rapidly rising consumer prices, a global trend exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ten vending machines were installed last week in supermarkets, with a computer touch screen allowing people to select different types: Loaves for sandwiches, pitta bread or flat Indian-style chapatis. The machine has a credit card reader - for donations not payment.

According to government figures from the Dubai Statistics Center, the food price index, which tracks the monthly change in the cost of a basket of food commodities, rose by 8.75 percent in July, year on year. — AFP (See Page 11)



DUBAI: A man collects items from a vending machine that gives out free bread on Sept 22, 2022. — AFP

# Cabinet lauds decision to cede camp to PAHW

## Evaluates education sector, mega projects

**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Acting Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior, informed the Kuwaiti Cabinet on his decision to move the camp of the Southern Brigade to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), during the Cabinet's weekly Monday meeting. Dr Mohammad Al-Fares, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs lauded the decision adding that it highlighted the government's eagerness to ensure the welfare of its citizens. He also said that the Cabinet members appreciated the decision as a generous initiative from Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Sabah, to address the housing issue in the country. The camp of the Southern Brigade is two kilometers long and two kilometers wide and is located to the west of Sabah Al-Hamad City.

The Cabinet also offered its congratulations to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al Saud on the upcoming national day celebrations in Saudi Arabia.

Praising the achievements of the Kingdom and its positive role in serving the Muslims and world peace, the Cabinet expressed its wishes to the sisterly kingdom and desired it to have more prosperity, progress, stability and welfare under its wise leadership, Al-Fares said.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr Ali Fahad Al-Modhaf briefed the Cabinet on the preparations for the start of the school year 2022-2023. He elaborated on the arrangements made by the specialized committees on rehabilitation and the maintenance of schools and educational facilities countrywide. The Cabinet expressed its best wishes for all students, adding that no efforts should be spared to ensure a decent educational environment for all students. Regarding the implementation of mega projects, the Cabinet



**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet during their weekly Monday meeting. —KUNA

discussed the recommendations of the competent ministerial committee and the report of the committee on state land, regarding the appropriation of areas for residential projects in urban sites. The Cabinet tasked the Kuwait Municipality with speeding up the appropriation of plots of land, specified in the PAHW report, which will, in turn, distribute the plots among beneficiaries.

The Cabinet added that the municipality was to coordinate with PAHW and other competent state agencies to develop housing projects in these areas and report back to the Cabinet within one month. Meanwhile, the Cabinet debated on the progress of several other projects - the Leisure City project, the timelines of related projects, including Al She'b park (T2), Failaka Island resorts and Al-Sebbiyah Leisure city, the status quo of Al-Shamlan pond, the upgrad-

ing of Kuwait International Airport, the labor city, the cargo city, Kuwait railway project, Al-Safarin marketplace and the designing and development of rest houses along highways. The Cabinet also discussed the latest report of the technical committee on the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway investment projects. The Cabinet tasked the committee to continue working with the two ministries of electricity, water and renewable energy and communication as well as Kuwait Municipality and the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation to finalize the development of the infrastructure on the two artificial islands (the northern and the southern) and facilitate the investment projects of along Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway.

Approving the donation of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) to the state digital transformation

drive, the Cabinet lauded 'the generous contribution' as reflective of the private sector's role in backing the state's developmental efforts. The cabinet members also approved a recommendation - jointly raised by the legal committee and the Martyr's Bureau - to write off the remaining debts of martyrs to PAHW and Kuwait Credit Bank (KCB) and return the repaid funds to the martyr's families. They also agreed a cybersecurity agreement between Kuwait's Ministry of Defense and the Italian National Cybersecurity Agency, an amendment of the Double Taxation Agreements (DTA) with Luxembourg against double taxation, and an amendment to the February 16, 1999, DTA with Switzerland. The Cabinet also reviewed the latest developments of the situation in the Arab region and beyond. — KUNA

## Madrid-Kuwait flights to open new horizons

**MADRID:** The newly operational direct flights between Kuwait and Madrid is expected to open up new horizons for travelers and tourists, said Basmah Al-Mayman, Head of Regional Department, United Nations World Tourism Organization. In an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Al-Mayman stated that the operation of this new route by Kuwait



**Basmah Al-Mayman**

Airways, coincides with the World Tourism Day, adding that this would allow Kuwaiti and European travelers, the opportunity to travel to new destinations. On the recovery of the tourism sector post the coronavirus pandemic, Al-Mayman, the first Arab woman to occupy this office, added that the region experienced an exponential growth in the number of foreign visitors - four times higher than that of last year - an increase of 287 percent between January and July. Furthermore, she also highlighted that Qatar is the first Arab nation to host an event as substantial and exceptional as the World Cup Championship. She added that a number of neighboring countries would also benefit from this announcement, especially as Gulf countries have now agreed to facilitate travel for World Cup visitors and operate flights to and from their countries and Qatar. — KUNA



**BELGRADE:** Faye Al-Mutairi with the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. — KUNA

## Al-Mutairi submits credentials to Serbian President

**BELGRADE:** Ambassador Faye Al-Mutairi submitted his credentials to the Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic Tuesday, as the country's ambassador to Serbia. During the reception, Ambassador Al-Mutairi conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Serbian president. He also stressed his keenness on boosting relations between the two countries in a way that meets the aspirations and interests of the countries and their people. — KUNA

## Interior minister inspects road traffic congestion

**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Talal Al-Sabah, the acting Minister of Interior has inspected, along with personnel from traffic and public works ministry, road congestions after the start of the new academic year, in order to reduce traffic congestion.

The team analyzed the roads in Kuwait, hoping to understand the reasons for the congestion and rated the road situation during rush hour, in order to decide on measures that would help attain the highest level of safety in the country. Al-Sabah has also asked for a complete study to understand the



**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Talal Al-Sabah with traffic and public works officials.

reasons for the traffic congestion and one which would also suggest solutions that would solve the road problem as well as limit traffic congestions.

The Minister also spoke about the significance of violators being handled gently, especially in areas where schools were located.

## Spike in diabetes cases due to unhealthy lifestyle

**KUWAIT:** Dr Khaled Al-Saeed, Minister of Health, has said the Kuwait leads the list of countries, where patients undergo kidney transplants, adding that further initiatives are planned to develop liver and heart transplants in the country. Speaking on the sidelines of an event organized by the Kuwait Heart Society and Sabah Al-Ahmad Heart Center, to mark the 'World day for heart', Al-Saeed said that currently two kinds of transplants - organs and bone marrow- were being carried out in Kuwait, especially for children and said that the Health Ministry has also noticed an increase in cases of heart diseases in the country. "Previously, some heart surgeries were available



**Dr Khaled Al-Saeed**



only in one hospital, but it is now conducted in four hospitals and it is also planned to have facilities to conduct such surgeries across all hospitals in Kuwait, as the number of doctors increase in the sector."

He also said that the increase in the number of diabetic patients in Kuwait was primarily due to the unhealthy lifestyle choices practiced by people in the country which also led to an increase in heart and cholesterol-related diseases.

Al-Saeed also appraised the role of the Kuwait Heart Society which has been serving patients for 40 years now and has been supporting efforts to treat heart disease in the country.

Meanwhile, Dr Talal Al-Bahar, Head of Kuwait Heart Society expressed his appreciation in collaborating with the Ministry to execute training projects aimed at saving lives.

"The society is proud of its national and social duty in supporting medical research aimed at preventing heart diseases and in supporting researchers in making scientific studies and attending global medical conferences," he said.

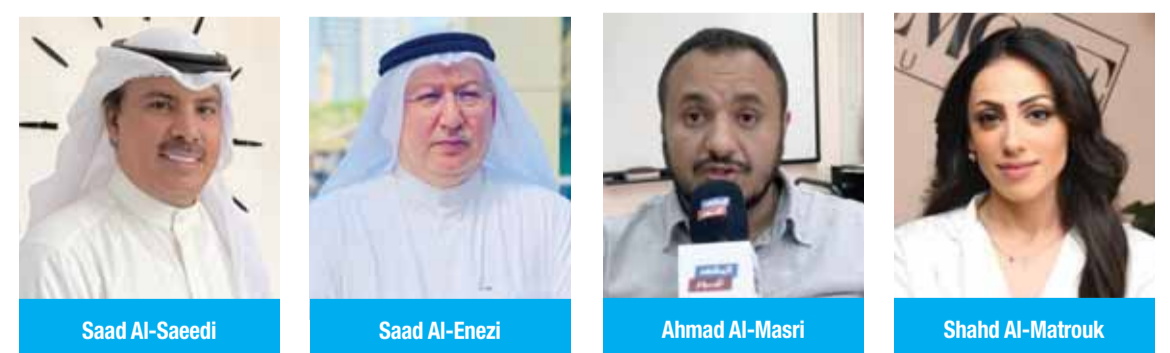
He added that the society conducted awareness events - for medical testing and to estimate body mass-to identify obesity and related issues and said that the society would continue to reach people through these awareness programs.

## International media keen on covering Kuwait elections

**KUWAIT:** Officials representing international media outlets have expressed their enthusiasm in covering Kuwait's upcoming parliamentary elections. Speaking to KUNA, Saad Al-Saeedi, Bureau Chief, Al-Jazeera Channel, said that international media has been covering the elections so far in a way that was reflective of the country's democratic practices.

"Arab and foreign media outlets are quite keen to cover the upcoming parliamentary elections with its focus on transparency and democracy," he said, adding that, "the Kuwait National Assembly is unique in the region and its public discussions have often attracted the attention of the Arab as well as the Western media."

Al-Saeedi also said that the parliament in Kuwait represented political liberty, freedom of choice and the ability to ratify treatments and agreements - ideas that have not often been seen in other countries. He also highlighted the equal contribution played by the parliament and the government in running the affairs of the state, adding that, the participation of women,



**Saad Al-Saeedi**

**Saad Al-Enezi**

**Ahmad Al-Masri**

**Shahd Al-Matrouk**

who represented more than 50 percent of voters, was an added value to the political scene.

Saad Al-Enezi, Sky news Arabia bureau chief, said that the 60-year-old democratic experience in Kuwait was "unique and deeply-rooted in the Kuwaiti society." "The National Assembly", said Al-Enezi, "represented the democratic aspirations of the Kuwaiti people and the elections contributed to the political, economic and social interactions among the general public - a fact admired by other nations." He noted that this year's elections highlighted a new political reality with the Amiri address to the nation, which emphasized commitment to the constitution and non-interference in elections, in order to smoothen out the political road ahead in Kuwait.

Ahmad Al-Masri, German News Agency (DPA)

correspondent in Kuwait, said that the National Assembly was "one of the best legislative institutions in the area due to its sound practices that have contributed to the development of Kuwait" and pointed out that "this is how assemblies have to function in democracies." Al-Masri said that the entire country was mobilized to guarantee the success of the elections.

Shahad Al-Matrouk, Al-Arabiya news reporter said that, "elections were a genuine part of a democracy where people selected their own destiny, through their 50 representatives." She said that, "people were eagerly waiting for the outcome of the Sept 29 elections while, foreigners would have a chance to have a first-hand account of how democracy functions in Kuwait." — KUNA

## Local

# Mudawi Diwaniya discusses key women's issues ahead of elections

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Former education minister Moudi Al-Humoud told Kuwait Times on the sidelines of a discussion event held on Monday by Mudawi List Platform titled "Mudawi Diwaniya" that Kuwaiti women from an earlier stage are fully empowered at all levels, while their success in reaching the parliament depends on voters' trust, elections and nomination of women.

"We hope women have a better opportunity to win in the current elections, especially with the increase in the number of female candidates this time - 7 percent of total candidates - not to mention that many female candidates have distinct proposals that tackle national priorities. So, we hope to have more than one Kuwaiti woman in the parliament," she said.

"Mudawi Diwaniya" was held at Volvo Studio in cooperation with BNK Group and Volvo to discuss the journey of Kuwaiti women in political life and their chances of reaching the Abdullah Al-Salem Hall. Asrar Hayat, one of the founding members of Mudawi List, told Kuwait Times that a large percentage of female citizens are optimistic the election will result in extensive female representation, due to the great number of qualified candidates who have nominated themselves.

"The new election law is in women's favor, due to the system that obligates voters to vote through their civil ID, which will limit them to vote only for candidates that are in the same constituency as them. This means it will destroy many of the previous groupings, forgery in electoral lists, vote buying and byelections. Therefore, I hope the current election will give women a better opportunity to reach parliament and succeed in all other aspects in life," Hayat said. She claimed women in Kuwait are less corrupt compared to men, pointing out, "we have never heard of women buying votes or participating in byelections."

Lawyer Noor Bin Haidar told Kuwait Times that despite her interest in empowering women in parliament, she believes voters should vote for those who adopt women's issues that she and the society care about. "When candidates reach the parliament, my responsibility as a voter is to follow up with them to ensure their commitment to the issues they were elected on, and whether they benefit the community and women. In addition, voters should take advantage of the importance of their votes and apply

pressure on representatives/candidates over the issues they want to fix or highlight, because at the end, they cannot succeed without voters' votes," Bin Haidar said.

Regarding the values document signed by some conservative candidates, Bin Haidar said from a legal perspective, the document violates the constitution. "Kuwaiti citizens do not expect representatives to teach us how to act, wear or speak - their role is limited to regulatory and legislative matters and not oversight of the people," she said.

"The absence of women from parliaments and councils in the previous years is a result of several things. In the previous period, the interests of female voters were not towards supporting female candidates. The role of the media and the government toward directing public opinion to empower women is very important. When the government supports women by appointing them in leading authorities and ministries and they perform well, then women will be elected to parliament," Bin Haidar said.



Noor Bin Haidar



Asrar Hayat



Moudi Al-Humoud

Former minister Humoud, the main speaker at the event, pointed out that female voters constitute the majority of the electoral base in Kuwait at around 53 percent, as a large number of men are in the military and police, who are excluded from the electoral process. She pointed out women in Kuwait joined political and democratic life less than 17 years ago, while men entered this field more than 60 years ago,

so comparison is difficult. Women need more political experience and more practice to be compared to men, despite the fact that women are quick in adapting to the political process, Humoud said. She added Kuwait women in 17 years succeeded to increase the percentage of their participation in elections by 17 percent, which is a great success and reflects women's determination to succeed.



KUWAIT: The audience, in participation for the event.

## Kuwait's electoral campaigns get creative

**KUWAIT:** There is no doubt that the candidates for the National Assembly elections 2022 have the right to use all traditional, modern or advanced media and new technological methods in their election campaigns, as long as they are within the legal framework, to ensure the integrity of electoral campaigns aimed at attracting voters' attention and to promote themselves. However, an observer of the current campaigns held ahead of the National Assembly Elections, which will be held on Thursday, noticed that media and propaganda campaigns are being created with various innovative and new technological methods that have changed the way Kuwaiti parliamentary election campaigns have been held previously and the way candidates interact with voters or engage in public opinion.

Speaking on the matter, Professor of Political Sociology at the College of Social Sciences at Kuwait University, Dr Marzouqa Al-Quwaidhi said that technologically advanced forms of communication were meant to address people's minds with clear words and frank discussions about issues which reflected a positive and reliable electoral result. Al-Quwaidhi pointed out that technology-based media played a significant role in this year's campaigning as it brought down the cost of campaigning and the electoral process as a whole.

"Given the wide area of the geographical constituencies amidst the five-circle system, the candidates relied on smart advertising means by managing them in a correct manner and according to a well-researched plan to influence his electoral bases."

She also noted that enthusiastic videos and rhymes are being used in promotions to motivate voters and stimulate enthusiasm in order to vote for candidates as a form of publicity and advertisement. This type of propaganda carries a brief, clear and easy message that touches the aspirations and the conscience of voters, raises their interests, and shows the purpose and objective of the nomination.

Meanwhile, Professor of Media at the College of Arts at Kuwait University, Dr Khaled Al-Quhs, said that these technological means, whether through videos or tweets, made it easier to portray the candidates' ideas and agendas to the public instead of having electoral seminars. He also mentioned innovative ways that can help candidates, such as paid podcast interviews, videos and pictures, which are circulated through different social media platforms. Al-Quhs also said that there is an innovative method to display candidates' biography, history and plans through a barcode to be scanned and easily broadcasted.

On his part, Professor of Media at the College of Arts at Kuwait University, Dr Ahmad Al-Sharif told KUNA that modern technological media is a significant driver in influencing public opinions, as social media has become the most dominant method in electoral campaigns and is taking the lead, thanks to the society's tendency to use it for being the fastest, easiest and less expensive. He added that the use of social media outlets has exceeded television usage, in terms of the number of views, and had a big effect in voter's opinions. — KUNA

local spotlight

## Three persons, and one!

By Yousuf Awadh Al-Azmi



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"It is not important to read a lot, rather it is useful reading." - Arnold J Toynbee

I was browsing the shelves of a library in the city, looking for a certain book. As I was moving slowly, I thought about thousands of titles of the books of all types, and how the author gets the name of the book to be indicative of the subject and express its idea. It logically supposed that the title will be unique. The author will, of course, take into consideration the attractiveness of the book, with the cover being expressive, in addition to other concerns, the least of which is what font to use.

While I was thinking about this, I remembered the suggestions of some friends to have a book of many of my writings and published columns. I am not enthusiastic towards this idea, and this has reasons I think have merit. The first is that what will be published in the suggested book are columns, which a researcher can access at a click of a button through the Internet, so there will be nothing new in the book.

Even if I write exclusive columns for the book, I do not think this will add to the value of the book, and most importantly, I do not know the intellectual and cultural value of what I write. Here I mean that my writings are not presented for evaluation by specialists, and I am compelled to only publish what is recommended by specialists, which did not happen. I am convinced that the publication of a book without meeting professional and scientific rules is not a good decision, as the ethical responsibility compels the author not to decide to publish until after all conditions are met.

Also, the publication of the book has to be profitable, or at least cover its cost, but it is more likely to make losses. Also, there are columns that were published in English, so do I reprint them in English or be satisfied with the Arabic version only?

Back to my tour among the bookshelves and their titles, and suggestions of my friends to publish a book, the truth is that I do not know if it will be possible to publish according to the conditions I mentioned. What is certain is that I remembered my three friends who love books and writing with much gratitude, and remembered my friend who is outside Kuwait, news about whose sickness made me sad, and I wish him speedy recovery.



## National Guard begins preparations for rainy season

**KUWAIT:** National Guard Undersecretary, Hashem Al-Refaei, accompanied by leaders, visited Al-Tahrir encampment, to inspect the strength of support units ahead of the rainy season.

He listened to plans regarding the handling of rain related issues, starting October, which included technical squads being trained to use modern equipment to deal with flooding, plans to rescue trapped people and measures to facilitate road movement. Al-Refaei also visited the fire and rescue branch to examine the preparation of the firefighting equipment to be utilized, to deal with the rainy season. He stressed on the importance of all safety procedures to support those in need.



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#### News in brief

#### MoI to transform 123 schools into election centers

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Interior has chosen 123 school buildings to transform them into electoral centers for the upcoming parliamentary polls due on Thursday. Five of the selected buildings will be transformed into main electoral stations and 118 will serve as regular centers; located in all electoral constituencies, said Feras Kartchi, the Director of Public Services, at the Ministry of Education in a statement on Tuesday. The selected schools are already being cleaned and prepared to receive the voters on the election day on Thursday, he added. He indicated that these schools would be restored to their original status after the election. — KUNA

#### Kuwait Embassy in US to set up shelters for Hurricane Ian

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Embassy at the United States designated two shelters in areas expected to be struck by Hurricane Ian in the states of Florida and Georgia, to help evacuate Kuwaitis if needed. The Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington DC called on Kuwaiti citizens to be cautious and take all the required procedures and to follow up instructions issued by local authorities to deal with the hurricane, requesting everyone to be safe and sound. The Embassy called on the Kuwait citizens to continue communicating with their office in the following phone numbers: Kuwait Embassy: -202-262-0758, Kuwait's General Consulate in New York: -917-242-6688, Miami Emergency number: -202-873-3671, Atlanta Emergency number: -210-666-5555 - 917-297-444. — KUNA

#### KBC lauds Kuwait's oil studies institute

**DUBAI:** Feras Al-Salem, Acting Chairman of Kuwait Business Council (KBC) in Dubai and Northern Emirates appreciated Kuwait's efforts to establish the largest institute for oil studies in the region and said that he hoped that the institute would enable young Kuwaitis to get good training and research opportunities. Speaking at the opening of the seventh edition of the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA) Research and Innovation Conference in Dubai, Al-Salem said that the initiative would help young Kuwaitis to also acquire expertise that would help them to gain a foothold in the labor market. He also spoke about the possibility of developing businesses to improve the local economy, adding that the leaders of the oil and petrochemical industry had always expressed a keen interest in innovations, research as well as in knowledge sharing. The two-day conference which is attended by several researchers includes discussions on the latest techniques implemented by GCC companies working in the field. — KUNA



**MUSCAT:** Mohammad Al-Hajri with Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Al-Busaid. — KUNA

#### Al-Hajri submits his credentials to Omani FM

**MUSCAT:** Kuwait's Ambassador Mohammad Al-Hajri submitted his credentials to Oman's Foreign Minister Badr Al-Busaid Monday, as the country's ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. During the reception, Ambassador Al-Hajri conveyed the greetings of Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah to his Omani counterpart and stressed his keenness on boosting relations between the two countries, and pushing them for wider perspectives in a way that meets aspirations and achieves interests of the two countries and their peoples, according to the statement. — KUNA

#### Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** A jetski enthusiast races against the horizon. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Kuwaiti economists: Legislations needed to boost economy

**KUWAIT:** With the 2022 National Assembly planned to be held on Sept 29, Thursday, Kuwaiti economists stressed the importance of choosing candidates eager to promote the sustainability of the national economy through laws and legislations. Speaking to KUNA, the economists shared a vision focused on diversifying income, cultivating a viable atmosphere for commerce and investment, as well as encouraging creativity and ingenuity in business. Continuing to make oil the sole source of income is a 'dangerous matter' due to the commodity being linked with the varying nature of global energy prices, said Dr Anwar Al-Shurai'an, a professor of economy at Kuwait University (KU).

Dr Al-Shurai'an indicated that the decline in price of oil during the COVID-19 was a great motivator to diversify the economy, a vision - which has been spoken about for 45 years. He noted that according to reports, the volume of Kuwait sovereign wealth fund had reached around \$1 trillion, which indicates that its income was at around six percent equaling \$80 per barrel of income made in current production estimates. Al-Shurai'an called on

parliamentary hopefuls and those involved in drafting laws and legislations to focus on a sustainable vision for the Kuwaiti economy. The legislative authority must have a role in promoting economic diversity and sustainability, noting that what occurred during the pandemic had highlighted the importance of such ventures. The private sector had been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and such emergencies required legislators to look into laws that protect private businesses and find ways to promote economic growth, he affirmed.

Providing his input, economic lecturer at Kuwait University (KU) Dr Riyad Al-Fares said that the executive authority, through the New Kuwait 2035 vision, had come up with plans to counter mishaps in the national economy. The state income had decreased tremendously during the coronavirus pandemic, putting the price of oil at \$30 per barrel, he indicated, noting that the legislative authority should come up with laws to strengthen the input of the private sector in Kuwait and diversify income from a petroleum-based economy that represented around 95 percent of the GDP. He pointed out that

privatization was key to help the private sector flourish, adding that the National Assembly must focus on laws or amend legislations, which were aimed at economic diversification and improving the business environment. He noted that the government's agenda for 2021 had nine economic drafts laws in need of legislative amendments. The parliament and government need to support projects such as the free-trade zone and Al-Harir City to promote the welfare of the state and citizens alike, he affirmed. Meanwhile, assistant lecturer at Kuwait University's (KU) the college of law, Dr Mohammad Al-Shubaib said that the upcoming election of the National Assembly had various challenges to tackle, namely the ones pertaining to budget and spending. He reiterated the importance of supporting the private sector and encouraging creativity and ingenuity in business to attract foreign investments and expand the state income. Al-Shubaib also said that having a strong economic base would allow Kuwait to maneuver against global economic crises and turn the country to a regional and international hub for commerce and finance. — KUNA

### Kuwaiti activists: Environmental causes should be a legislative priority

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti activists said on Monday that candidates running for positions in the upcoming national elections, scheduled to be held next Thursday, must put environmental causes on the forefront of their respective campaigns, to achieve sustainable development for the country.

Several sources stressed on the importance of protecting the environment saying that the issue was not to be ignored and had been put in the back burner for way too long. Wajdan Al-Oqab, Chairperson of the Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS), called for protecting the environment and promoting alternative energy resources saying that these issues affected Kuwait and the whole world.

"The increase in temperatures and the climate change cannot simply be brushed under the carpet as these are real threats that require real solutions," she said. Al-Oqab also called on candidates to recognize the importance of protecting natural resources and also asked all parties to respect international environmental protection accords.

"Previously, the parliament had approved laws pertaining to protecting the environmental rights of individuals," she said, adding that, "environmental protection law 24/2015 and law 99/2015 both enshrined the rights of citizens for clean air quality, water, and land."

"Controlling pollution and protecting the environment are vital parts of sustainable development and the New Kuwait Vision 2030."

Shareef Al-Khayat, Head of the Climate Change department at the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), said that the issue of climate change was a reality and has already resulted in rising sea levels due to the melting of ice both in the Arctic and Antarctica. He said that Kuwait would not be exempted from this global issue, a reason why legislators need to focus on laws to prevent an environmental catastrophe and added

that the rise in temperature was a great danger facing the country.

Al-Khayat also revealed that the rise in temperature also meant an increase in electricity and water usage and this resulted in 65 to 70 percent of power consumption, especially during the summer. Carbon emission and energy production activities were the main culprits of climate change, he said, noting that Kuwait has the capability to push forward for alternative energy resources to decrease pollution and protect the environment. Meanwhile, meteorologist and former head of the Kuwaiti meteorology center, Mohammad Karam, urged legislators to put the issue of the environment on the top of their agenda, saying that such topics affected citizens and residents alike. The spike in temperature, for example, would lead to more energy consumption and pollution, he added, saying that solving the problem was a requirement and not an afterthought. "Candidates must set their sight on protecting the environment to ensure a sustainable future for Kuwait and its people," he said, noting that "increasing greenery and using alternative means of producing energy were vital tools to combat pollution." — KUNA

## Congratulations:



**A cake gifted by the Bowling Club to Kuwait Times, congratulating the newspaper on its 61st anniversary.**

#### BOWLING CLUB:

To the Editor-in-Chief of Kuwait Times

I am pleased to congratulate you and all employees of your esteemed paper on the occasion of the 61st anniversary of publication. We noticed the balanced and credible publication that made Kuwait Times a media model to be followed.

We follow your publication that discusses issues, through which it cares for the country's interests, making it a source for those searching for the truth.

I congratulate you on this effort and continued work. I wish you more prosperity and success for the sake of free speech and interest of our beloved country, Kuwait.

**Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah**  
President of the Bowling Club

#### British School of Kuwait:

We congratulate you on occasion of the 61st anniversary of Kuwait Times Newspaper, which has a bright record of leadership in the history of Kuwait, Gulf and Arab Journalism, being the first newspaper published in the English language in the Arabian Gulf region.

We appreciate your efforts in enriching media activities in our beloved country, we wish your paper more prosperity and success.



Vietnam orders mass evacuations ahead of Super Typhoon Noru

## Thousands march to demand justice for Mexico's missing students

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ROME: (From left) Leader of Italian far-right Lega (League) party Matteo Salvini, Forza Italia leader Silvio Berlusconi, leader of Italian far-right party 'Fratelli d'Italia' (Brothers of Italy) Giorgia Meloni, and Italian centre-right lawmaker Maurizio Lupi stand on stage after the general election victory. —AFP

# Meloni begins tricky government talks

## Berlusconi eyeing president of the Senate

ROME: Italian far-right leader Giorgia Meloni and her allies began Tuesday what is likely to be a weeks-long process of forming a new government, with crises looming on several fronts. Meloni's post-fascist Brothers of Italy party, which triumphed in Sunday's elections, has no experience of power but must assemble a cross-party team to tackle sky-high inflation and energy prices, and relations with a wary Europe.

The 45-year-old is hoping to be the first woman to lead Italy as prime minister, but needs her allies, Matteo Salvini's far-right League party and former Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, for a majority in parliament.

The division of the top jobs—namely economy, foreign affairs, the defence and interior ministries—will always be political but now, more than ever, “will have to reflect areas of expertise”, the Stampa daily noted. In the past, it has taken anything between four and 12 weeks for a new administration to take office.

But the first deadline for action is coming up fast, with debt-laden Italy due to submit its draft plan for next year's budget to Brussels by October 15. President Sergio Mattarella will begin consultations on who should lead the new government only once the Senate and Chamber presidents have been elected by parliament, which meets on October 13.

With families and businesses struggling with huge bills aggravated by the Ukraine war, sorting out the budget will be “like scaling Everest without oxygen tanks for the new cabinet”, the Corriere della Sera daily said. Meloni sought to reassure investors during the election campaign that, despite

her radical past, she will be a safe pair of hands.

But the Italian ten-year bond rate increased to its highest level since October 2013 on Tuesday morning. And the gap between German and Italian interest rates, the closely watched spread, rose above 250 points for the first time since the depths of the coronavirus pandemic in spring 2020.

### Non-controversial, credible

The European Commission was set to approve Tuesday



### Allies pitching for heavy-weight positions

the second instalment of post-pandemic recovery funds to Italy, worth 21 billion euros, a government source said. But Meloni has said she wants to renegotiate the deal with Brussels, potentially putting the rest of the fund—worth a total of almost 200 billion euros—at risk.

Agnese Ortolani, senior Europe analyst at the Economist Intelligence Unit, said she expected Meloni “to continue to

reassure the markets by picking a non-controversial figure for the role of finance minister”. “She will also want to avoid reputational damage by nominating someone who is not perceived as credible by the markets,” she said in a note.

Meloni's allies have been pitching for heavy-weight positions, Salvini wanting his old job as interior minister back, and Berlusconi eyeing president of the Senate. Their disappointing performance in the polls, however, with neither reaching 10 percent while Brothers of Italy's secured 26 percent, means Meloni may already be planning to sideline them.

### Friction

Salvini and Berlusconi do not see eye-to-eye with Meloni on several fronts, including on sending weapons to Ukraine. With all the potential friction ahead, winning the elections “was almost the easy part”, commented Luciano Fontana, chief editor of the Corriere della Sera daily.

Berlusconi downplayed concerns he would rock the boat Tuesday, saying his party was ready to make compromises “in the country's interests”. His ally Antonio Tajani, a former European parliament president, is tipped as possible foreign minister, an appointment which could both appease Berlusconi and assuage international fears that Meloni's Eurosceptic populist party plans to pick fights with Brussels.

Salvini, 49, may prove more difficult. He is currently on trial for allegedly abusing his powers as interior minister in 2019 to block migrants at sea, which could rule him out returning to the job. “Defusing Salvini” without sparking a backlash that could seriously weaken the nascent executive is “Meloni's first test”, the Repubblica daily said. —AFP

## Iran protest death toll tops 75 as crackdown intensifies

TEHRAN: More than 75 people have died in Iran's crackdown on 11 nights of unrest sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, a rights group said, as Western nations pile pressure on the Islamic republic to end the violence.

The Iranian authorities' official death toll has remained at 41 since Saturday, including several members of the security forces, as the country is rocked by its biggest wave of protests in almost three years. Demonstrators took to the streets again on Monday night—as they have every night since Amini's death on September 16 following her arrest for allegedly breaching the country's strict rules on hijab headscarves and modest clothing—witnesses told AFP.

In Sanandaj, the capital of Amini's western home province of Kurdistan, women climbed onto the roofs of cars to tear off their headscarves in front of cheering crowds, images published by Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR) showed, with police nowhere to be seen.

Tehran crowds have shouted “death to the dictator”, calling for the end of the more than three-decade rule of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 83. Video shot from several floors above street level, purportedly in the city of Tabriz, showed people protesting to the sound of tear gas canisters being fired by security forces.

IHR said at least 76 people have been killed in the crackdown that has seen sweeping restrictions imposed on the internet, including blocks on Instagram and WhatsApp. Officials said Monday they had made more than 1,200 arrests. Those taken into custody have included activists, lawyers and journalists as well as protesters.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said it was “very concerned by the continued violent response by security forces to protests in Iran”. It was “extremely concerned by comments by some leaders vilifying protesters, and by the apparent unnecessary and disproportionate use of force against protesters,” spokesperson Ravina Shamdasani told a Tuesday briefing.

### Tensions with West

Tensions with Western powers grew as France on Monday issued its “strongest condemnation” over the “violent repression” by security forces, Germany summoned the Iranian ambassador and Canada announced sanctions.

A day earlier, the European Union had deplored the crackdown and Tehran said it had called in the British and Norwegian envoys. “We call on the international community to decisively and unitedly take practical steps to stop the killing and torture of protesters,” said IHR's director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam.

Video footage and death certificates obtained by IHR showed that “live ammunition is being directly fired at protesters,” he charged. Riot police in black body armour have beaten protesters with truncheons in running street battles, and students have torn down large pictures of the supreme leader and his predecessor Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in recent video footage published by AFP. —AFP

## Kremlin proxies to close polls in ‘sham’ annexation votes

KYIV: Annexation polls were due to close Tuesday in Kremlin-controlled regions of Ukraine, as officials in Moscow repeated warnings that Russia could use nuclear weapons to defend the territories from Ukrainian counter-attacks.

Kyiv and its allies have denounced the votes as a sham and said the West would never recognise the results of the ballots that have dramatically ratcheted up the stakes of Russia's seven-month invasion. Kremlin-installed officials in the four regions have said the outcome could be announced as early as Tuesday evening or Wednesday.

“Saving people in the territories where this referendum is taking place... is the focus of the attention of our entire society and of the entire country,” Vladimir Putin said during a televised meeting with officials.

His spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the votes would have “radical” legal implications and that the so-called referendums “will also have consequences for security”, referring again to Moscow's threats to use nuclear weapons to defend its territory.

Russian forces in Ukraine this month have suffered serious setbacks, both in the east and south of the country, which observers say pushed Putin to rush ahead with the vote to cement Moscow's authority there. Putin said Russia would use any and all available means to defend its territory, implying that after the four regions were annexed Moscow could deploy strategic nuclear weapons to repulse Ukrainian attempts to take back the territory.

### Nuclear ‘right’

“I want to remind you—the deaf who hear only themselves: Russia has the right to use nuclear weapons if necessary,” former leader Dmitry Medvedev warned Tuesday on social media.

The four Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine—Donetsk and Lugansk in the east and Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in the south—announced that they would hold the elections just days before voting began last Friday. Together, they form a crucial land connection for the Kremlin between Russia and the Crimean peninsula, which Moscow annexed in 2014 and is otherwise only connected to the mainland by bridge.

The EU spokesman Peter Stano announced the bloc will



MARIUPOL, Ukraine: Konstantin Ivashchenko, former CEO of the Azovmash plant and appointed pro-Russian mayor of Mariupol, visits a polling station as people vote in a referendum in Mariupol on September 27, 2022. —AFP

slap sanctions on organisers of the “illegal” vote, following a similar move the UK earlier in the week. French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna meanwhile was in Kyiv for a surprise visit to meet with President Volodymyr Zelensky and underscore her country's support for Ukraine's “sovereignty and territorial integrity”.

Even Moscow's closest ally since the start of the invasion, Beijing, said after the votes were announced last week that Russia should respect territorial integrity in the war.

### Counter-offensive

The so-called referendums follow a pattern that Moscow utilised in Crimea after nationwide street demonstrations saw Ukraine's Kremlin-friendly president ousted. Like then, the outcome of the ballot is being viewed by observers as a foregone conclusion. Election officials brought ballot boxes door-to-door in many cases accompanied by armed Russian forces.

Lawmakers are expected to vote hastily to annex the territories after the results are announced and Russian news agencies have said Putin could sign legislation formalising the land grab this week. Ukrainian forces meanwhile have pursued their counter-offensive in the east and the governor of the eastern Kharkiv region announced Tuesday its forces had recaptured Kupiansk-Vuzlovyyi “one of the largest logistical and railway junctions” in the

region, not privy to this week's vote.

With fighting continuing along the sprawling frontline, AFP journalists were led to the country's latest suspected mass burial site in a shell-damaged and abandoned industrial chicken farm. “I was told by the soldiers who came to our village that they saw a burial place of soldiers, but they didn't specify the number,” said Lyudmyla Vakulenko, head of the Kozacha Lopan local administration.

The village is in the eastern Kharkiv region where a counter-offensive by Ukrainian troops saw dozens of towns and villages recaptured. Along with threats to use nuclear weapons, Putin announced a mobilisation of hundreds of thousands of Russian men to bolster Moscow's army in Ukraine, sparking demonstrations and an exodus of men abroad.

The UN voiced alarm on Tuesday at credible reports of nearly 2,400 arrests in less than a week during nationwide protests in dozens of cities against the draft order. Ex-Soviet Georgia, which was invaded by Russia in 2008, said the numbers of Russians crossing its borders had increased to around 10,000 people daily since Putin's announcement.

Kazakhstan, the Central Asian country on Russia's southern border meanwhile said nearly 100,000 people had entered the country since September 21 and its leader Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said authorities would “ensure their safety”. —AFP

## International

# Thousands march to demand justice for Mexico's missing students

## President urge protesters to rally peacefully in memory of the victims of tragedy

**MEXICO CITY:** Thousands of Mexicans marched on Monday demanding justice on the eighth anniversary of the disappearance of 43 students, after investigators branded the atrocity a "state crime" involving the military and other institutions.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador urged protesters to rally peacefully in memory of the victims of a tragedy that shocked the nation and prompted international indignation. Relatives, students and other demonstrators advanced through the heart of Mexico City chanting slogans such as "alive they took them, alive we want them!"

Some carried signs reading: "It was the army." "We demand that the military be investigated, that they be punished," said Blanca Nava, the mother of one of the students. Lopez Obrador's appeal came after several dozen members of the security forces were injured on Friday in clashes with protesters hurling rocks and homemade explosive devices at a Mexican military base.

"The only thing is to avoid violence," Lopez Obrador told reporters, declaring Monday a day of national mourning. "It's not about throwing stones or Molotov cocktails. It's about protesting peacefully," he said. Monday's march appeared to be mostly peaceful, with only occasional skirmishes between protesters and the police.

### Unsolved crime

The 43 teaching students had commandeered

buses in the southern state of Guerrero to travel to a demonstration in Mexico City before they went missing. Investigators say they were detained by corrupt police and handed over to a drug cartel that mistook them for members of a rival gang, but exactly what happened to them is disputed.

Last month, a truth commission tasked by Lopez Obrador's government to investigate the atrocity declared the case a "state crime" involving agents of various institutions. It said that military personnel bore "clear responsibility," either directly or through negligence.

Arrest warrants have been issued for more than 80 suspects, including military personnel, police officers and cartel members.

But a lawyer for the victims' families, Vidulfo Rosales, told reporters that prosecutors had withdrawn at least 20 of the warrants. "That's why there were strenuous demands for answers," he said, referring to Friday's protest violence, which came despite a number of high-profile detentions in the case.

Former attorney general Jesus Murillo Karam, who led a controversial investigation into the mass disappearance, was arrested last month on charges of forced disappearance, torture and obstruction of justice.

This month an army general and two other mili-



**MEXICO CITY, Mexico:** People shout slogans during a march at the Zocalo square in Mexico City to mark the eighth anniversary of the disappearance of 43 students of the teaching training school in Ayotzinapa. —AFP

tary personnel were also detained. According to an official report presented in 2015 by the government of then-president Enrique Pena Nieto, cartel members killed the students and incinerated their remains at a garbage dump.

Those conclusions were rejected by relatives, independent experts and the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. So far, the remains of only three victims have been identified. —AFP

## Starmer insists Labour fit to govern as crisis grips UK

**LIVERPOOL:** Labour leader Keir Starmer argued Tuesday he was ready to lead Britain out of economic crisis, as a new poll gave his once-fractured party its biggest lead in two decades over the ruling Conservatives.

The head of the main opposition told its annual conference that new Prime Minister Liz Truss and the Tories had "lost control of the British economy", as the UK reels from soaring inflation, imminent recession and a weakening currency. His speech in the northwestern English city of Liverpool was met with fervent applause from the Labour rank and file, who can now scent power, after 12 years in the political wilderness and bouts of ideological fighting.

It came the day after the pound crashed to an unprecedented low against the dollar. "And for what?" Starmer queried. "For tax cuts for the richest one percent in our society. Don't forget, don't forgive," he said. "The only way to stop this is with a Labour government." The pound's plunge has been blamed on a mini-budget unveiled Friday by Britain's new finance minister, Kwasi Kwarteng, which cut taxes-including for the highest earners-and raised government borrowing.

The currency rebounded somewhat Tuesday, but remains vulnerable amid market concerns that the tax-slashing plan could drive up interest rates and derail public finances. "What we've seen from the government in the past few days has no precedent," Starmer said, vowing instead investment in health-care, education and a "green prosperity plan" against climate change. —AFP

## Hurricane Ian hits Cuba

**HAVANA:** Hurricane Ian made landfall in western Cuba early Tuesday, with the storm prompting mass evacuations and fears it will bring widespread destruction as it heads for the US state of Florida. "Ian is already over Cuban territory," said a forecaster from the country's Institute of Meteorology in a special broadcast on state television. "The outer wall of the storm is on the coast of the province of Pinar del Rio."

About 38,000 people had been evacuated from their homes in the province, which was bearing the brunt of the storm, local authorities said. The US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said Ian made landfall just southwest of the town of La Coloma at about 4:30 am local time (0830 GMT).

The hurricane was packing maximum sustained winds of 125 miles (205 kilometers) per hour, the NHC said, making it a Category 3 storm on the Saffir-Simpson scale. "Devastating wind damage is expected where the core of Ian moves across western Cuba this morning," it added.

### 'Storm surge'

With the hurricane moving north, Florida's western coast from Fort Myers to Tampa Bay were at greatest risk of "life-threatening" storm surges, the NHC said. Florida Governor Ron DeSantis declared a state of emergency in all 67 counties as officials scrambled to prepare for the storm's forecast landing on Wednesday or Thursday.

Ian "will bring heavy rains, strong winds, flash flooding, storm surge, along with isolated tornado activity along Florida's Gulf Coast," DeSantis said at a press conference in Tallahassee on Monday. He warned people to prepare for power cuts.

"Even if the eye of the storm doesn't hit your region, you're going to have really significant winds, it's going to knock over trees, it's going to cause interruptions," DeSantis said, warning of likely flooding. The governor



**HAVANA, Cuba:** Cuban children carry personal belongings to a safe place in the Fanguito neighborhood in Havana, ahead of the arrival of Hurricane Ian. —AFP

urged residents to stock up on food, water, medicine and fuel, and he called up 7,000 National Guard members to help with the effort.

Authorities in several Florida municipalities, including Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Tampa, started distributing free sandbags to residents to help protect their homes from the risk of flooding.

Tampa International Airport said it would suspend operations on Tuesday at 5:00 pm local time (2100 GMT). US President Joe Biden approved emergency aid to 24 counties in Florida through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

NASA said it was rolling back its massive Moon rocket into its storage hangar at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida due to the hurricane.

### Fiona's wake

The Caribbean and parts of eastern Canada are still counting the cost of powerful storm Fiona, which tore through last week, claiming several lives. When it arrived in Canada, the storm packed intense winds of 80 miles per hour, bringing torrential rain and waves of up to 40 feet (12 meters).

Three people are believed to have died when Fiona barreled into Canada's Atlantic provinces as a post-tropical cyclone early Saturday. Prince Edward Island authorities confirmed the death of one person, while officials in Newfoundland said they found the body of a 73-year-old woman believed to have been swept from her home. She was apparently sheltering in her basement when waves broke through. —AFP

## Abe honored at controversial...

Continued from Page 1

strategy. He resigned in 2020 over recurring health problems, but remained a key political voice and was campaigning for his ruling party when a lone gunman killed him with a homemade weapon on July 8.

The shooting sent shock waves through a country with famously low gun crime and prompted international condemnation. But the decision to give him a state funeral - only the second for a former premier in the post-war period - has provoked opposition, with around 60 percent of Japanese against the event in recent polls. US Vice-President Kamala Harris and world leaders including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian premier Anthony Albanese were among those in attendance at the Budokan.

Outside, thousands of people stood in line as the ashes arrived, waiting to deliver flowers and say a prayer in two mourning tents. Koji Takamori came all the way from northern Hokkaido with his nine-year-old son. "I wanted to thank him. He has done so much for Japan," the 46-year-old told AFP. "The way he died was so shocking. To be honest, I also came because there has been so much opposition. It's almost like I'm here to oppose those who are opposing this (funeral)," he added.

Those opponents were also out, marching near the tents before a larger demonstration in front of the parliament. "There are people struggling financially who suffered particularly under the 'Abenomics' policies. We must not forget this," Ryo Machida, a 19-year-old student, said outside

the Budokan. "He may have been a strong leader, but in hindsight, he was iron-fisted and anti-democratic."

Abe's accused killer targeted the former leader believing he had ties to the Unification Church, which the attacker resented over massive donations his mother had made to the sect. The assassination prompted fresh scrutiny of the church and its fundraising - and uncomfortable questions for Japan's political establishment, with the ruling party admitting around half its lawmakers had links to the religious organization.

Kishida has pledged the party will sever all ties with the church, but the scandal helped fuel discontent over the state funeral. Thousands have protested in the run-up to the ceremony and a man set himself on fire last week near the prime minister's office, leaving notes reportedly expressing his objection to the event. Some lawmakers from opposition parties are also boycotting the funeral. The controversy has several roots, with some accusing Kishida of unilaterally approving the funeral instead of consulting parliament, and others resentful of a nearly \$12 million price tag.

It is also the legacy of Abe's divisive tenure, marked by persistent allegations of cronyism, and opposition to his nationalism and plans to reform the pacifist constitution. Kishida's government may have hoped the solemnity of the event, attended by an estimated 4,300 people including 700 foreign invitees, would drown out the controversy.

Abe worked to cultivate close ties with Washington to bolster the key US-Japan alliance, and also courted a stronger "Quad" grouping of Japan, the United States, India and Australia. Japan's emperor and empress are not attending, as neutral national figures, but Crown Prince Akishino and his wife led mourners in offering flowers at the end of the service. — AFP

## NASA strikes asteroid with...

Continued from Page 1

the last few minutes, as DART raced toward it at roughly 23,500 km per hour. NASA scientists and engineers erupted in applause as the screen froze on a final image, indicating that signal had been lost and impact had taken place. To be sure, the pair of asteroids pose no threat to our planet as they loop the Sun every two of our years.

But NASA has deemed the experiment important to carry out before an actual need is discovered. By striking Dimorphos head on, NASA hopes to push it into a smaller orbit, shaving 10 minutes off the time it takes to encircle Didymos, which is currently 11 hours and 55 minutes. Ground telescopes - which can't see the asteroid system directly but can detect a shift in patterns of light coming from it - should provide a definitive orbital period in the coming days and weeks. The proof-of-concept has made a reality of what has before only been attempted in science fiction - notably in films such as "Armageddon" and "Don't Look Up".

Minutes after impact, a toaster-sized satellite called LICIACube, which already separated from DART a few weeks ago, was expected to make a close pass of the site to capture images of the collision and the ejecta - the pulverized rock thrown off by the strike. LICIACube's pictures will be sent back in the next weeks and months. Also watching the event: An array of telescopes, both on Earth and in space - including the recently operational James Webb - which might be able to see a brightening cloud of dust.

The mission has set the global astronomy community abuzz, with more than three dozen ground telescopes participating, including optical, radio and radar. "There's a lot of them, and it's incredibly exciting to have lost count," said DART mission planetary astronomer Christina Thomas. Finally, a full picture of what the system looks like will be revealed when a European Space Agency mission four years down the line called Hera arrives to survey Dimorphos' surface and measure its mass, which scientists can currently only guess at.

Very few of the billions of asteroids and comets in our solar system are considered potentially hazardous to our planet, and none are expected in the next hundred years or so. But wait long enough, and it will happen. We know that from the geological record - for example, the six-mile wide Chicxulub asteroid struck Earth 66 million years ago, plunging the world into a long winter that led to the mass extinction of the dinosaurs along with 75 percent of all species.

An asteroid the size of Dimorphos, by contrast, would only cause a regional impact, such as devastating a city, albeit with greater force than any nuclear bomb in history. How much momentum DART imparts on Dimorphos will depend on whether the asteroid is solid rock, or more like a "rubbish pile" of boulders bound by mutual gravity - a property that's not yet known.

If it had missed, NASA would have another shot in two years' time, with the spaceship containing just enough fuel for another pass. But its success marks the first step towards a world capable of defending itself from a future existential threat. "I think Earthlings can sleep better, definitely I will," said DART mission systems engineer Elena Adams. — AFP

## International

# Blinken urges Pakistan to seek China debt relief after floods

## US committed \$56 million in humanitarian aid and sent 17 planes full of supplies

WASHINGTON, United States: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Monday on Pakistan to seek debt relief from its close partner China as floods devastate the South Asian country. Blinken promised strong US support for Pakistan as it dries out from the floods, which have submerged one-third of the country, an area the size of the United Kingdom.

"We send a simple message. We are here for Pakistan, just as we were during past natural disasters, looking ahead to rebuild," Blinken said after talks in Washington with Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. "I also urged our colleagues to engage China on some of the important issues of debt relief and restructuring so that Pakistan can more quickly recover from the floods," Blinken said. China is a key eco-

nom and political partner of Pakistan, pushing ahead with a \$54 billion "economic corridor" that will build infrastructure and give Beijing an outlet to the Indian Ocean, although Chinese interests have also faced attacks from separatists.

Washington, whose Cold War alliance with Islamabad has frayed, has repeatedly charged that China will reap the benefits while Pakistan will face unsustainable debt. The warnings by the United States—which considers China its preeminent global competitor—have repeatedly been brushed aside by Pakistan.

Some 1,600 people—one-third of them children—have died in Pakistan's floods and more than seven million have been displaced, amid fears that such severe disasters will become more common due to climate change.

The United States has committed \$56 million in humanitarian aid and sent 17 planes full of supplies, with promises of long-term support. Bhutto Zardari said that President Joe Biden, who signed a landmark domestic climate package last month, also needed to look at "climate justice."

"It's not only important that you 'build back better' here," he said, using Biden's campaign slogan. "The opportunity of this crisis in Pakistan is that we must build back better—greener, more climate-resilient—back home as well," he said. "I believe that working together we can do this." Pakistan, despite being the fifth most populous country, contributes only about 0.8 percent of greenhouse gas emissions blamed for climate change due to its state of development.

**Lingering distrust on Afghanistan**  
The US relationship with Pakistan sharply deteriorated over the course of the two-decade war in Afghanistan. Under heavy pressure, Pakistan provided crucial logistical access, but US officials believe Islamabad's powerful military and intelligence apparatus never abandoned the Taliban, who swept back to power last year as US troops pulled out.

"We have had our differences—that's no secret," Blinken said. But he said Pakistan and the United States "have a shared stake in Afghanistan's future," including greater freedoms for women and girls, whose rights have again been heavily curtailed by the Taliban under their austere interpretation of Islam.

In another longstanding concern of the United States, Blinken encouraged Pakistan to respect for freedom of religion and expression. Pakistan has seen repeated attacks against religious minorities and mob violence over accusations of blasphemy.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's five-month-old government has faced criticism for restrictions on the media since he replaced Imran Khan, who lost a no-confidence vote in parliament after running afoul of the military.

Blinken also called on Pakistan to pursue a "responsible relationship" with India. Dialogue has been at a standstill between the historic rivals, with India launching airstrikes in February 2019 in response to a deadly attack blamed on Pakistan-backed militants.

Immediately after meeting Bhutto Zardari, Blinken was hosting a dinner for India's foreign minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, with whom he will hold talks on Tuesday. The South Asian foreign ministers were not expected to meet in Washington. — AFP

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NEW YORK, United States: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (L) meets with Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at the State Department in Washington. — AFP

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'I believe that working together we can do this'

economic and political partner of Pakistan, pushing ahead with a \$54 billion "economic corridor" that will build infrastructure and give Beijing an outlet to the Indian Ocean, although Chinese interests have also faced attacks from separatists.

Washington, whose Cold War alliance with Islamabad has frayed, has repeatedly charged that China will reap the benefits while Pakistan will face unsustainable debt. The warnings by the United States—which considers China its preeminent global competitor—have repeatedly been brushed aside by Pakistan.

Some 1,600 people—one-third of them children—have died in Pakistan's floods and more than seven million have been displaced, amid fears that such severe disasters will become more common due to climate change.

## Philippines to deport 40,000 Chinese in gaming crackdown

MANILA: The Philippines will deport 40,000 Chinese workers in a crackdown on unlicensed online gaming businesses, an official said Tuesday, after reports of kidnapping, prostitution and murder in the gambling industry.

So-called Philippine offshore gaming operators, or POGOs, have boomed since 2016 as former president Rodrigo Duterte pursued closer trade and investment ties with China. But the influx of tens of thousands of Chinese workers in the sector that targets customers in China, where gambling is illegal, has created friction.

Many Filipinos complain POGOs have evaded taxes and driven up property rates while not pro-

viding job opportunities because not enough locals speak Chinese languages. Justice Secretary Crispin Remulla recently ordered police to go after 175 operators whose licences had been revoked but continued to operate illegally.

Next month the country will start deporting the estimated 40,000 Chinese workers employed by those businesses, justice ministry spokesman Dominic Clavano said, after reports of POGOs involved in "murder, kidnapping and prostitution".

"This is really our job to society and to make sure that these crimes are not committed," Clavano told AFP. "We thought it best to send a signal that this type of behaviour is not tolerable, it's not acceptable to the country."

China, which has previously called on the Philippines to ban all forms of online gambling, welcomed the latest crackdown. "Crimes induced by and associated with online gambling not only harm China's interests and China-Philippines relations, but also hurt the interests of the Philippines," the Chinese embassy in Manila said.

## Zuma eyes political comeback

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa: South Africa's ex-president Jacob Zuma, who is facing corruption charges and served a short stint in jail, has said he is ready for a political comeback with the ruling party.

In a statement late Monday, Zuma, 80, said he has been asked by members of the African National Congress (ANC), which has ruled South Africa since the end of apartheid, to put himself forward as the party gears up to elect a new leadership.

"I will not refuse such a call should they deem it necessary for me to serve the organisation again," he said, adding he has been consulting with party leaders "in spite of the difficulties caused by my current legal situation".

The move comes amid heavy infighting within the ANC, ahead of a national elective conference in December. The party is to hold internal polls to pick a new leader, who would then become the candidate for the next presidential election in 2024.

Current President Cyril Ramaphosa is hoping to secure a second term but faces a challenge from a faction loyal to Zuma—a divisive figure whose name resonates with graft

for most South Africans but remains a hero to many grassroots ANC members.

Zuma said he supports his ex-wife Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma to replace Ramaphosa and hinted he would be prepared to serve as party chairman, another key role. Support for the party of Nelson Mandela dropped below 50 percent for the first time in local elections last year, and the government is facing growing discontent over widespread poverty, unemployment, and a prolonged power crisis.

Zuma became president in 2009 but was forced to step down nine years later in favour of Ramaphosa, then vice-president. In July last year he was jailed for 15 months for contempt of court after refusing to testify before a graft inquiry, but was released on medical parole just two months into the term. — AFP



Jacob Zuma



HOI AN, Vietnam: Residents sit in a primary school being used as a shelter during Typhoon Noru in Hoi An in Vietnam's Quang Nam province on September 27, 2022. — AFP

## Vietnam orders mass evacuations ahead of Super Typhoon Noru

DANANG, Vietnam: Vietnam ordered hundreds of thousands of people to evacuate their homes Tuesday as Super Typhoon Noru barreled towards the busy city of Danang, with forecasters predicting the storm would be one of the biggest to hit the country.

Almost half of Vietnam's airports have been shut, schools and offices across several central provinces were closed and residents rushed to find shelter before the expected arrival of the typhoon on Wednesday.

After slamming into the Philippines earlier this week, where it killed six people, Noru is predicted to make landfall as a super typhoon before 11 am (0400 GMT) and then subside to a severe typhoon as it makes its way inland.

Vietnam's flood and storm control authority said

wind speeds would reach 160 kilometres per hour (100 miles per hour), equalling Typhoon Xangsane—which hit Danang in 2006 and killed 76 people.

Authorities have urged 400,000 people to leave their homes, including in the popular tourist city of Hoi An, where residents were brought to a primary school.

"I wanted to leave. My house is not very strong. I am afraid its roof might be blown away when the typhoon hits," Huynh Mua told AFP, clutching a plastic bag full of clothes, a blanket and several packets of instant noodles.

In Danang, Vietnam's third-biggest city, all shops and hotels were closed, while residents have been banned from going out on the streets from late Tuesday. According to data from the Joint Typhoon Warning Center, located in Hawaii, Super Typhoon Noru will be only the sixth major typhoon to hit Vietnam since 1945.

Naru hit the Philippines' Luzon island on Sunday and Monday, toppling trees, knocking out power and flooding low-lying communities. Five rescuers were killed after being sent to help flooded residents, while another man died after he was hit by a landslide. Officials estimate about \$2.4 million worth of crops were damaged. — AFP

## Direct impact or nuclear weapons? How to save Earth from an asteroid

LAUREL, United States: NASA's DART mission to test deflecting an asteroid using "kinetic impact" with a spaceship is just one way to defend planet Earth from an approaching object — and for now, the only method possible with current technology.

The operation is like playing billiards in space, using Newton's laws of motion to guide us. If an asteroid threat to Earth were real, a mission might need to be launched a year or two in advance to take on a small asteroid, or decades ahead of projected impact for larger objects hundreds of kilometers in diameter that could prove catastrophic to the planet.

Or, a larger object might require hits with multiple spacecraft. "This demonstration will start to add tools to our toolbox of methods that could be used in the future," said Lindley Johnson, NASA's planetary defense office, in a recent briefing.

Other proposed ideas have included a futuristic-sounding "gravity tractor," or a mission to blow up the hypothetical object with a nuclear weapon—the method preferred by Hollywood.

### Gravity tractor

Should an approaching object be detected early-years or decades before it would hit Earth—a spaceship could be sent to fly alongside it for long enough to divert its path via using the ship's gravitational pull, creating a so-called gravity tractor.

This method "has the virtue that the method of moving the asteroid is totally well understood—it's gravity and we know how gravity works," Tom Staller, a DART program scientist at NASA said at a briefing last November when DART launched.

The mass of the spacecraft however would be a limiting factor—and gravity tractors would be less effective for asteroids more than 500 meters in diameter, which are the very ones that pose the greatest threat.

In a 2017 paper, NASA engineers proposed a way to overcome this snag: by having the spacecraft scoop material from the asteroid to enhance its own mass, and thus, gravity. But none of these concepts have been tried, and would need decades to build, launch and test.

### Nuclear detonation

Another option: Launching nuclear explosives to redirect or destroy an asteroid. "This may be the only strategy that would be effective for the largest and most dangerous 'planet-killer' asteroids (more than one kilometer in diameter)," a NASA article on the subject says, adding such a strike might be useful as a "last resort" in case the other methods fail. But these weapons are geopolitically controversial and technically banned from use in outer space.

Lori Glaze, NASA's planetary science division director said in a 2021 briefing that the agency believed the best way to deploy the weapons would be at a distance from an asteroid, in order to impart force on the object without blowing it into smaller pieces that could then multiply the threat to Earth.

A 2018 paper published in the "Journal of Experimental and Theoretical Physics" by Russian scientists looked at the direct detonation scenario. E. Yu. Aristova and colleagues built miniature asteroid models and blasted them with lasers. Their experiments showed that blowing up a 200-meter asteroid would require a bomb 200 times as powerful as the one that exploded over Hiroshima in 1945.

They also said it would be most effective to drill into the asteroid, bury the bomb, then blow it up—just like in the movie Armageddon. — AFP

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2022

# Business

## Boursa Kuwait hosts seminar to discuss role of market makers

Seminar aims to enable participants to keep pace with changes in the capital market



KUWAIT: (From left to right) Panelists Fahad Al-Rushaid and Sulaiman Al-Musallam with moderator Bader Al-Nesef during the seminar.



KUWAIT: (From left to right) Panelists Fahad Al-Rushaid, Sulaiman Al-Musallam and Bader Al-Nesef.

**KUWAIT:** Boursa Kuwait organized a seminar for listed companies in an effort to shed light on the mechanism and performance of market makers and their role in enhancing security liquidity. The seminar focused on the importance of liquidity and the overall mechanisms to enhance it as well as the requirements of market makers and key factors to consider when dealing with them. The participants also discussed the willingness of companies that qualify for upgrade into the "Premier" Market to deal with market makers and the types of agreements between the listed companies and their market makers.

The seminar was moderated by Bader Al-Nesef, Assistant Director of Institutional Investor Affairs at Boursa Kuwait who was joined by panelists Fahad Al-Rushaid, the Vice President of MENA Equities at the Kuwait Financial Center "Markaz", and Sulaiman Al-Musallam, Assistant Director -Market Maker Department in the Asset Management Sector in the Kuwait Investment Company.

The seminar falls in line with Boursa Kuwait's commitment to raise awareness of the effective role of market makers in enhancing liquidity, which can lead to attracting more investors who wish to benefit from the investment environment of the Kuwaiti capital market.

Commenting on the seminar, which witnessed keen interaction from attendees, Bader Al-Nesef said: "We are currently witnessing an increasing

interest from listed companies, specifically those that qualify for the "Premier" Market, in the market maker tool for its active role and ability to provide liquidity on securities."

"Hosting this seminar comes within the framework of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to raise the efficiency of the market and all its participants by raising awareness of the tools and products offered and encouraging their adoption. On behalf of Boursa Kuwait, I would like to thank the speakers and all participants for their valuable inputs, which undoubtedly enriched the seminar," Al-Nesef added.

Market makers contribute to the enhancement of security liquidity, improving market efficiency and supporting the overall adoption of all its tools. Market makers are also considered an integral part of stock market operations in developed and emerging markets, for their ability to provide liquidity to their registered security. In effect, market makers match buyers and sellers who want to trade the same security. In the Kuwaiti capital market, market makers are investors who ensure the availability of supply and demand for one or more security, according to such controls as may be issued or approved by the Capital Markets Authority (CMA).

Fahad Al-Rushaid, Assistant Manager - MENA Equities at Kuwait Financial Centre "Markaz" said "The demand on market makers is due to the role they play in providing liquidity for listed companies,

due to the mechanism's clear rules and obligations and listed companies being comfortable in dealing with them. All listed companies can utilize market makers, and market makers can trade treasury shares or shares from individual shareholders. Market makers can also work for a designated fee, or for an incentivized percentage of trades if trading volume gets to a certain point, options that undoubtedly give companies the flexibility to utilize this tool as they see fit. I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for organizing this seminar and applaud the exchange's overall efforts to raise awareness of the market maker tool."

The Kuwait Financial Center "Markaz" received the license to operate as a market maker at the end of 2019 and is currently registered as a market maker for seven securities. Established in 1974, "Markaz" was listed on the Kuwaiti stock exchange in 1997.

Sulaiman Al-Musallam, Assistant Manager Market Maker Department, Asset Management Division at Kuwait Investment Company also commented on the occasion, saying: "I would like to thank Boursa Kuwait for hosting this seminar, which gave us an extraordinary opportunity to clarify several matters for market participants, sharing and exchanging viewpoints and promoting financial literacy. The market maker has become an invaluable tool for companies seeking to provide further liquidity for their shares. Investment companies that offer this service are keen to contribute to the

development of the market, allowing them to record higher profits."

The Kuwait Investment Company began operating as a market maker in 2021 and is currently registered as a market maker on three securities. The Kuwait Investment Company was established in 1961 as the first investment company in Kuwait and the region and was listed on Boursa Kuwait in 1984. Organizing seminars and training programs forms part of Boursa Kuwait's efforts to create a lasting meaningful impact on the communities in which it operates as part of its Corporate Sustainability strategy as well as the company's ongoing efforts to equip all market participants with an in-depth understanding of the functioning of capital markets and various tools and techniques required to make informed investment decisions and effectively meet investors' needs.

Since its inception, Boursa Kuwait, a self-listed company and one of the government entities to successfully undergo privatization, has implemented many steps in accordance with international practices and standards to enhance the position of the exchange regionally and globally, as well as transform Kuwait into a regional and global investment destination, by focusing on creating an attractive issuer base and broadening its investor base, increasing the depth and breadth of its products, as well as upgrading its infrastructure and business environment to international standards.

## WTO chief warns world edging into 'global recession'

**GENEVA:** The World Trade Organization's chief said Tuesday she believes the world is heading towards a global recession due to multiple colliding crises, and called for radical policies to revive growth.

WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said Russia's war in Ukraine, the climate crisis, food price and energy shocks plus the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic were creating the conditions for a world recession. "Now we have to weather what looks like an oncoming recession," she told the opening of the global trade body's annual public forum in Geneva. "I think a global recession. That's what I think we are edging into. But at the same time, we have to start thinking of the recovery. We have to restore growth."

She noted that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund had both downgraded global growth forecasts, while indicators on trade numbers were "not looking too good". Okonjo-Iweala added: "We have security shocks, we have climate shocks, we have energy shocks, we have food price shocks, and all of this hitting countries at the same time, so we cannot afford to do business as usual."

The former Nigerian finance and foreign minister said central banks were in a tight spot, with little choice over the course ahead. "Central banks don't really have too much of a choice but to tighten and increase interest rates-but the repercussions on emerging markets and developing countries is quite severe, because they too are tightening an increase in interest rates," she said.

"But what happens in the developed countries affects their debt burdens, affects what they have to pay to service debt, affects the flight of capital from their economies back into the developed countries. "But right now, I think there's not much choice but for central banks to act because inflation really hits



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

at the poor very badly."

She stressed the need for central banks to determine whether inflation was being caused by strong demand or whether the rise in prices was linked to structural problems on the supply side.

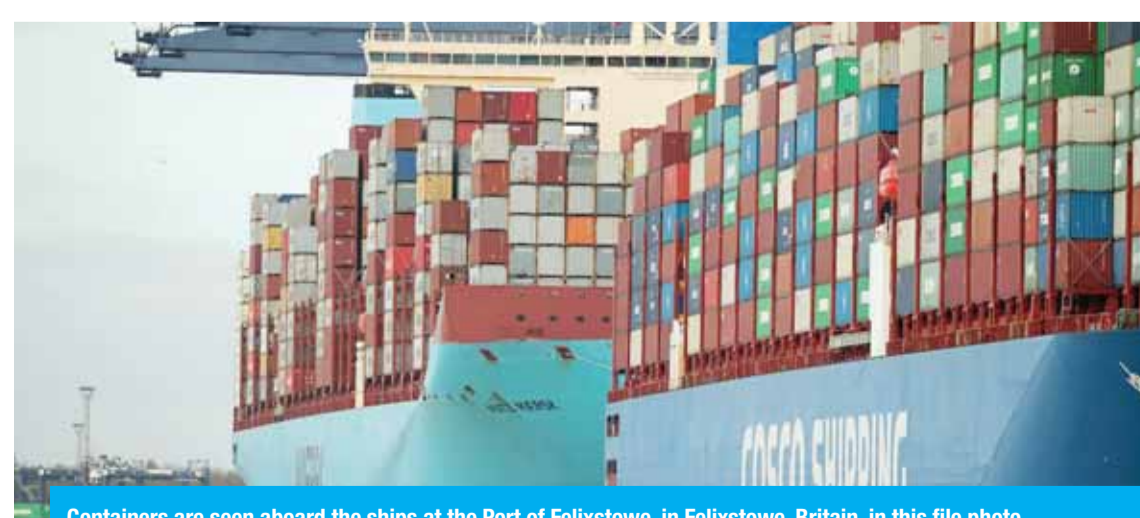
Okonjo-Iweala said her top concern was how to ensure food security, followed by access to energy. "The specter of not having enough food is one that worries me," she said. —AFP

## Britain's largest container port hit by another strike

**GENEVA:** Around 1,900 workers at the UK's largest container port, Felixstowe, returned to picket lines on Tuesday for an eight-day strike, raising concerns about the country's supply chains.

The walkout coincides with ongoing action at the port of Liverpool-together affecting 60 percent of the country's container port capacity. The strike at Felixstowe, which accounts for almost half of the UK's container trade, follows an eight-day walkout last month, the first since 1989.

Workers are demanding a 10-percent pay rise to match current decades-high inflation rates, with a majority of Unite union members at the port voting to strike. The current action will go on until October 5, after the facility's owner Hutchison Port Holdings, which is owned by a Hong Kong conglomerate, refused to enter further negotiations. The company has offered a seven percent wage increase, which amounts to real-terms pay cut with inflation recent-



Containers are seen aboard the ships at the Port of Felixstowe, in Felixstowe, Britain, in this file photo.

ly hitting 9.9 percent and predicted to rise further.

The port expressed disappointment at the new walkout, but warned there was "no prospect of agreement being reached with the union". "The port is in the process of implementing a very fair pay increase of seven percent plus £500 (\$534, 554 euros)," said a port spokesman. Unite general secre-

tary Sharon Graham said the port was a "tremendously wealthy company which can fully afford to pay its workers a fair pay increase but has chosen not to in order to boost their already huge profits". The action comes after a summer of strikes in Britain, with railway and postal workers, among others, walking out as wages fail to keep up with inflation. —AFP

## Lebanon approves 2022 budget in step towards IMF loan

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon's parliament on Monday approved the 2022 budget, one of the conditions set by the International Monetary Fund to action a bailout for the crisis-stricken country. Lebanon and the IMF had reached a conditional agreement on a \$3 billion loan in April to help the country tackle its economic crisis, but the global lender last week condemned the "very slow" progress Beirut has made towards implementing reforms.

Lawmakers on Monday approved the budget with 63 votes in favor and 37 opposed, the state news agency NNA reported. The approved budget sets expenditures at 41 trillion pounds (about \$1.2 billion according to black market exchange rates), while revenues were projected at 30 trillion pounds.

Among the key changes was a "temporary" doubling of public servants' salaries and pensions, which would now reach a maximum of 12 million pounds (about \$324).

The budget has set the dollar exchange rate at 15,000 pounds to the dollar-less than half its rate on the black market-contravening calls by the IMF to unify the various dollar exchange rates functioning across the country. Lebanon is in the throes of an economic meltdown that the World Bank has branded one of the world's worst crises in modern times.

The IMF has conditioned its loan on a series of measures, including the approval of the budget as well as reforms to bank secrecy laws, restructuring the banking sector and the implementation of formal capital controls. The head of a visiting IMF delegation last week said the country had yet to implement the needed reforms. "Despite the urgency for action to address Lebanon's deep economic and social crisis, progress in implementing the reforms... remains very slow," said Ernesto Ramirez Rigo. —AFP



## Business

# Heavy floods ravage West Africa farmlands, rice plots

## Floods wipe out crops and risk worsening food insecurity in the region

KANO: Nigeria rice farmer Adamu Garba squelched barefoot through his paddy fields, surveying damage from devastating floods that have destroyed farmland across the north of the country.

Parts of West and central Africa have been battered by floods ravaging farms like Garba's rice plots, wiping out crops and risking worsening food insecurity in a region already struggling with economic fallout from the Ukraine war. Just in Nigeria, constant heavy rains caused the worst flooding in a decade, killing more than 300 people since the start of the rainy season and displacing at least 100,000, according to emergency officials. "It is devastating but there is nothing we can do, we just have to be strong," Garba told AFP at his farm near the city of Kano, where he normally harvests 200 bags of rice. "Now in the condition we find ourselves we are not sure we will harvest half a bag here."

Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) spokesman Manzo Ezekiel said flooding has been unprecedented due to continuous rainfall with 29 of the country's 36 states affected.

"Thousands of farmlands have also been destroyed. The figures will rise further because we are still experiencing torrential rains and flooding," he said. Flood waters were made worse partly by neighboring Cameroon's release of excess waters from a dam and by Nigeria releasing waters to ease pressure on its Kainji and Jebba dams, Ezekiel said. However, an official with Eneo, operator of Cameroon's Lagdo hydro-electricity plant, said excess waters released from the dam contributed only a small amount to flooding.

Parts of Nigeria, from northern farmlands to the coastal economic capital Lagos, are prone to flooding in the rainy season, though NEMA says this year is the worst since 2012, when 363 people died and more than 2.1 million were displaced.

### Climate change

The Niger river-West Africa's main river-flows through northern Niger past Benin's northern border into Nigeria before reaching in the Gulf of Guinea on the Atlantic through southern Nigeria's Niger Delta.



NUMAN, Nigeria: This aerial view shows the nearly submerged community of Imburu on September 25, 2022 in Adamawa State - North East Nigeria. —AFP

Heavy rains falling in Niger since June and the severe floods have claimed 159 lives and affected more than 225,000 people, making this rainy season one of the deadliest in history, emergency officials said earlier this month.

"According to our studies, we can link these rains to climate change in general," said Katiellou Gaptia Lawan, Director General of National Meteorology of Niger. "The rains are becoming more and more intense and the extreme precipitation is increasing."

Rains in Niger this year have also totally destroyed

or damaged more than 25,900 homes, and impacted farmland and cattle, authorities said. The June to September rainy season regularly kills people in Niger, including in the northern desert areas, but the toll is particularly heavy this year.

In 2021, 70 people died and 200,000 were affected. In Chad, the UN said more than 622,500 people had been affected "at different levels" by flooding in more than half of the country, including the capital N'Djamena, with most impacted areas bordering the north of Cameroon. According to the United Nations,

in 2021, 5.5 million Chadians, more than a third of the population of the landlocked country were already in need of emergency humanitarian aid, even before the floods.

In northern Nigeria, Kabiru Alassan, a 19-year old farmer, said flood waters washed sand from the roads and covered his rice fields. But he was trying to salvage what he could. "This is the little we have left by Allah's grace which we are going to harvest," he said. "The rains have never been this destructive. We pray never to experience such a nightmare." —AFP



DUEODDE, Denmark: This handout picture released on September 27, 2022 by the Danish Defense Command shows the gas leak at the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline as it is seen from the Danish Defence's F-16 rejection response off the Danish Baltic island of Bornholm, south of Dueodde. — AFP

## Sabotage suspected after leaks in Russia, Europe gas pipelines

COPENHAGEN: The two Nord Stream gas pipelines linking Russia and Europe have been hit by unexplained leaks, Scandinavian authorities said Tuesday, raising suspicions of sabotage. The pipelines have been at the centre of geopolitical tensions in recent months as Russia cut gas supplies to Europe in suspected retaliation against Western sanctions following its invasion of Ukraine.

Russia said it was "extremely concerned" about the leaks. Asked by reporters whether it could be an act of sabotage, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that at the moment "it is impossible to exclude any options". While the pipelines, which are operated by a consortium majority-owned by Russian gas giant Gazprom, are not currently in operation, they both still contain gas but the environmental impact appeared limited so far.

One of the leaks on Nord Stream 1 occurred in the Danish economic zone and the other in the Swedish economic zone, while the Nord Stream 2 leak was in the Danish economic zone.

A leak was first reported on Nord Stream 2 on Monday. "Authorities have now been informed that there have been another two leaks on Nord Stream 1, which likewise is not in operation but contains gas," Danish climate and energy minister Dan Jorgensen told AFP in a statement on Tuesday.

"It is too early to say anything about the causes of the incidents," the Danish Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities said in a statement. Denmark's energy agency has, however, called for "higher levels of preparedness in the electricity and gas sector" in the country, Jorgensen said.

### 'Not common'

During a visit to Poland for the inauguration of the Baltic Pipe Project — connecting Poland and Denmark to a North Sea pipeline — Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen also told Danish media "it's hard to imagine that it's accidental."

The EU Commission meanwhile stressed that it was too early to speculate on the causes of the leaks. "We

believe we do not have the elements in order to determine what is the reason for the leak. And obviously any act of sabotage on any infrastructure is something that we would condemn," EU commission spokesman Eric Mamer told reporters. A Nord Stream spokesperson told AFP that they had not been able to assess the damage but conceded that "an incident where three pipes experience difficulties at the same time on the same day is not common."

The Danish energy agency told the Ritzau news agency that only the area where the gas plume is located will be affected by the leak, but methane escaping into the atmosphere has a "climate-damaging effect". "Gas pipeline leaks are extremely rare and we therefore see a reason to increase the level of preparedness following the incidents we have witnessed over the past 24 hours," director of the Danish Energy Agency Kristoffer Boltzauw said in a statement.

Built in parallel to the Nord Stream 1 pipeline, Nord Stream 2 was intended to double the capacity for Russian gas imports to Germany. But Berlin blocked newly-completed Nord Stream 2 in the days before the war.

Germany, which has been highly dependent on imports of fossil fuels from Russia to meet its energy needs, has since come under acute stress as Moscow has dwindled supplies.

Russian energy giant Gazprom progressively reduced the volumes of gas being delivered via Nord Stream 1 until it shut the pipeline completely at the end of August, blaming Western sanctions for the delay of necessary repairs to the pipeline.

### 'Targeted attack'

Germany has rebuffed Gazprom's technical explanation for the cut, instead accusing Moscow of wielding energy as a weapon amid tensions over the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, German daily Tagesspiegel reported that "the Nord Stream pipelines may have been damaged by targeted attacks and leaked as a result".

According to a source close to the government and relevant authorities, quoted in the newspaper, "everything speaks against a coincidence". "We cannot imagine a scenario that is not a targeted attack," the source said. As a result of the leaks, navigational warnings have been issued for a distance of five nautical miles and a flight height of 1,000 meters (3,280 feet). The incidents on the two pipelines have no impact on the supply of gas to Denmark, the Danish energy minister said. — AFP

## Pound rebounds, stocks firm tracking recession risks

LONDON: The dollar weakened slightly against major rivals Tuesday, helping the pound to rebound from a record low, while equity markets stabilized after recent volatility.

The world is heading towards a global recession as multiple crises collide, World Trade Organization's chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala told the global trade body's annual public forum in Geneva.

Recession prospects have risen in recent weeks as central banks keep hiking interest rates to try and cool decades-high inflation, boosting in particular the dollar. The Federal Reserve has carried out three successive bumper US hikes and is warning of more to come.

That has seen investors pile into the dollar, sending it to record or multi-decade peaks, in turn rattling governments from Tokyo to Beijing and London. On Monday, the pound hit an all-time low at \$1.0350, with traders spooked by a UK tax giveaway they warned could further fuel inflation and significantly ramp up British state borrowing.

"Dollar strength remains the driving force-or wrecking ball-in financial markets at the moment," said Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson. Sterling staged a small recovery Tuesday after the Bank of England said it would "not hesitate to change interest rates by as much as needed".

With the pound showing record weakness against the dollar this week, analysts are forecasting a big rate increase when the BoE holds its next regular policy meeting on November 3. "A rate hike of over 150 basis points is currently priced in for the coming meeting,"

## High earners could pay more tax to help poorest: Economist

FRANKFURT: High earners and extremely profitable companies could pay more taxes to finance support for society's poorest as they struggle with record inflation, the European Central Bank's chief economist has said. Consumer prices are surging across the eurozone and elsewhere, spurred by high energy costs after Russia halted crucial gas supplies to Europe amid tensions over its invasion of Ukraine.

"The energy shock we are experiencing is huge," ECB chief economist Philip Lane said in an interview with Austrian newspaper Der Standard published Tuesday.

"It is the poorest people in our society that are most affected." Governments need to support those suffering the most, and the question was whether this should be financed by tax hikes for the better off, he said. "This could take the form of higher taxes on higher earners or on industries and firms that are highly profitable in spite of the energy shock," he added.

Increasing taxes has less of an impact on inflation than if you increase public deficits to provide support, he said. ECB president Christine Lagarde said this week the central bank supports targeted measures to help the most vulnerable households.

The idea of hiking taxes on high earners is already gaining traction in the eurozone. Spain announced last week it will slap a temporary levy on the wealthiest one percent of the population from next year to help pay for inflation relief measures.—AFP

Commerzbank analyst Esther Reichelt noted Tuesday, questioning if that would even be enough.

The Bank of England's statement "is unlikely to calm all those who had already questioned the BoE's determination to fight inflation even prior to these events", she added.

Elsewhere, European natural gas prices surged nearly ten percent to 190.50 euros following news that the two Nord Stream gas pipelines linking Russia and Europe have been hit by unexplained leaks, raising suspicions of sabotage. The pipelines have been at the centre of geopolitical tensions in recent months as Russia cut gas supplies to Europe in suspected retaliation against Western sanctions following its invasion of Ukraine. A major new pipeline that will bring in Norwegian gas via Denmark was inaugurated in Poland on Tuesday in a move aimed at helping strengthen Europe's energy security.

Oil prices jumped almost two percent, helped by a weaker dollar. — AFP



FRANKFURT: Traders work on the Frankfurt bourse in this file photo.

## Politicians wage tax war ahead of Spain elections

MADRID: With elections a year away, the battle lines have been drawn between Spain's left-wing government and its right-wing regions who are tripping over themselves to unveil lower tax policies.

On the back burner for months, the tax issue hit the headlines last week after the leader of the southern Andalusia region decided to axe wealth tax and lower income tax in a bid to attract wealthy taxpayers. "We were a tax hellhole but now we're the region with the second lowest taxes in Spain," boasted Juanma Moreno of the right-wing opposition Popular Party (PP) — his region trailing only Madrid, which is also held by the PP.

As one of the Western world's most decentralized nations, Spain is divided into 17 regions, whose governments have considerable autonomy and are responsible for budget management.

Moreno's remarks opened the floodgates, with many other PP-run regions announcing cuts, including Murcia, which slashed income tax, and Galicia, which is rolling back its wealth tax. This flurry of announcements was hailed by top figures within the PP, among them the party's rising star, Madrid leader Isabel Diaz Ayuso.—AFP

## Business

# ADB boosts Asia-Pacific food security financing to \$14bn

## Bank seeks to help poor countries as prices soar and climate bites

**MANILA:** The Asian Development Bank will provide \$14 billion in loans over four years to help poor countries improve food security as prices soar and climate change bites, the Philippines-based lender said Tuesday. The bank, which provides loans and grants for projects in the poorest countries in the Asia-Pacific region, said the financing would target among other things food production and distribution, and climate mitigation.

"Food insecurity is threatening to reverse decades of development progress in Asia and the Pacific," ADB president Masatsugu Asakawa told reporters in a virtual news conference.

Asakawa said there are many factors for the "worsening situation" including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have disrupted supply chains and helped push food prices to "record highs". "We also have to keep in mind that the current food security crisis will get even worse if we fail to address climate change," Asakawa said.

He added that the battle against a warming planet would be "won or lost in Asia and the Pacific".

The bank, which has 49 members stretching from the Cook Islands in the Pacific to Kazakhstan in Central Asia, usually allocates \$2 billion a year for food security loans. That is expected to reach \$3.3 billion this year, and \$10.7 billion from 2023 to 2025, ADB said.

It estimates nearly 1.1 billion people in the region "lack healthy diets due to poverty and food prices".

The announcement comes after the bank recently cut its 2022 growth forecast for the region, to 4.3 percent from its April projection of 5.2 percent. ADB warned of significant risks for the region's outlook as central banks around the world struggle to rein in inflation and recurrent lockdowns in China hammer the world's second-largest economy. The bank also raised its inflation forecast to 4.5 percent from 3.7 percent.

The ADB cut its 2022 growth forecast for developing Asia last week. While easing pandemic restrictions had spurred consumer spending and investment in the region, the Philippines-based bank warned of "global headwinds" to the recovery as food and fuel prices soared and central banks hiked interest rates.

As a result, the bank slashed its 2022 growth forecast for developing Asia — which refers to the 46 members of the ADB, stretching from the Cook Islands in the Pacific to Kazakhstan in Central Asia — to 4.3 percent.

That compares with its April forecast of 5.2 percent growth. The region grew by 7.0 percent in 2021.

ADB chief economist Albert Park warned "risks loom large" for the region's outlook and urged governments to remain "vigilant". "A significant downturn in the world economy would severely undermine demand for the region's exports," Park said. "Stronger-than-expected monetary tightening in advanced economies could lead to financial instability. And growth in the PRC (China) faces



**MANILA:** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Tuesday announced plans to provide at least \$14 billion over 2022-2025 in a comprehensive program of support to ease a worsening food crisis in Asia and the Pacific.

challenges from recurrent lockdowns and a weak property sector."

China's growth forecast for 2022 was reduced to 3.3 percent from 5.0 percent, as Beijing pursues a zero-Covid strategy that has devastated the world's second-largest economy.

Chinese officials are under pressure to curb

even the smallest virus outbreaks swiftly, ahead of a key political meeting in October where President Xi Jinping is expected to secure an unprecedented third term.

Officials have imposed targeted lockdowns and travel restrictions, disrupting businesses and forcing millions of people to stay home. —AFP

## Norwegian pipeline opens in Poland after Russian cut

**BUDNO, Poland:** A new pipeline that will carry Norwegian gas via Denmark was inaugurated in Poland on Tuesday in a move to strengthen Europe's energy security after Russia cut off Warsaw's supplies.

At a ceremony in western Poland, Norwegian Energy Minister Terje Aasland said it was "a milestone on the important path towards European independence from Russian energy."

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said the pipeline launch "marks a crucial geopolitical step for all of us." "We have to do all we can to remove energy as a Russian instrument of power," she said at the launch in Budno near the city of Szczecin.

Russian President Vladimir "Putin uses Russian energy as a weapon to destabilize Europe, to divide us. He cannot be allowed to succeed," she added.

Polish President Andrzej Duda called the pipeline "a Polish dream". Baltic Pipe has a capacity of 10 billion cubic meters per year and is a link to the Europipe II connecting Norway and Germany. Polish gas operator PGNiG said in a statement that the gas pipeline would carry 6.5 billion cubic meters of gas in 2023 and this would rise to 7.7 billion in 2024.

Deliveries are to begin on October 1.

Poland earlier this month struck a deal with Norwegian giant Equinor for 2.4 billion meters per year-around 15 percent of its total consumption-from 2023 to 2033. Poland depended on Russia for around two-thirds of its annual gas consumption just a few years ago but has been reducing its dependence by diversifying energy sources including using liquefied natural gas imports.

This year, Russian giant Gazprom stopped supplies altogether after PGNiG refused to pay its bill in rubles following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Frederiksen said the pipeline launch "marks a crucial geopolitical step for all of us." She also referred to unexplained leaks from the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines linking Russia and Germany detected this week.

"The very concerning events of yesterday with leaks from Nord Stream I and II highlight the urgency of increasing our energy security in Europe," she said.

Speaking to Danish media, she said it was "hard to imagine" that the three leaks were "accidental".

"It's an unusual situation to have three leaks a distance from each other," she said.

The Baltic Pipe project has been planned for years but has been delayed multiple times.

Construction of the partly submerged 900-kilometre (559-mile) pipeline eventually began in 2018 but work was suspended in 2021 over environmental concerns. Within days of Russia's invasion, however, Danish state-owned firm Energinet said work had resumed on the pipeline after the project was granted a new environmental permit. —AFP

## Rare protest in China tech hub over lockdown

**SHENZHEN:** Dozens of people have taken part in a rare protest in the southern Chinese tech hub of Shenzhen, social media footage shows, after officials announced a snap lockdown over a handful of COVID cases.

### YES FOR MAZDA



## Al Shaya & Al Sagar launches 'Yes' for Mazda campaign

**KUWAIT:** Al Shaya & Al Sagar, the exclusive distributor of Mazda in Kuwait, has launched the "YES" for Mazda Campaign to highlight Mazda's SUV and Crossover models, using creative phrases that best describe the specific car model.

### 'YES' for future with Mazda CX-3

The moment you sit in the CX-3, you're elevated in a driver-centric cabin designed to expand your visibility of the world around you. The dash features futuristic-looking analog dials and a full-color display screen. Every detail of the CX-3 makes it feel like a second home.

### 'YES' for safety with Mazda CX-30

With an entirely new handcrafted look using Kodo Design, the All-New Mazda CX-30 uses

## Germany raids Russian oligarch's yacht in tax probe

**BERLIN:** German investigators on Tuesday raided a yacht belonging to a Russian oligarch suspected of evading taxes, laundering money and violating EU sanctions, prosecutors said.

The public prosecutor's office in the western city of Frankfurt said more than 60 officers searched the vessel belonging to a "69-year-old businessman from the Russian Federation".

They did not name the suspect, but he is thought to be billionaire Alisher Usmanov, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin and former president of the International Fencing Federation.

Between 2017 and 2022, the suspect is accused of funneling several million euros acquired in illegal activities, including tax evasion, through an "extensive and complex network of companies and corporations", prosecutors said in a statement. They added that the search was also carried out to com-

next-generation platform architecture to make the impossible possible. Spacious and supremely comfortable on the inside, compact and beautifully elegant on the outside. With flowing, captivating curves, this All-New Compact Crossover makes every day practical yet extraordinary.

### 'YES' for trust with Mazda CX-5

Mazda CX-5, is the crossover SUV that refines dynamic beauty with no compromises. A captivating interior ambiance. An exhilarating driving experience. This pure execution of Mazda's Jinba-Ittai brings driving pleasure to life. Mazda's advanced groundbreaking engines power it. They are taking the SUV into new territory and opening a new dimension of joy on the road.

### 'YES' for you with Mazda CX-9

We believe in the power of human potential; creativity, imagination, and the fantastic things we're all capable of when we're inspired. We believe in taking the unconventional road and going the extra mile to do work that inspires. We believe in artisans, designers, engineers, and ambassadors who pour human energy into their

work. We believe in the power of cars to move human emotions. To awaken senses, heighten reflexes, and make pulses race. We believe the joy of being alive comes from what we discover on our journey and the inspiration we find in every mile.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of (Al Shaya & Al Sagar) stated, "Our vision is to continue to provide our car-loving customers and their families with innovative products, technologies, and experiences that enhance the joy of driving." Mazda won the Best Safety Choice Award from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) this year. For the third year, the award included Mazda 3 sedans, Mazda 3 hatchbacks, CX30, CX5, and CX9 cars.

Waleed Al-Qahtani, Mazda Brand Manager, stated, "The campaign cleverly managed to draw the attention of the public and urge them to visit Mazda showrooms in Kuwait to learn about their models and features, especially the safety and security features."

Issa Abdallah, Marketing Manager of (Al Shaya & Al Sagar) stated, "The campaign 'Yes' for Mazda highlights each Mazda model's sense of Safety, Trust, and Future."



ply with a request for assistance from the US Justice Department on its own probe.

German investigators had already raided two properties belonging to Usmanov last week in the Bavarian district of Miesbach, as part of searches targeting a total of 24 properties linked to the Russian oligarch and four other people. Tuesday's raid had zeroed in on the "Dilbar", the world's biggest yacht by tonnage owned by Usmanov.

The 155-metre (500-foot) vessel, named for Usmanov's mother and valued at around \$600 million, had been docked in a Hamburg shipyard since October 2021 for repairs. It is now moored in the

northern port city of Bremen. Usmanov was ranked at number six in the Sunday Times list of the world's richest people in 2021. He is one of dozens of Russian billionaires hit by Western sanctions following the start of the invasion of Ukraine. Usmanov is currently believed to be residing in Uzbekistan, according to Der Spiegel, which said he is accused of evading at least 555 million euros (\$534 million) in German taxes since 2014. The magazine said complications in enforcing economic sanctions in Germany had led investigators to rely heavily on tax law to try to bring suspected violators-including Russian oligarchs-to book. —AFP

The protest took place in Shawei, a neighborhood in Futian district where the city government is based, AFP confirmed. Shawei's subway station was shut down from 10 pm (1400 GMT) on Monday until further notice "as part of pandemic prevention and control", the city's metro operator said in a statement.

At least 14 "high-risk areas" across three districts—Futian, Luohu and Longgang—were under lockdown on Tuesday, with residents forced to stay in their homes, health officials said without offering details on the number of people affected.

Another 15 neighborhoods are marked as medium

risk, with residents only allowed to walk inside their housing compounds. Shenzhen, a sprawling tech hub that neighbors Hong Kong, had just emerged from strict COVID restrictions that saw schools and entertainment venues closed for weeks in early September. The city only allows residents to board public transport, enter a restaurant or access public services including hospitals if they have a negative PCR COVID test taken within 24 hours.

Hong Kong scrapped its mandatory hotel quarantine requirement for arrivals on Monday after the strict virus rules threatened the city's status as a key financial hub. —AFP



A man orders items from a vending machine that gives out free bread, in Dubai.



A man holds a box he collected from a vending machine which gives out free bread, in Dubai.



A man collects items from a vending machine that gives out free bread, in Dubai.

## IN WEALTHY DUBAI, POOR GET FREE BREAD FROM MACHINES

With the cost of living surging, free hot bread distribution for the poor has been introduced in Dubai, a rich Gulf emirate where millionaires rub shoulders with hard-working migrants. The city of skyscrapers soaring above the desert, which imports almost all of its food, has been impacted by rapidly rising consumer prices, a global trend exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ten vending machines were installed last week in supermarkets, with a computer touch screen allowing people to select different types: loaves for sandwiches, pitta bread or flat Indian-style chapatis. The machine has a credit card reader-for donations not payment. "A friend told me there was free bread, so I came," said Bigandar, a young man from Nepal who works at a car wash, not wanting to give his full name.

Like millions of Asian migrants, he dreamt of making a fortune in the United Arab Emirates. He headed for Dubai, a city that has earned a reputation for conspicuous consumption and excess. According to government figures from the Dubai Statistics Center, the food price index, which tracks the monthly change in the cost of a basket of food commodities, rose by 8.75 percent in July, year on year. The cost of transport has jumped by more than 38 percent.

### 'Disadvantaged'

The bread machines are the initiative of a foundation set up by the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. "The idea is to go to disadvantaged families and workers before they come to us," said the foundation's

heart of the UAE, relies on this army of workers to build skyscrapers and for the service sector, from real estate to luxury tourism, on which it has built its reputation. Bigandar, who has worked there for the past three years, says that for each vehicle he cleans he earns three

migrant workers, a rare strike was led in May by delivery men demanding better wages in the face of rising fuel prices.

In July, the authorities announced the doubling of social aid, but only for the handful of Emirati families with incomes below 25,000 dirhams per month

their needs," said Fadi Alrasheed, a Jordanian businessman who has lived in Dubai for 20 years. According to the UN World Migration Report, the UAE is home to nearly 8.7 million migrants, mainly from India, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Henley and Partners, a



A man loads a vending machine that gives out free bread, in Dubai.



A man walks after collecting items from a vending machine which gives out free bread, in Dubai. — AFP photos

director, Zeinab Joumaa Al-Tamimi. Anyone in need can now get hot bread just "by pressing a button", she said.

The oil-rich UAE has a population of nearly 10 million people, 90 percent of them foreigners, many laborers from Asia and Africa. Dubai, the commercial

dirhams, or 81 US cents.

Working hard and with tips from customers, he can earn between 700 and 1,000 dirhams a month (\$190-270). "My employer covers housing and transportation, but not food," he said. In a sign of the growing difficulties faced by

(\$6,800), considered to be disadvantaged households. This aid program does not include foreigners.

"Because of inflation and rising interest rates, there are many people whose wages are low and who, with the rising cost of living, can no longer meet all

London-based investment migration consultancy, estimates there are more than 68,000 millionaires and 13 billionaires in Dubai, ranking the city the 23rd richest in the world. — AFP



Models present creations for Weinsanto Spring-Summer 2023 fashion show during the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris. — AFP photos



## 'Madness and humor' as Paris Fashion Week opens with Gaultier protege

Paris Fashion Week launched on Monday with a protege of Jean Paul Gaultier bringing light-hearted vibes to the catwalk, while the luxury world awaits the French debut of Victoria Beckham. As is traditional, the first day focused on young designers, and the opening show of womenswear spring-summer 2023 was that of 28-year-old Victor Weinsanto, a former dancer who studied under Gaultier before launching his label in 2020. Weinsanto told AFP his collection is a "declaration of love" to his generation, and inspired by young fellow designers.

In an unprecedented move, he brought some of those peers on to the runway, with Charles de Vilmorin (from Rochas) and Egonlab founders Kevin Nompeix and Florentin Glemarec parading clothes in their style, but with a "Weinsanto twist". It was eclectic, featuring everything from regular denims to theatrical, overblown "black widow" dresses. One plus-size model paraded in little more than bondage ties, while another sported a white dress with a huge lipstick kiss across the breast, and another filled the catwalk with gigantic white head-dress.

### 'We want escapism'

Freshly decked out in bright orange hair, the designer said people were looking for "creativity, freedom, madness and humor" in their outfits at the moment. The image of

1990s designers who gossiped nastily about each other has gone out of style, he added. "No one wants that anymore," said Weinsanto. "We want a game among friends, a family reunion... We want escapism."

Like many of his generation, there is a focus on sustainability-with almost all his

designs made from surplus stock from other brands-and inclusivity. The clothes are designed for "both mother and daughter," he said, and the models included all ages and sizes, with smiles and dancing that were a clear link to Weinsanto's mentor.

### Metaverse

Further nods to the zeitgeist: Weinsanto also included a collection created specially for K-Pop superstars Lightsum, who appeared virtually via holograms at an after show party. That digital collection will be sold as NFTs in the metaverse. Weinsanto said he was fascinated by online fashion, even if he didn't see it as crucial to the industry. "You can really free yourself," he said. "I want to go beyond 3D."

More than 100 brands feature in the official calendar for Paris Fashion Week. Almost all are back to live runway shows following the shift online during the Covid-19 pandemic, including Dior, Chanel, Balenciaga, Stella McCartney and Issey Miyake. But all eyes are on Victoria Beckham, who makes her first appearance at Paris Fashion Week after previously showing in New York and London. Beckham's brand has struggled to turn a profit despite strong reviews since she launched as a designer in 2008, and a newly reorganized back office is hoping for a boost in Paris.— AFP





A devotee of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with a skewer pierced through her cheek takes part in a procession during the annual Vegetarian Festival in Phuket. — AFP photos



A devotee of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with skewers pierced through her cheeks takes part in a procession during the annual Vegetarian Festival in Phuket.

## Extreme piercing cleanses souls at Thai vegetarian festival



A devotee of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with skewers pierced through the cheeks takes part in a procession during the annual Vegetarian Festival.



Tattoos are seen on the back of a devotee with skewers pierced through his cheeks at a procession during the annual Vegetarian Festival.



A devotee of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with skewers pierced through the cheeks waits to take part in a procession during the annual Vegetarian Festival.



A devotee of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with skewers pierced through the cheeks takes part in a procession.

Taoist devotees had body parts pierced with objects ranging from skewers and swords to a model ship on Tuesday as Thailand's Vegetarian Festival returned from a two-year pandemic hiatus. The annual nine-day celebration honors the "Nine Emperor Gods" and adherents shun all animal products while offering their bodies to deities who they believe will banish bad luck. Internationally known for often graphic images of the piercings, the event in Phuket previously drew thousands of visitors to the southern tourist island hoping for blessings and good fortune.

"I could cleanse my mind and concentrate my thoughts," said 62-year-old Teepakorn Kerdkla as he waited to see a procession of the faithful who had undergone piercings. Those volunteering to be perforated are known as "mediums" and believe they have a personal connection with one of the gods. They must apply in advance and are carefully considered before being granted the honor. On Tuesday morning as the sun rose over Phuket, the mediums prepared themselves at a local temple as drums beat, bells rang and incense burned to begin the day's festivities.

### 'Gratitude'

Folklore traces the ritual back to 1825 when a visiting Chinese opera troupe fell ill in Phuket, but today the festival comes with latex-gloved medics and modern safeguards. After devotees emerge from the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine, nurses



A devotee of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with a ship model pierced through his cheek waits to take part in a procession during the annual Vegetarian Festival.

closely monitor the proceedings as the sharpened objects—chosen by the mediums—are carefully guided through their skin. "The wishers have to pierce themselves as a way to express their gratitude to the gods as well as getting rid of their bad luck," said onlooker Chitsanuphong Tankongkoy, 18.

After the piercing is complete, the mediums are guided by supporters five kilometers (three miles) to a park by the sea. During this procession—in which some devotees appear in a trance, their

eyes rolling as they tremble, wave and dance—they dispense blessings to a crowd of hundreds. The return of the event is a welcome boon for Thailand's Covid-battered tourism industry. "We hadn't had this festival in a few years so this year is especially exciting," said 58-year-old participant Rapeepan Naknakhon. "I'm glad to see lots of people joining and making merit." — AFP



A devotee (center) of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with a sword pierced through her cheek takes part in a procession during the annual Vegetarian Festival in Phuket.



A devotee of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with a skewer pierced through her cheek takes part in a procession during the annual Vegetarian Festival.



A devotee of the Jor Soo Gong Naka shrine with skewers pierced through the cheeks takes part in a procession.



Coach Edmond Gyekye training at the gym.

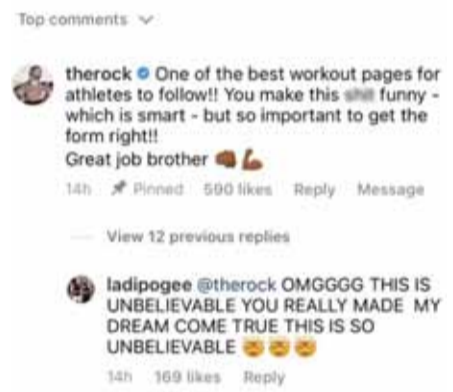


# How 'Coach Edmond' turned into social media sensation in Kuwait

Fitness trainer credits Kuwait's social media scene in helping him build his brand

By Ahmad Jabr

Edmond Gyekye, a fitness and bodybuilding coach based in Kuwait, has reached global recognition by following a simple rule: Exercise while having fun. But that wasn't all - Gyekye has found a very rich and largely well-receptive social media scene in Kuwait to help him break into stardom. His way of promoting a proper exercise routine in a fun way has earned him a great following on social media - reaching nearly two million followers on Instagram in less than a year, and nearly one million followers on TikTok in a few months.



A screenshot of Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson commenting on one of Coach Edmond Gyekye's videos.

His videos - which mix informative and fun content - have become very popular; so much so that Hollywood's top star Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson has commented on one of his videos. "That was the happiest day of my life," he said. "I wasn't expecting it. It was a dream come true. His comment really helped me grow. It was as if he gave me his stamp of approval."

Gyekye, or 'Coach Edmond' as he likes people to call him, noticed that many people at the gym were performing their exercise routines wrong. While teaching people to exercise with the proper form, he got the

idea to make videos and upload them on social media. The idea itself isn't new, but Edmond decided to add his own twist to it. In his videos, Gyekye approaches a trainee doing his exercise, makes his signature 'arm-swipe' gesture indicating that the trainee is performing the exercise wrongly, then proceeds to teach him how to do the exercise properly - all in a comical and entertaining way.

When he first started posting his videos, 'Coach Edmond' only had around 2,000 followers on Instagram, but his following reached 1.8 million in less than a year. This inspired him to set up channels on YouTube and TikTok to appeal to a larger audience. "I found more success on Instagram," he said. "I think attracting followers on Instagram is more challenging compared to TikTok. On Instagram, there are more professional people who leave comments, both positive and negative, whereas on TikTok, you get more likes than comments, so it's easier to deal with the audience there."

Gyekye realizes that social media has been huge in helping him promote his brand. "Social media is one of the main ways for promotion in the world now. Without social media, I wouldn't have been able to promote myself till now. It did help me a lot in terms of growth and advancing my career." Gyekye is grateful for the positive feedback he's received from followers in Kuwait, saying it helped him reach success. "I thank all my followers for their support and for accepting me for the way I am," he said.

### 'Impressive' bodybuilding scene

Hailing from Ghana, Gyekye, 33, is a 16-year veteran of the bodybuilding sport who has called Kuwait his home for the past eight years. "I've been working for 16 years in fitness, starting in my home country of Ghana before moving to Kuwait eight years ago. I've worked in many gyms in Kuwait, and was able to create good relations with many people here. Most people in the local bodybuilding scene know me," he said.

"Compared to my country, Kuwait is more professional when it comes to fitness and bodybuilding. I prepared myself for this. An important aspect of bodybuilding is how to grow, especially with diet and exercise. I've invested in myself a lot to reach this level, and the environment here in Kuwait has been very helpful. I'm still growing, because learning has no limits," Gyekye said.

'Coach Edmond' describes Kuwait's bodybuilding scene as one of the most impressive he's ever seen. "Bodybuilding is one of the most popular sports in Kuwait. They love bodybuilding here," he told Kuwait Times. "I'm surprised by how dedicated people are here, especially when you compare it to other countries. People come to the gym even at 1 am or 3 am. I really love the way they enjoy the sport and make it their lifestyle. I'm really impressed. Especially the youth - they love fitness. The younger generation are more aware and understand the importance of fitness."

difficult to continue once they start, Bebehani believes focusing and patience can give you the push you need to keep going. "Ignore people who talk bad about you," he said. "Don't listen to them. Keep going to the gym, keep chasing your dream and don't give up."

### 'Fitness is important'

Kuwait has one of the world's highest diabetes and obesity rates. Many people would often say they struggle to make time or energy to exercise regularly. Gyekye says that people don't need to focus on reaching the perfect body shape to start following a healthier lifestyle. "Fitness is important. You don't need to care mainly about building the muscles or bodybuilding, because fitness is more important," he said. "There is a saying that goes 'prevention is better than the cure'. We need to take care of what we eat, follow a healthy lifestyle and take good care of our bodies to live longer."

Once you reach your goal, the only logi-



Coach Edmond Gyekye.



Hussein Behbehani posing in the gym.

## The Rock's support was like 'stamp of approval'

One of those people is Hussein Behbehani, a 20-year-old Kuwaiti who has been training with Gyekye for much of his young bodybuilding career. "I started bodybuilding three years ago as I was turning 18," he said. "I liked the aspect of seeing the change in my body; it really inspired me to keep going and keep working hard."

Experiencing positive change motivates Behbehani to always find time for working out. In fact, he says once he decided to follow a healthy lifestyle, it wasn't difficult for him to manage his time between studying and exercise. "I made time for [exercise]. I made a schedule and follow it strictly," he said. While many people may find it more

cal step is to ask yourself, what's next? When asked about his future plans, Gyekye says the sky is the limit. "No one knows what happens tomorrow," he said. "Life is a journey, and only Allah knows the destiny." But for now, 'Coach Edmond' says he's enjoying his time in Kuwait; a country he says has been very welcoming and which he is proud of the relations and friendships he's made in. "I like the culture. I like the 'straightforwardness' in Kuwait. Follow the laws and you're safe," he said.

## When movie fan-art becomes the real thing

It's a hobby that can turn into the real thing - some fan-art film posters are so good that they end up in galleries or even earn the artist a chance to work with Hollywood's biggest names. That has been the case for Belgian artist Laurent Durieux, 52, whose pastel-toned, retro posters have their own fan base, including filmmakers. Durieux remembers falling out of his chair when he received a congratulatory email

from Steven Spielberg for his reimagined version of the "Jaws" poster.

It was a bold move to offer a new take on one of cinema's most iconic images, but his version is a classic example of fan-art, which often makes playful, subtle references to the movie. Rather than the terrifying shark of the original, Durieux shows a peaceful beach scene with just a hint of the danger provided by the shark fin shape on a parasol.

"I like to tell my own version of the film, while being respectful of the director's vision," he told AFP at the Annecy Animation Festival, for which he designed the poster and where he presented his works. "I'm saying the same thing but in a slightly left-field way. I'm looking for elements that the director, and especially the PR, have not highlighted," he added. "The

big difference is that my posters don't have to worry about real marketing."

### Commissioned by Coppola

A letter from Spielberg was one thing, but another legendary director, Francis Ford Coppola, went one better by actually using Durieux's design as the cover art for the re-release of "Apocalypse Now". "We worked hard in hand. He was a real fan," said Durieux. His take on 1969 classic French film "The Swimming Pool" was similarly used for its re-release last year. All his posters contain neat insider references, such as the fire station that doubles as a ghost trap for "Ghostbusters".

Or for "The Shining", he opted for a tricycle featuring the number 237 - a reference to the forbidden room that is instantly recognizable to fans of the classic horror by Stanley Kubrick. His silkscreen prints take up to three months to make and sell for around \$100 a piece, but some have since been resold for up to \$7,000.

Durieux is far from the only artist to create his alternative posters - "fan art" is a popular genre on Instagram under hashtags such as #AlternativeMoviePosters or #alt-poster. The best examples have shown up in well-established galleries from Brooklyn to Paris, while a Texas-based store, Mondo, specializes in the sector and commissioned many of Durieux's works. A dedicated auction in July at Heritage Auctions in the United States brought in more than \$100,000. Thanks to their quality and carefully limited editions, they have become "true works of art", said Hope Grubbs, a manager at the auction house. — AFP



Cinema poster illustrator Laurent Durieux poses for a picture in Brussels. — AFP

## William makes first visit to Wales since inheriting new title

Britain's heir to the throne, William, and his wife, Catherine, on Tuesday made their first visit to Wales since becoming the new Prince and Princess of Wales. William automatically inherited the title on the death of his grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, when his father-the previous prince of Wales-became king. The visit came as media reports said William had no plans for "any kind" of investiture.

King Charles III spent time learning Welsh at university before he was crowned by his mother in a televised ceremony at Caernarfon Castle in July 1969 when he was 20. During the elaborate investiture

ceremony, the queen placed a coronet on Charles's head and helped arrange robes around his shoulders.

He pledged allegiance to his mother with the words: "I, Charles, Prince of Wales, do become your liege man of life and limb." The domestic Press Association news agency reported that rather than planning an investiture, William was focused on deepening the trust and respect of the people of Wales over time.

His wife Catherine, meanwhile, while conscious of the history associated with the role, wished to create "her own path", a royal source was quoted as saying in the days after the queen's death on September 8. At the same time, William spoke by telephone with Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales-a conversation in which the prince mentioned his "deep affection for Wales". The prince, who served as an RAF search and rescue helicopter pilot while living on the island of Anglesey, off the northwest coast of Wales, "expressed his and the Princess of Wales's honor in being asked by the king to serve the Welsh people". — AFP



Britain's Prince William (left), Prince of Wales, and Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, laugh as they visit the Guildhall in Windsor. — AFP

## Sports

# Nets eye reboot as Nash plays down Durant trade request

## Durant shocks basketball, issues 'an ultimatum'

**NEW YORK:** Brooklyn Nets head coach Steve Nash played down Kevin Durant's trade request on Monday, insisting the superstar was "on the same page" as the team prepares for the new season. Durant shocked basketball in June after requesting a trade, less than a year after he signed a four-year \$198 million contract extension to remain in Brooklyn.

Durant is reported to have given Nets owner Joe Tsai an ultimatum, to either grant his request for a trade or fire Nash and Nets manager Sean Marks. The standoff appeared to have been resolved last month when the Nets said in a statement that Durant would remain with the club following clear the air talks.

Speaking at the Nets media day on Monday, Nash said Durant's trade request was part-and-parcel of life in the NBA. "Families go through things like this," Nash told reporters. "You go through adversity, you go through disagreements. This is not new to the NBA. It has happened dozens of times; I'm sure every organization has faced that. So, you know, it's a part of the process. It's a part of working in this business. It's super competitive.

"We're all prideful. We all have expectations, and when we get dinged up like we did last year, you know, everyone's disappointed. We cleared the air and we spoke and we got

on the same page." Brooklyn had hoped to challenge for an NBA Championship last season, building their roster around the talents of Durant, James Harden and Kyrie Irving. However the Nets big three failed to deliver, and Harden was traded away to the Philadelphia 76ers in February.

The Nets were later swept in the first round of the playoffs by the Boston Celtics. Durant said Monday he had sought a move after becoming concerned that the team would not be capable of challenging for championships. "As last season went on, you see what happened with our season, guys in and out of the lineup, injuries, just a lot of uncertainty, which built some doubt in my mind about the next four years in my career," Durant said.

"I'm getting older and I want to be in a place that's stable and trying to build a championship culture. So I had some doubts about that. I voiced them to (Nets owner) Joe (Tsai), and we moved forward from there." Durant said he had been encouraged by Marks' roster moves during the close season. "I liked what we did, what Sean put together this summer with the team," Durant said, adding that talks with team ownership and management had put his mind at rest. "We came to a mutual agreement that we should keep moving forward," he said. —AFP



**NEW YORK:** Kevin Durant #7 of the Brooklyn Nets speaks during a press conference at Brooklyn Nets Media Day at HSS Training Center in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. —AFP

## Premiership Rugby club Worcester to be placed in administration

**LONDON:** English Premiership side Worcester are set to be placed in administration after they were suspended from all competitions by the Rugby Football Union on Monday for failing to meet a funding ultimatum. Worcester are burdened by debts totaling more than £25 million (\$26.5 million), including at least £6 million in unpaid tax, with growing anger expressed towards owners Colin Goldring and Jason Whittingham, who have been accused of asset-stripping the club.

A statement from the RFU said the owners had failed to meet a deadline of 1600 GMT on Monday to provide proof of insurance cover and funding for the monthly payroll and were also missing a "credible plan to take the club forward". "The RFU has therefore suspended Worcester Warriors from all competitions, including the Gallagher Premiership... with immediate effect," it added. Worcester confirmed they have applied to the UK government's department of media, culture media and sport (DCMS) to place the club in administration.

"Worcester Warriors can confirm that WRFC Trading Limited, the company that owns the Worcester Warriors Premiership rugby club, has today asked DCMS to place the club into administration," the club said in a statement. "DCMS will now apply to the court to appoint administrators. As negotiations with possible investors have still not led to critically-needed funding, administration is seen as the best solution to safeguard the interests of the business and ensure the best chances of a solution that saves the club."

In a statement the DCMS said it has agreed to the administration request "to give the club the best possible chance of survival, and to protect a significant taxpayer investment." RFU CEO Bill Sweeney acknowledged the decision taken by the sport's governing body was "incredibly difficult news for fans, staff and players". "We met with players and staff last week to explain why this action would be necessary and regrettably without assurances in place we have had to take this action to protect everyone's best interests," he said.

Sweeney said he hoped a buyer could be secured to allow the club to return to professional rugby, saying that the RFU would seek to learn from the situation to address broader financial problems in English club rugby. "While it is the responsibility of each business owner to manage their individual finances, we will look at learnings from this situation to see what regulation can be put in place to provide all parties with more financial transparency," he added.

### Match off

Worcester are not the only one of the Premiership's 13 clubs facing potential financial collapse. Wasps, twice European champions, announced last week their intention to appoint administrators after failing to meet a May deadline to repay £35 million in bonds, which helped finance their relocation to Midlands city Coventry from London in 2014.

There are fears Worcester and Wasps represent the tip of an iceberg, with the collective debts of all Premiership clubs estimated at more than £500 million. Speaking last week, Worcester rugby director Steve Diamond said: "We have been in this period of near-purgatory for a while now, and it is starting to come to a head. I don't know how it has got to this position. It is sad, and it is diabolical that it has been allowed to walk itself to the graveyard, virtually, and I never thought it would get to this position, but it has." —AFP

## LeBron prioritizing fitness, not records, in the 20th season

**EL SEGUNDO:** Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James said Monday staying injury free will be his priority as he prepares for a 20th season in the NBA which could see him break Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's all-time scoring record. The 37-year-old heads into the campaign determined to lead the Lakers back to the playoffs after a dismal 2021-2022 season that saw the franchise's hopes torpedoed by a combination of injuries and poor form.

James, who played just 56 times last season, told reporters at the Lakers media day maintaining fitness would be his focus this season. "Just being available, that's what's most important," James said. "Obviously some injuries you can't control, but that's my whole mindset. For me as one of the leaders of the team, availability is the most important thing in this league - to be available on the floor."

James moved into second place in the NBA's regular season points scoring standings in March, overtaking Karl Malone during a game against the Washington Wizards. He enters the 2022-2023 season 1,325 points behind all-time regular season points leader Abdul-Jabbar - meaning that if he

maintains his average points per game totals, the record should fall this season. James said however that he does not obsess about surpassing Lakers legend Abdul-Jabbar's record.

### James 'in awe' of record

"The only time I've thought about it is when someone's posted something on my social media and I've been scrolling through my feed and I see it," James said. "And every single time I'm kind of in awe of it, like 'Wow'. 'I've never played my career thinking about records, just making sure I'm in the best shape possible going into the season and being available.' But to sit here knowing I'm on the verge of breaking the most sought-after record in the NBA, is super humbling for myself and super cool. 'To be able to be in the same breath as (Abdul-Jabbar) who wore this same uniform and was a staple of this franchise, it's super-duper dope to be in that conversation."

"I'm not going to put too much pressure on (the record) throughout the season. But it's a historical moment when it gets there, and as long as my family and friends are there to see it, that's the most important thing." James meanwhile spoke warmly about new Lakers coach Darvin Ham, the former Milwaukee Bucks assistant coach who replaced the sacked Frank Vogel in June. "Every single day it continues to get better and better and better, but I think the transparency that we have from the time he was granted the head coach here has been



**CALIFORNIA:** LeBron James poses with a ball at the Los Angeles Lakers media day in El Segundo, California. —AFP

great," James said.

"We've had multiple conversations, not only about the game of basketball but things off the floor as well. I think it was well overdue for him to be a head coach. "I'm happy to be part of his journey and try to do some special things." James, who last month inked a two-year contract extension with the Lakers, added that he remained firmly committed to the franchise that he joined in 2018. "I came here because I believed in the franchise and I'm still here. It's literally that simple." James said. "I'm committed to the franchise as long as my contract is here. I look forward to getting going tomorrow." —AFP

## Kuwait's 17th Tennis Junior Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's 17th Tennis Junior (J5 ALZAHRA) Championship concluded at the Kuwait Tennis Federation Courts at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex. 15 females from nine countries and 27 males from 11 countries participated in the event. The closing ceremony was held under the patronage and in the presence of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Kuwait National team players Hussein Al-Shatti and Yaqoub Mohammad won the first

place and the gold medal of the doubles final - defeating Amirhosien Kepadkho from Iran and Seth Sadikov from Georgia in two sets to one. In the men's singles, Hugo Soares from France won the first place, while Nordan Clausen from Denmark won the second place.

For the Women's Juniors Doubles, Munisa Ashurbekova from Uzbekistan and Renata Garaeva from Russia took the first place while Sreenidhi Balaji from India and Sahana Sanjeev from USA won the second place. Also, Munisa Ashurbekova from Uzbekistan won first place; Sahana Sanjeev from USA won second place in the Singles Juniors.

This is the first of four Championships for Juniors of both genders under the supervision of the International Tennis Federation, and will continue until October 18. Players from various parts of the world will participate to collect ITF juniors ranking points. Kuwait's Hussein Al-Shatti and Yaqoub Mohammad collected 9 singles points and 25 doubles respectively.



## Singapore dressed up to party like it's 2019 for F1 return

**SINGAPORE:** With tickets selling fast and party suites costing up to \$70,000 a night, Singapore is putting the pedal to the metal when it hosts Asia's first Formula One race this weekend since the pandemic. Tens of thousands of fans are expected to converge for the Singapore Grand Prix from Friday to Sunday as the night race roars back after a two-year absence because of COVID.

Adding to the party atmosphere, Red Bull's Max Verstappen could retain his world title on the floodlit street circuit around the Marina Bay district. But one of the most glamorous races on the F1 calendar has always been about more than just the racing. Away from the track, the city-state will be letting its hair down with concerts by Westlife, Black Eyed Peas and Suede, plus American rapper Fatman Scoop and Dutch DJ Oliver Heldens.

More upscale parties are boasting caviar and champagne on the menu, and diners can dig into an F1-themed "Roaring Dinner Feast" and "Fuel Up Brunch". About 25 corporate meetings and events, including the Forbes Global CEO Conference, are also scheduled, allowing executives to mix work and play.

"It signals to the world that Singapore is back in business and that our ability to stage world-class,

high-quality events remains undimmed," Ong Ling Lee, an executive director at Singapore Tourism Board (STB), told AFP. Authorities have not released numbers, but ticket sales for Singapore's biggest event since the pandemic have already exceeded 2019, when 268,000 spectators watched, said Ong. Race tickets cost from Sg\$98 (\$70) to nearly Sg\$10,000.

### 'Coming-out-of-COVID party'

Singapore has removed all COVID restrictions, except for mask-wearing inside buses and metro trains, after vaccinating most of its population of nearly six million and deciding to live with the virus. "From a global perspective, this is the brightest light to shine on Singapore since the pandemic," Song Seng Wun, an economist with CIMB Private Banking, told AFP. "This is Singapore's grand coming-out-of-COVID party."

COVID wrecked Singapore's economy with its deepest-ever recession in 2020 and in 2021 visitor arrivals plunged to 330,000, from 19.12 million in 2019. But it shifted to endemicity earlier this year and last week overtook Hong Kong as Asia's premier finance centre in a global ranking list. Seeing Singapore emphatically open up has "put pressure" on other Asian economies such as Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong to also relax travel curbs, said Song.

"Formula One is also shining the spotlight on Asia in terms of who is seriously going back to business." Hotel bookings have been brisk, even with room rates estimated to be up to 50 percent higher than they were pre-COVID. Prices have surged past Sg\$2,000 a night, especially for those around the circuit. "There's a lot of pent-up demand for those race enthusiasts look-



**SINGAPORE:** Cars drive along the road used for the race track for the upcoming Formula One Singapore Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore on September 27, 2022. —AFP

ing forward to come back to Singapore," said Marcus Hanna, managing director of Fairmont Singapore and Swissotel The Stamford.

### \$70,000 party suite

For many, the socializing is as important as the racing. F1 after-party specialist Amber Lounge has a "Noir Suite" for up to 25 people at the five-star Fullerton Bay Hotel costing Sg\$100,000 a night. The hotel's F1-inspired dishes include a "Pit Stop Cake". The nearby Marina Bay Sands casino and hotel complex is offering a "Mandala Weekender", where guests can enjoy a variety of musical entertainment and parties. —AFP

Sports

# 'Frustrated' Mali's basketball duo apologize for WCup fight

## Puerto Rico book women's World Cup quarters for first time

SYDNEY: Two Mali players apologized on Tuesday after they fought each other at the women's basketball World Cup, with governing body FIBA opening an investigation into the incident. The scuffle erupted in a media zone at the tournament in Sydney on Monday and was caught on camera while Serbia's Sasa Cado was being interviewed. Serbia had defeated Mali 81-68.

A short video clip which has since been widely watched online showed Mali's Salimatou Kourouma throwing at least three punches at teammate Kamite Elisabeth Dabou as a shocked Cado retreated. Other Mali players shouting "stop" rushed over to intervene and break up the fight. The two players fronted a press conference after their final tournament game, an 88-65 loss to Canada in which both featured, and apologized.

"We are here to apologize for the image that was on social media, it was not our intention," Dabou said as they sat side-by-side. "We were frustrated because of the loss and we're here to apologise to the whole of the FIBA basketball World Cup. We are sorry." They took no questions.

FIBA said was investigating and once concluded "will decide on any applicable disciplinary measures". Coach Joaquin Brizuela called the fracas a "sad incident". "They are two of our key players and even though it was a sad incident, it was more about they wanted to play basketball at a higher level, and they did show that today," he said through an interpreter. "We have learned a lot from playing this tournament." Mali failed to win any of their five games after qualifying for their second World Cup as a late replacement for Nigeria, who pulled out citing administrative difficulties around the sport in their country.

Meanwhile, Puerto Rico booked the last quarter-final slot at the women's basketball World Cup on Tuesday with a "fairytale" 92-73 win over South Korea, securing a knockout place for the first time. Mya Hollingshed drilled a game-high 29 points and 12 rebounds in the do-or-die clash on the final day of group matches at the 10-day tournament in Sydney. Defeat consigned the Koreans to an early exit as 17th-ranked Puerto Rico progressed with two wins from five in Group A, quickly taking the initiative to open an 18-

point lead after the first quarter.

The Koreans, missing injured marquee star Park Ji-su, battled back in much tighter second and third quarters and came out on top in the fourth, but their slow start was fatal. "Obviously very proud of our team, we have a mix of young players with veteran players," said Puerto Rico coach Jerry Batista. "So for us who have been here for a couple of years working and trying to develop Puerto Rico basketball, it is so great. "It is like a fairytale... it shows that if you work, you can achieve everything," he added.

Arella Guirantes has been a standout with her exceptional performances helping steer Puerto Rico to the playoffs in only their second World Cup, having failed to win a game at their first tournament in 2018. The ever-dangerous shooting guard finished with 18 points, five rebounds and five assists. South Korean coach Jung Sun-min said her players were tired after a gruelling tournament, but was gracious in defeat. "The better team deserved the win today," she said.

Puerto Rico join 10-time champions the United States,

hosts Australia, China, Belgium, Canada, France and Serbia in the last eight, which tips off on Thursday. Who faces who will be determined after the last group games. The USA have already clinched top spot in Group A and will face the third- or fourth-placed team from Group B. Whoever wins between China and Belgium will advance as Pool A's second seed. France, Canada and Australia all have an opportunity to win Group B or finish second to avoid the mighty Americans, depending on how they fare in their final clashes.

The French face Serbia and Canada take on a winless Mali, who are in disarray after two of their players were caught on camera fighting each other in a media zone after their loss on Monday. Footage showed Salimatou Kourouma throwing at least three punches at a teammate as other Mali players rushed to intervene, with governing body FIBA opening a disciplinary investigation. Australia have shaken off a rocky start against France to win three in a row and meet a Japanese team that has been a shadow of the one that took silver at their home Olympics in Tokyo. —AFP



## Uzbekistan Futsal team crush Turkmenistan 8-0

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Uzbekistan Futsal team started the AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022 with a decisive win over Turkmenistan (8-0) in the first round of the second group competition on Tuesday. In group three, the current champions Iran will start their

defense of the title against Indonesia, and will be followed by a match between Lebanon and China. Iran hold the record number of championships (12), and their only loss was in 2014 to Japan. The Iranian team are expected to lead the group.

Indonesia's team are among the tough teams. The Saudi team in the fourth group will have a tough match with Japan, which ended second in the previous championship, while Vietnam will face South Korea in the same group. Uzbekistan coach said the 8-0 win against Turkmenistan in the championship opener does not send a message to other teams. "We are here to compete for the championship. We had a good offensive match and took advantage of the Turkmenistan defensive mistakes," he said.



## KFH announces winners of packages to attend WCup

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the winners of the packages to attend FIFA World Cup in Qatar. This comes within "The Card is in Your Court" campaign with VISA, which offers customers several chances to win packages to attend the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. The campaign is part of KFH's keenness to continue offering its customers outstanding benefits when using KFH cards in their purchasing transactions.

The winners of the packages to attend the FIFA World Cup in the first draw for VISA card holders are: Khaled Al-Mutairi, Noora Al-Najdi, Mohammed Al-Mutairi, Sopash Thakshan, Jamal Al-Enezi, Mohammed Al-Mishri and the winners of Hesabi card holders are: Mariam Al-Ilamad and Ali Al-Gabandi. The total number of winners in the campaign will be 16 winners, 4 of them will be Hesabi youth account customers.

### Prize packages

Each winner will have a FIFA World Cup Qatar package which includes one travelling companion, return trip to Doha for 3 days by private jet, accommodation for 2 nights in a 5-star hotel, transportation to and from Doha airport and Stadium, in addition to attending a quarter-final or semi-final

match in a private cabin.

Eligible purchasing transactions include all transactions made during the campaign period using KFH-VISA credit and prepaid cards through PoS, or online on local and international websites, in addition to all overseas purchasing transactions made using KFH-VISA debit cards through PoS, or online international websites.

During the campaign period, a customer has one chance to enter the draw for each one (1) Kuwaiti Dinar spent of the total local purchasing transactions (including the purchasing made through online websites in Kuwaiti Dinar). Furthermore, customers have 10 chances to enter the draw for each one (1) Kuwaiti Dinar of the total purchasing transactions spent overseas (including purchasing made online in foreign currencies).

Launching the campaign with VISA contributes to granting customers an outstanding banking experience and winning opportunities when using KFH-VISA cards. Offering the benefit to use the cards inside or outside Kuwait encourages customers to use the cards in the local market and promotes sales. KFH will continue collaborating with VISA for planning and launching more campaigns, as they have a positive impact on customer satisfaction, increasing usage rates and expanding KFH's market share in banking cards of different types.

KFH has been always keen on contributing to launching distinguished campaigns that enhance customers' banking experience and meet their aspirations, as well as maintain the Bank's leadership in the banking cards market in Kuwait. KFH expressed its pride in the collaboration with VISA, especially following the huge success of KFH campaigns,



services and innovative payment solutions which widely resonated in the market. The collaboration with VISA is an opportunity to adopt more digitalized payment solutions to make customers' experience easier and more inclusive.

## Bellingham gives England cause for hope at World Cup

LONDON: England will head to the World Cup on a six game winless streak, their longest going into a major tournament, but lifted by the eye-catching performance of Jude Bellingham against Germany. The Three Lions were denied a morale-boosting win in an enthralling 3-3 draw against the four-time world champions at Wembley on Monday. At just 19, Bellingham stepped forward to help spark a fightback from 2-0 down to 3-2 in the space of 12 second-half minutes.

The Borussia Dortmund midfielder started the move that resulted in Luke Shaw firing in England's first goal from open play in more than 520 minutes. Bellingham then put his body on the line to win a penalty that Harry Kane converted to complete the comeback before Kai Havertz snatched a late equalizer for the visitors. "I think the biggest thing is he's got a top-level mentality to compete," said Southgate.

"Yes, he's got technical ability and he's got athletic prowess, but the thing that makes the difference with the top players is that mentality that they are never beaten. "They drive the game and they don't look like they are fazed by any occasion and that's what we are seeing." Bellingham was in the England squad that reached a first major tournament final for 55 years at last year's delayed Euro 2020, but spent little time on the pitch. Southgate's critics have pinpointed a stubbornness and loyalty to players who have performed for him in the past.

That faith proved misplaced in the selection of Harry Maguire, who was at fault for Germany's first two goals, even though the Manchester United captain has been dropped at club level. Bellingham could also have suffered from Southgate's loyalty to the midfield pair of Declan Rice and Kalvin Phillips, who combined to great effect at Euro 2020. However, a shoulder injury to Phillips that could rule the Manchester City midfielder out of the World Cup in Qatar gave Bellingham an opportunity at Wembley that he took full advantage of.

A child prodigy, Bellingham made his debut for Birmingham aged just 16. His boyhood club were mocked for retiring his 22 shirt number when he left the club after just one season in the first team. "He said he wanted to be a No 10 (creative midfielder). I said, 'I think you can be a 22,'" Mike Dodds, Bellingham's long-time academy coach, told The Athletic. "He asked what I meant and I said, 'You can be a No 4, a No 8 and No 10 - someone who can do it all.'" Despite interest from Manchester United, he chose Dortmund because of the German giants' reputation for developing young talent.

Now into his third season in the Bundesliga, transfer speculation surrounds him again with United, Manchester City and Liverpool expected to battle for his signature next year - Dortmund are reportedly asking for £150 million (\$160 million). "I was impressed when he was 17, imagine now he's 19," said City boss Pep Guardiola after Bellingham scored against his side in the Champions League for the second time earlier this month. "He's an exceptional player. —AFP

# Classifieds

## Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Adaliya	22517144
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Khalidiya	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
<b>Clinics</b>			
Kaizen center	25716707		
Rawda	22517733		

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, Tejinder Singh S/o Manna Singh holder of Indian Passport No. M7064950 issued at Kuwait on 09/08/2015 permanent resident of Village Jhal Raju Singh Tehsil and Distt. Tara Taran Punjab India and presently residing at Block 4 Street 25 Building 101 Floor 5 Apartment 9 Area Mangaf City Kuwait do hereby change my name from Tejinder Singh to Tajinder Singh with immediate effect. All concern notes that. (C# 2407)

I, Anthony Jesino

Piedade holding Passport No. N2561608 issued in Mumbai having permanent address 15/5 Mathurdas colony, opp MES colony, Kalina St. Anthony Street, Santacruz East Mumbai - 400098, Maharashtra, India would like to correct my name from Old Name: Anthony Piedade to New Name: Anthony Piedade. (C# 2409)

I, Joyce Anthony Piedade holding Passport No. R8665839 issued in Mumbai having permanent address 15/5 Mathurdas colony, opp MES colony, Kalina St.

Anthony Street, Santacruz East Mumbai - 400098, Maharashtra, India would like to correct my name from Old Name: Joyce Anthony Piedade to New Name: Joyce Fernandes. (C# 2410) - 28-09-2022

I, RAWOOT MUSAAB HIDAYAT, holder of Passport No. L2867213 do hereby change my name to MUSAAB HIDAYATULLAH (as Given Name) RAWOOT (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name RAWOOT MUSAAB HIDAYATULLAH and I

### For Rent directly from the Owner

Villa in Jabriya  
For rent in Surra One floor Flat for rent in Jabriya, Salwa and Salmiya

One floor in Surra  
99666522

Please contact  
24911260  
24911325

also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

I, William Samir, holder of Passport No. M9885223 do hereby change my name to

William Samir (as Given name) Dewan (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name William Samir Dewan and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C# 2408) 27-09-2022



BUDAPEST: Hungary's midfielder Daniel Gazdag (left) and Italy's defender Federico Dimarco vie for the ball during the UEFA Nations League Group 3 football match between Hungary and Italy in Budapest on September 26, 2022. — AFP

## England rally in 6-goal thriller to ease pressure on Southgate

### Italy beat Hungary; England salvage a 3-3 draw against Germany

LONDON: Gareth Southgate hopes England will feel the benefit of being put under intense pressure in recent days at the World Cup after fighting back from 2-0 down to salvage a 3-3 draw against Germany on Monday. The Three Lions had already been relegated from the top tier of the Nations League and will head to Qatar on a six-game winless run. The knives were being sharpened for Southgate after his faith in Harry Maguire backfired for two German goals early in the second half.

Centre-back Maguire has been publicly backed by the England boss despite being dropped at club level by Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag. Ilkay Gundogan slotted home the opener from the penalty spot after Maguire gifted possession to Jamal Musiala and then chopped down the Bayern Munich midfielder.

Kai Havertz then curled brilliantly into the top corner after Maguire was disposed in the German half. England had failed to score from open play in any of their opening five games in Group A3. But two goals in three minutes transformed the atmosphere around Wembley and the scrutiny on Southgate's position heading to Qatar. Luke Shaw was also restored to the starting line-up despite his lack of game time at United and started the fight-back by volleying in at the back post.

Moments later, two of Southgate's substitutes combined to deadly effect as Bukayo Saka set up

Mason Mount to curl home. Harry Kane looked to have completed the turnaround from the penalty spot seven minutes from time after Nico Schlotterbeck's challenge on Jude Bellingham was punished following a VAR review. Yet, there was more drama to come as Nick Pope spilled Serge Gnabry's shot and Havertz pounced on the rebound to snatch Germany a point.

#### Relief for Southgate

Despite the disappointment of a late equaliser, there was relief for Southgate that England's attack finally came to life after accusations that his conservative tactics were to blame for a lack of goals. "The whole experience has been what we needed," said Southgate, who had been booed by England fans after a 1-0 defeat to Italy in Milan on Friday.

"You are going to have pressure in a World Cup. You can try to avoid pressure, but it's coming. It's better that we feel it and know how we deal with it. The players reacted in the right way - we showed character but a lot of quality." The home side had plenty of chances to end their goal drought even in a scoreless first half. Raheem Sterling twice shot too close to Marc-Andre ter Stegen with just the German goalkeeper to beat, while Kane would have had a tap in but for a poor cross from Phil Foden.

Germany were seeking to bounce back from their first defeat under Hansi Flick after their hopes

of reaching the Nations League final four were ended by losing 1-0 at home to Hungary on Friday. "We made individual mistakes - it can't happen that we give away a lead like that," said a frustrated Flick. "But we came back, that's the positive. There's some work for us to do, but we're optimistic."

Germany came alive after the break with Musiala, who played for England at youth level, particularly impressive. Dutch referee Danny Makkelie needed the assistance of VAR to see Maguire's mistimed challenge on Musiala as he tried to atone for his error in giving the ball away. Gundogan coolly slotted into the bottom corner and it seemed game over when Havertz arrowed home his shot from outside the box with 23 minutes to go.

However, three goals in 11 minutes got the England support back on side and gave the team some impetus to build on heading to Qatar. Any doubt over who Southgate will start in goal against Iran on November 21 appears to have been over though, as long as Jordan Pickford has recovered from a thigh injury that kept him out of this squad. Pope has impressed in his early weeks as Newcastle's new number one, but would have done much better to palm Gnabry's shot to safety and Havertz took full advantage.

Italy, who will miss a second consecutive World Cup, again found consolation in Europe as they won 2-0 in Budapest on Monday to edge Hungary for

first place in their Nations League group. Giacomo Raspadori, who scored the winner against England on Friday, poked the ball home after Wilfried Gnonto had pounced on a poor Hungarian back pass to give Italy the lead in the 27th minute.

"We needed these matches to restore enthusiasm, even if the World Cup remains an open wound and we can't go back," said Italy goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. "We have to start again, we have to do it for all of Italy." Hungary, who started the final round of games top of Group A3, fought hard but Donnarumma made two miraculous saves in quick succession in the 50th minute from Loic Nego and Adam Szalai. — Agencies

## Lamb wonder-catch seals Cowboys win over Giants 23-16

NEW YORK: CeeDee Lamb snagged a catch-of-the-season contender as the Dallas Cowboys came from behind to defeat the New York Giants 23-16 in a hard-fought divisional battle on Monday.

Cowboys receiver Lamb plucked a one-handed touchdown reception at the back of the end zone from quarterback Cooper Rush's pass to help Dallas into a 20-13 lead at the Giants' MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford.

Lamb's go-ahead touchdown atoned for a blunder in the first half, when the wide-open Cowboys receiver dropped an easy pass that should have ended in a 52-yard touchdown. Instead, the Cowboys headed into half-time with only a slender 6-3 lead after two Brett Maher field goals either side of a 42-yard three-pointer from the Giants' Graham Gano.

The Giants threatened to make Dallas pay for Lamb's missed touchdown after the break, with Gano kicking them level with a 51-yard field goal in the third quarter. Giants running back Saquon Barkley then produced a dynamic 36-yard rush for a touchdown to give New York a 13-6 lead. But the Cowboys responded impressively, with Rush leading the team on a 75-yard drive that ended with running back Ezekiel Elliott barreling over for a touchdown from one-yard to make it 13-13 at the end of the third quarter.



EAST RUTHERFORD: Saquon Barkley #26 of the New York Giants runs the ball to score a 36 yard touchdown against the Dallas Cowboys during the third quarter in the game at MetLife Stadium on September 26, 2022. — AFP

Lamb then hauled in his wonder-catch after an 89-yard drive to give Dallas the lead at 20-13, and after the Cowboys forced a stop from the Giants on the next drive, they went back down the field and stretched their lead with a Maher field goal to make it 23-13. Gano reduced the deficit with a 51-yard field goal, but Dallas's Trevon Diggs snared an interception inside the final two minutes to effectively seal victory.

#### NFL scraps Pro Bowl

The NFL is to replace its traditional Pro Bowl game with a week-long skills competition and non-contact flag football contest, the league announced on Monday. In a statement, the NFL said that rather than the full-contact game between NFC and AFC

players, next year would see the introduction of the "Pro Bowl Games". The multi-day event will pit the best players from the AFC and NFC against each other in a series of skills-based events. The week will conclude with a flag football game at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas on February 5.

Flag football is a non-contact variation of gridiron. Instead of tackling, players must remove a flag attached to a belt from the ball carrier. "We've received invaluable feedback from players, teams and fans about reimagining the Pro Bowl, and as a result, we're thrilled to use The Pro Bowl Games as a platform to spotlight flag football as an integral part of the sport's future," said Peter O'Reilly, the NFL's executive vice president of club, business and league events. — AFP

## Qatar's service conscripts set for WCup duty

DOHA: Qatar has recalled some national service conscripts from their civilian jobs to boost stadium security during the World Cup, authorities said Tuesday. With more than one million fans expected to visit during the 32-nation tournament, the Gulf state will be relying on foreign security forces as well as its own army and police for the massive operation.

Since 2014, all Qatari men aged between 18 and 35 have had to train for four months with the military. The emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, said in a recent interview that he was considering extending national service to women. Conscripts in key jobs can delay their national service but some have been called in for World Cup duties.

"Qatar's national service program will continue as normal during the World Cup," a government official said in a statement. "Recruits completing their mandatory service will be supported by a small number of temporary recalls. This is standard practice and happens every year during major public events such as the national day celebrations," the official added. Conscripts were also used for security duties when Qatar held the world athletics championships in 2019 and the FIFA Arab Cup, a rehearsal for the World Cup, last year.

Security guards from private companies and thousands of World Cup volunteers have had special training alongside the conscripts on handling the huge crowds expected around the eight stadiums in the Doha region, a security official said. Qatar has more than 50,000 soldiers and police, but is using thousands of private guards for stadium security while foreign countries are helping to police the streets. Turkey has agreed to send 3,200 police during the World Cup and diplomats said Pakistan and Morocco are also expected to send forces. — AFP