

Established 1961

ISSUE NO: 18848  
16 PAGES, 150 FILLS

The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf

RABIA ALAWWAL 3, 1444 AH  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

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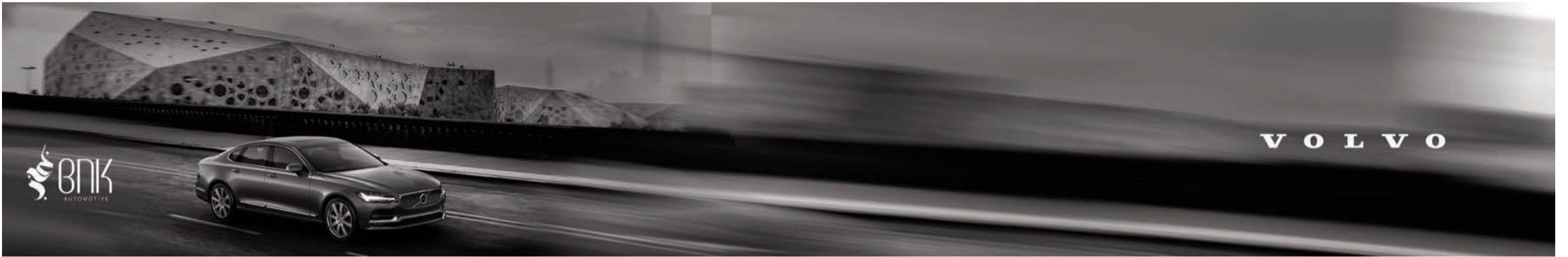
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# Kuwaitis vote in 'election of hope' for a new Kuwait

Polls seen as golden opportunity to lift Kuwait out of political turmoil

## Kuwait marks 2nd 'versary of Amir's proclamation

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait celebrates on Thursday the second anniversary of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's proclamation as the country's top leader, its guide toward further development and modernization. The occasion coincides with elections for membership in the National Assembly's 17th legislative term, in line with HH the Amir's visionary guidance urging for revising the political situation for attaining higher national interests. — KUNA (See Page 3)



HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti voters head to the ballots on Thursday to elect a new parliament in a historic election, hoping to see an end to non-stop political bickering and put the oil-rich country back on the right track following years of turmoil. The snap elections were called after HH the Amir intervened and dissolved the National Assembly in August, barely 20 months after it was elected, after disputes between the former government and opposition MPs reached a deadlock.

The election, the 17th since 1963 when Kuwait became the first Gulf nation to embrace parliamentary democracy, also come after HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, through HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, appointed a new prime minister who is hailed as a reformist. HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah immediately took a series of measures to fight alleged corruption in elections by introducing two key reform decrees and cracking down on vote-buying and outlawed tribal primaries



that were rife in previous elections.

The optimistic tone was set by an "historic" Amiri address, read by HH the Crown Prince, in which he pledged that the government will not interfere in the polls or in the election of the Assembly speaker. Candidates across the board hailed the speech as unprecedented and historic, saying it has paved the way for a bright future for the country and ends or at least contains political disputes and allows the government and Assembly to cooperate for the interests of Kuwait.

As a result of political disputes, Kuwait held 10 general elections since 2003, two of which were revoked by court, compared to just nine elections in the first 40 years of democracy. Between 2006 and now, parliament was dissolved five times and was revoked by the constitutional court on

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### News in brief

#### Mawlid holiday on Oct 9

**KUWAIT:** The Civil Service Commission announced that Sunday, October 9, 2022 will be a public holiday on the occasion of the Prophet's (PBUH) birthday.

#### Pope to visit Bahrain in Nov

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis will in November visit Bahrain, home to the biggest Catholic church in the Arabian Peninsula, the Vatican said Wednesday. Francis, 85, will be the first pope ever to visit the majority-Muslim Gulf country. "Accepting the invitation of the civil and ecclesial authorities, Pope Francis will make the announced apostolic journey to Bahrain from November 3 to 6 this year," the Vatican said in a short statement. — AFP (See Page 5)

#### US admits killing 12 civilians

**WASHINGTON:** The US military killed 12 civilians in 2021, all in Afghanistan, according to a Pentagon report released Tuesday. The Department of Defense "assesses that there were approximately 12 civilians killed and approximately five civilians injured during 2021 as a result of US military operations," said the report. — AFP

#### India bans Islamist group

**NEW DELHI:** India banned the Popular Front of India (PFI), an Islamist group, and its affiliates for five years on Wednesday over alleged terrorism links, after a nationwide crackdown that saw hundreds of the organization's members arrested. The PFI denies involvement in extremist activity and says it is the subject of a "witch hunt" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government. Actions against the PFI were "a conscious attempt by the Modi government to spread Islamophobia among the public and demonize Muslims as a community", tweeted CPIML Liberation, a communist party. — AFP (See Page 7)

## \$3bn railway to link Oman, UAE

**DUBAI:** A new \$3 billion railway is to link Oman's Sohar port with Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates, officials said on Wednesday. The 303-km railway, with passenger trains travelling up to 200 km per hour, will join up with the UAE's national network that is now under construction. The joint venture between Oman Rail and the UAE's Etihad Rail was agreed during a visit by UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed to the Omani capital Muscat.

"The railway... promises huge strategic economic and social gains," Abdulrahman Salim Al-Hatmi, Group CEO of Oman Rail's parent company

Asyad, said in a statement issued by the Abu Dhabi government. Sohar, a deep-sea port on the Gulf of Oman and itself a joint venture with the port of Rotterdam, bills itself as a nexus of trade between Asia and Europe.

No finish date was given for the project. A multibillion-dollar railway linking the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries has languished since a feasibility study was approved in 2004. When completed, Etihad Rail, the UAE network, will operate 1,200 km of track connecting all seven emirates and the border of neighboring Saudi Arabia, as well as Oman.

Construction is 70 percent finished, according to its website, although the first stage - a remote line transporting sulphur through the Abu Dhabi desert - began full operations in 2016. — AFP

## Zionists kill 4 in Jenin raid

**JENIN:** A Zionist raid targeting alleged militants in a West Bank flashpoint killed four Palestinians on Wednesday, the Palestinian health ministry said, including the brother of a man blamed for a deadly attack in Tel Aviv. The violence was the latest to hit Jenin, in the north of the Zionist-occupied West Bank, an area that has seen near daily clashes between Zionist troops and Palestinian gunmen since an escalation that began in March.

Jenin deputy governor Kamal Abu al-Rub told AFP that Wednesday's

raid was "the most violent that the occupation army has carried out since the start of the year". The Palestinian health ministry recorded four dead and 44 wounded by live fire in the latest Zionist operation. Among them was Abed Hazem, whose brother Raad was named as the killer of three Zionists in a shooting spree in Tel Aviv's busy nightlife district in April.

Raad Hazem was shot dead after a massive Zionist manhunt. Zionist forces have for months been pursuing Abed and Raad's father Fathi, who attended his son's funeral on Wednesday. Mohammed Al-Haj Qasem, head of operations at Jenin's Ibn Sina Hospital, said the clashes were the worst since the facility

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## Iran strikes kill 9 in Iraqi Kurdistan

**ZARGWEZ, Iraq:** Iran launched cross-border missile and drone strikes that killed nine people in Iraq's Kurdistan region Wednesday after accusing Kurdish armed groups based there of stoking a wave of unrest that has rocked the Islamic republic. The Sept 16 death of Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa

Amini, 22, while in the custody of Iran's morality police has sparked a major wave of protests and a crackdown that has left scores of demonstrators dead over the past 12 nights.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has in recent days accused the Iraq-based Kurdish groups of "attacking and infiltrating Iran from the northwest of the country to sow insecurity and riots and spread unrest". After several earlier Iranian cross-border attacks that caused no casualties, a barrage of missiles and drones on Wednesday claimed nine lives and wounded 32, said the regional health min-

ister in Arbil, Saman al-Barazanji, while visiting some off the wounded in a hospital in the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.

"There are civilians among the victims", including one of those killed, a senior official of the Kurdistan region earlier told AFP. An AFP correspondent reported smoke billowing from locations hit, ambulances racing to the scene and residents fleeing, at Zargwez, about 15 km from Sulaimaniyah, as medics were treating the wounded. In Baghdad, Iraq's federal government called in the Iranian

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MUSCAT: Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said bids farewell to UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on the conclusion of his visit to Oman on Sept 28, 2022. — AFP



JENIN: Mourners bid farewell to Abed Hazem after he was killed in a Zionist raid on Sept 28, 2022, during his funeral in a mosque. — AFP

# Kuwait supports peaceful use of nuclear power



VIENNA: Dr. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah e-participates in the 66th IAEA General Conference of 2022. —KUNA Photo

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Dr. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah took part in the 66th IAEA general conference of 2022 in Vienna on Tuesday, giving a speech addressing both members and constituents alike. He began by thanking the members for their efforts to put together the conference and also thanked Director General of the IAEA, Rafael Grossi and his staff for their efforts to uphold such a gathering in materializing the agency's goals.

He said that Kuwait had donated \$200,000 for the final stage of the modernization of its nuclear applications laboratories in Seibersdorf, near Vienna, putting the total amount of Kuwaiti donations to the project since its launching in 2015 at \$1.7 million. In the subsequent review of the 2021 yearly report of the agency, the minister expressed Kuwait's satisfaction with the path of cooperation taken between Kuwait and the IAEA. "Cooperation has been exquisite on a wide variety of existing projects

including nuclear technical applications in the oil industry, production of genetically modified crops, freshwater aquifers and cancer treatment, including research on the feasibility of using small reactors to produce electric energy," Al-Sabah said.

He went on to say that this has encouraged Kuwait to host a number of events relating to these efforts and to plan other regional activities this year in the areas of energy, agriculture, water, soil and food. Specialists will also be working on a variety of projects, such as Zoonotic Disease Integrated Action (Zodiac) and will also be hosting training programs early next year for members of the Asian and Pacific regions, to be able to run sample tests by using the modern research vessel 'Al-Mustakshif', which is equipped with the latest research equipment.

On nuclear power and its uses, the Foreign Affairs Minister called on North Korean authorities to adhere to international treaties and pertinent Security Council resolutions, while

also urging Iran to firmly stick to the UNSC resolution 2231 of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and sign the additional protocol to help provide a more credible source of trustworthy information on the current situation of the nuclear facilities in Iran.

He reiterated Kuwait's keenness on being part of a Middle East region,

free of any Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), in adherence to the 1995 treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT), while also stressing on the importance of the Zionist entity's compliance to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapons party and subjecting all its facilities to IAEA's safeguarding protocols. —KUNA

## Of women and social conditioning

in my view



By Jethu Abraham

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We live in an age where women's issues are getting an unprecedented amount of spotlight, perhaps, for the first time in media history - ever since the suffragettes earned their spot with their cries, "votes for women" in the early twentieth century, that would go on to later echo across the world. With the onset of the digital media especially, women's issues today resonate much further than their geographical space - a reason why what happens even in digitally closeted countries almost instantaneously ends up becoming an issue of international interest.

Away from the noise and the distractions - we must not forget that in the digital world, news is news for just two seconds - so, once that fades away, are we truly capturing the essence of the issues faced by women worldwide? What is the reason behind women facing such obvious derision of their rights even now, despite the advancements, even in progressive countries? Are we conditioned to be a certain way?

Conditioning especially cultural conditioning is often strongly and mostly felt, by women, across societies. If we look at societies that function on the contemporary model or away from it, the social and cultural conditioning starts early for women - from the way they are supposed to eat, sit, talk, think and so on. As a society, we obviously need a certain level of conditioning to help smoothen the way for young ones to be able to live in societies or to be able to independently live out their lives in what may be viewed as appropriate behaviour, for the times we live in. And since mothers or women often are primary caretakers in more ways than one, a lot of the social and cultural rights and wrongs fall on women. Add to that, we not only often train ourselves in that but having young ones means that we need to train others, little minds, to follow the cue on this well-travelled road.

However, since social or cultural conditioning and its impact, as with other behavioural sciences, cannot truly be measured, we may be unaware of how much of conditioning can actually help us to be able to survive and how much of it threatens our very existence as human beings? We are, after all, individuals with our own set of fingerprints, not moulded figurines, all looking the same, produced in a mass factory. As young daughters, chances are we have heard our moms or matriarchs tell us plainly, firmly and perhaps more than once, "This is how we are", much to our annoyance then.

Yet, often with time and as we age, we do shed a lot of our conditioning, the realities of our existences speaking loudly to us, but by then it is already too late. Our bodies are no longer reliable, our minds jaded by the raw experiences we have had and so we do the safest thing we can think of - pass along the baton and tell our younger ones not to let it drop. But, perhaps, just maybe, if we leave a little more room in our homes for young minds to develop themselves as individuals, away from all that they are naturally expected to do, we would not have to witness middle-aged women having to march with placards on the streets or cut their hair off in public, in absolute frustration of never having had a space where they simply could be themselves.



KUWAIT: General Riyadh Tiwari with students.

## National Guard lauds engineer, initiates visit to schools

KUWAIT: National Guard Undersecretary, Hashem Al-Refaei, has congratulated cyber security engineer, Ahmad Ali Abdullah who was chosen as one of the best cybersecurity leaders in the Middle East for the year 2022 by the biggest assembly of global consultant companies in the field. The Undersecretary's congratulation was made on behalf of the Head of the National Guard, Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Salem Al-



KUWAIT: General Riyadh Tiwari distributes gifts to students.

Sabah, who said that the achievement was an evidence of the Guard's success and its application of the latest technologies within its cybersecurity procedures. He also said that it showcased the quality of the members of the National Guard, highlighting

their exceptional talent in many fields. Meanwhile, General Riyadh Tiwari led a team to visit schools to encourage them and to convey the regards of the management for the students, at the start of the new academic year.



KUWAIT: Hashem Al-Refaei congratulates cyber security engineer, Ahmad Ali Abdullah.

## KFF conducts metal protection workshop

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) has initiated a workshop in cooperation with Jotun, to understand how metals can be better protected, held at the Four Seasons Hotel on Wednesday. The workshop was attended by the Head of Prevention

at the KFF, Khalid Abdullah and discussed different painting techniques and the latest global features as well as the technical application procedures regarding metal structures. Moreover, they discussed the types of materials used for protection and levels of fire prevention with regards to the thickness of the structures and materials. Abdullah thanked the participants of the workshop for their efforts and added that he hoped the workshop would benefit public interest and prevent the spread of fires in metal structures. The KFF promotes the latest ways to prevent fires through lectures and workshops.



KUWAIT: KFF and Jotun officials at the jointly held workshop.



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## Local

# Kuwait celebrates 2nd anniversary of Sheikh Nawaf's proclamation as Amir

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait celebrates on Thursday, the second anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's proclamation as the country's top leader - its guide toward further development and modernization. The occasion coincides with the elections for membership to the National Assembly's 17th legislative term, in line with His Highness the Amir's visionary guidance, urging for revising the political situation in Kuwait for the betterment of the country's national interests.

His Highness the Amir, in a declaration made on his behalf by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on June 22, announced constitutional dissolution of the National Assembly (parliament) and called for general elections according to constitutional and legal schedules.

His Highness the Amir stated, "Our goal behind the constitutional dissolution is a sincere desire to see the people's wish happen - on remedying the political process path anew by a sound election of their representatives." The declaration was a follow-up to His Highness the Amir's gracious initiative, made public by the government on Nov 7, 2021, when His Highness Sheikh Nawaf practiced his constitutional right, granting amnesty for a number of prosecuted citizens. The announcement was designed to bolster cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities and bring together the potential for serving the homeland and the citizens. His Highness the Amir, on many occasions, affirmed his keenness on safeguarding the national unity as a fence that would protect Kuwait and its people in the face of perils and challenges.

Moreover, His Highness the Amir, in a statement

read by His Highness the Crown Prince on April 24, marking the last ten days of the fasting month of Ramadan, noted that reforms would require time and patience as well as the people's unity. "We will spare no efforts in protecting our dear homeland's accomplishments and we will not hesitate to take decisions to protect its security and stability in the shadow of our democracy, our constitution, traditions and norms.

The country, over the past two years, under His Highness the Amir's leadership, witnessed a follow-up of the development that had been initiated by his predecessors, while he was preoccupied with following up on issues that concerned the citizens, the legislative, executive and judicial authorities. His Highness the Amir supported all stakeholders who contributed to pushing development forward, enhancing national cadres' skills, stimulating the economy, creating investment opportunities, caring for the youth and backing the education, health and housing sectors.

His Highness the Amir also maintained the policy of coordination with Arab leaders regarding regional issues, with a special emphasis on the Palestinian cause, as a priority in the Arab world. With regards to foreign nations, His Highness the Amir adopted a policy of respecting every country's sovereignty, abiding by non-intervention in their domestic affairs, the international legitimacy, safeguarding global peace and security and settling strife among states through mutual dialogues.

Kuwait declared its allegiance to His Highness the Amir on Sept 29, 2020, succeeding the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a coro-

nation that capped Sheikh Nawaf's long record of accomplishments in the service in a chain of ranking posts. On the historic day, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf was proclaimed Kuwait's Amir in line with the constitution's 4th article of Law 4 (1964), according to which the Crown Prince would be the Amir's successor. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf took the top office following 58 years of service in many ranking positions - as Governor of Hawally, Minister of Interior and Defense, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Deputy Chief of the National Guard. The last post he had held before being proclaimed Amir was the Crown Prince's position, according to an Amiri Order by the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad on Feb 7, 2006. On Sept 30, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf took the constitutional oath as the Amir of the State of Kuwait during a National Assembly session, in line with the constitution provision 60.

Born on June 25, 1937, he was the sixth son of the late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait's 10th Amir, who ruled between 1921 and 1950. On Feb 12, 1962, he was appointed by the late Amir, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah as Hawally Governor, serving in the post until March 19, 1978, when he was named Minister of Interior during the era of the late Amir, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and remained at the helm of the Internal Affairs department until June 26, 1988, when he was appointed Minister of Defense. Following Kuwait's liberation from the flagrant Iraqi occupation in 1991, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf took the social affairs and labor portfolio on April 20, 1991, and remained in this post until Oct



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

17, 1992. On Oct 16, 1994, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf took the post of the Deputy Chief of the National Guard until July 13, 2003, when he became the Minister of Interior, serving in this department until he was declared as the Heir Apparent. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf is well known as a firm advocate of righteousness, values and unity of the Kuwaiti people and is dedicated to the service of the homeland. —KUNA

## Kuwait's Amir receives congratulations

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received letters of congratulations from the National Guard Chiefs: His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the second anniversary of his coronation as the Amir of the State of Kuwait.

His Highness the Amir sent messages in reply to the Highnesses expressing deep gratitude for their kind and brotherly sentiments on the occasion, hoping that His Almighty may lead the homeland, its security, safety and prosperity. He also said that he hoped that all efforts aimed at promoting the status of the homeland be well guided and the country's status be elevated further, also wishing to see further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Amir also wished Their Highnesses all good health and wellbeing. —KUNA

## Kuwaitis to vote in Parliament elections

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti voters will go to the polls on Thursday, across five electoral constituencies, to cast their votes and elect members of the National Assembly (Parliament) for the 17th legislative term of 2022. Voters will bear responsibility to reshape the course of the political scene and choose the right candidates that would best serve them and the nation. While being presented with the ballot paper, voters would recall His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's speech, which was delivered on his behalf by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, stressing on choosing strong, trustworthy, and candidates faithful to Almighty Allah and then his country and those who puts the interest of Kuwait and its people above everything else. Among the 305 candidates running for the National Assembly elections, 795,911 Kuwaitis will choose 50 members to represent them in the Parliament. The voting process, which takes place according to the one-vote system, will start from 8:00 am and will be held until 8:00 pm local time, after which heads of the electoral committees will announce the end of the voting process and begin the counting of votes followed by the announcement of the official results later on.

The first constituency will have 48 candidates with 100,185 eligible voters. The second constituency will also have 48 candidates competing to win the votes of 90,478 eligible voters. In the third constituency, 47 candidates will compete to win votes from 138,364 eligible voters. The fourth constituency will see 80 candidates competing to win votes out of 208,971 voters. Lastly, the fifth constituency will witness 82 candidates competing to win votes out of 257,913 voters. In terms of eligible voters, every Kuwaiti who has reached the age of 21 on polling day, after he or she is automatically registered in the voters' list, must bring his or her citizenship certificate and civil identification card to the polling station.

In the event of losing the citizenship certificate, the Ministry of Interior's General Administration of Nationality and Travel



Documents is ready to receive the voters on polling day and issue a certificate so as to enable them to vote. Voters could inquire about the polling stations via the Sahel application or visit the website of the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry's Elections Affairs Department has also allocated a hotline number (1889-888) to respond to any inquiries from voters from 8:00 am until 8:00 pm on Thursday. The 2022 elections will be held in line with Decree No. 136 of August 2, 2022 to dissolve the previous Assembly due to 'incompatibility, non-cooperation, differences, conflicts, giving priority to personal interests, including practices and behaviors that threaten national unity.' The political leadership decided 'to opt for the people of Kuwait and respect their wishes, so that they can correct the course of the political scene in a manner that achieves the country's best national interests.' The political leadership also underlined to citizens, the importance of the country's future and requirements of the next phase, to elect better representatives, to reflect their aspirations, achieve their hopes and implement their desires, expressing hope that the choice will not be based on bias to the sect, tribe or a group at the expense of the nation.

In August, a Decree No. 147 of 2022 was also issued to decide Sept 29 as a day for voting, in

which government departments would be on holiday. Preparations for voting day by the government were finalized, in order to provide the most suitable atmosphere for voters to perform their national duty to the fullest. Police forces will be deployed to facilitate and simplify the procedures during voting day. The Ministry of Education announced the designation of 123 schools as polling stations, including five schools, which were chosen as main committees, and 118 schools which were chosen as sub-committees polling stations distributed across all five constituencies. Meanwhile, Director-General of Kuwait Municipality and Chairman of the Joint Committee for the National Elections (Umma 2022) Ahmad Al-Manfouhi said that they have adopted an integrated plan to organize and facilitate the voting process in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and other bodies concerned with elections to highlight the country's democratic practices in its finest depiction. The Ministry of Information also confirmed its readiness to carry out a comprehensive and detailed coverage through a network of correspondents, five external studios and a central studio for television coverage from 8 am to 8 pm, in addition to Studio 800, to cover the vote counting hub and announce the results swiftly and accurately. —KUNA

## French Ambassador sends congratulations to His Highness the Amir

On behalf of France, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on the second anniversary of his assumption of power in the country. France and Kuwait share strong friendly and historical relationships that bind the two countries. Kuwait is an important partner for France, which attaches great importance to its balanced diplomacy and its democratic principles. During these two years, local issues, the youth and economic development, including the promotion of investment opportunities have been at the heart of His Highness the Amir's concerns. We look forward to further strengthening and deepening our bilateral cooperation for the benefit of our two countries. We are convinced that the new elections and a new government will give a new impetus towards a prosperous and stable Kuwait. On this occasion, I wish the best of success and health to His Highness the Amir, peace and well-being to the people of Kuwait.



Anne Claire Legendre  
Ambassador of France to Kuwait

## Embassy of Japan holds event for JKA

**KUWAIT:** The Embassy of Japan held a gathering party with Japan Karate Association (JKA) Kuwait at the Ambassador's residence. In his opening remarks, His Excellency Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait, Morino Yasunari congratulated JKA Kuwait on having the training camp and championship this year, after a long suspension due to the pandemic.

Yasunari also appreciated the cooperation between OKUMA Koichiro, a Karate instructor and the JKA HQ and JKA Kuwait. He also expressed his delight on seeing many Karate players in Kuwait, especially from the younger generation, who are dedicated to practicing the sport which originated in Japan.

Ali Khuraibat, General Manager of JKA Kuwait, mentioned in his speech that Karate is not a martial art for fighting with others but for fighting with the negativity in oneself, adding that Karate trainings help to improve the calmness in one's mind as well as the self-discipline.



KUWAIT: Morino Yasunari with JKA officials and participants at the event.

## News in brief

## Voters with no original IDs can vote with temporary certificates

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Interior declared on Wednesday that voters in the National Assembly 2022 elections must present an original identity card or the substitute temporary identification paper used in the polls, to be able to vote in the upcoming elections. In a statement, the MoI said that the voters who lost their IDs should apply at the office of the Directorate General of Citizenship and Passports on the day of the election to obtain the certificate, so that they may be admitted at the ballot stations and allowed to cast their votes. The temporary certificate can be obtained at the citizenship department in Al-Dajeej district. An applicant must present an ID card and a copy, in addition to two close-up photos. Sahel and the MoI websites have also provided various information needed for the voters. The election affairs administration can be contacted on the phone number 1889888 for any inquiry. —KUNA

## Kuwait tops Arab investments in Jordan

**JORDAN:** Kuwaiti investments in Jordan have reached \$18 billion, making Kuwait the biggest Arab country to invest in the Hashemite Kingdom, Kuwaiti Ambassador in Amman, Aziz Al-Daihani said. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of his participation in the Gulf-Jordanian economic forum in Amman, Al-Daihani hailed the deeply-rooted ties between the two Arab countries and added that he hoped the forum would help strengthen partnerships between the private sectors in Kuwait and Jordan respectively. The Kuwaiti envoy also noted that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) investments in Jordan were distributed across all economic and service sectors and significantly contributed to the Jordanian economy in creating new job openings for Jordanians. Earlier, Secretary General of the GCC, Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf stated that the size of trade exchange between GCC countries and Jordan during 2013-2020 reached \$57 billion. —KUNA

## Stateless ID regulation exempted across MoE, MoH and MoHE

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet has made a decision to allow stateless residents who have expired IDs to finish their work in the education ministry, health ministry and the higher education ministry. The decision was made for those stateless residents whose identification cards have expired and are part of the central system but continue to work in the three ministries, informed sources told Kuwait Times.

## Interior and Commerce ministries to supervise car rental offices

**KUWAIT:** A joint committee has been formed by the interior and commerce ministry to supervise car rental offices in all governorates of the country. The committee will ensure that these offices are following rules and regulations of the ministries and collaborate with the government entities for consumer protection and the insurance sectors. The committee is planning to perform detailed inspection campaigns across all governorates.

## Security committee plans to fix issues with taxis

**KUWAIT:** The ministerial security committee has announced plans to look into suggestions regarding the taxi situation in Kuwait and the noticeable increase in licensing that has been issued to them as well as its effects on traffic and the demographic imbalance. "The suggestion enlisted is part of a main report made by the traffic higher council and has gained the approval from the management in the interior ministry. We are waiting for a security committee to look into the plans for confirmation as it is connected to many other sectors such as transportation and investment," sources told Kuwait Times.

"The report also requires limiting taxi jobs to retired Kuwaitis, stateless residents, children of Kuwaiti mothers and GCC residents only, as there is a high demand for this job. Moreover, retired Kuwaitis will be allowed to drive their taxis with individual licenses without having to work for a taxi company," sources added.

Meanwhile, sources also said that, "The taxi market needs to be organized as soon as possible as the large number of taxis causes disturbance to traffic as there are more than 20,000 taxi vehicles, with many violations reported against them." "More than 20,000 expatriates currently work as taxi drivers in specific areas which is causing a disturbance in residential areas as well, as it has a negative impact on the environment due to their numbers and the old vehicles that they drive," sources added.

Sources also said that, "licenses for expatriate taxis will not be given to new arrivals and will instead be replaced with retired Kuwaitis, stateless residents, children of Kuwaiti mothers and GCC nationals, as they are already in the country which will be positive for the population demographic." "The suggestion will not hurt businessmen who run taxi agencies because it does not mean the cancellation of their services, but they will continue to function within the same regulations but with the rule of limiting the number of taxis per company," sources added.

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: An aerial view of the Gulf Road. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Price of staying fit high in Kuwait

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Changes in people's lifestyles in the past years made them decide to become healthier and exercise more to maintain a healthier body and get into better shape. Many of them, especially the youth, have joined sports clubs and gyms, which have mushroomed. But the cost of membership at gyms and sports clubs is highly overrated.

Prices that increased after the pandemic and due to inflation were already high. The average charges at mid-level women's gyms range are already seen as unaffordable, and it does not include specific classes and activities at the gyms. Some of these sports clubs requires members to pay extra charges to access some classes, whose per session charges are still considered expensive.

A women's gym, whose monthly membership charges are on the higher range told Kuwait Times that these prices match the services they provide, such as modern sports machines, experienced trainers, cleaning services, lockers and all other

services members need. Regarding extra charges, the gym said they don't add any extra charges, but have personal trainers whose per hour charge is considered expensive. So, the total charges per month with four personal training classes will be costly for an average person. The customer may probably need more than four sessions if she needs to lose weight, for example. Other women's gyms said their monthly membership is more expensive if the customer pays monthly and does not take a 3-month package at least. If the customer skips any day under any circumstance, she will lose that day from her balance.

Mona Ahmad told Kuwait Times the gym has become an essential routine in her life, and she is not willing to stop frequenting it. However, the cost of the gym places financial pressure on her due to the high prices that are unacceptable. She hoped the authorities' set laws that legislate the clubs' prices and curb overpricing that has become illogical, especially at ladies' gyms.

Abeer Al-Abdullah said women's gyms are not only overpriced, but also provide fewer services



compared to men's gyms, adding they are exploiting women because they don't have other options, which will force them to pay higher prices. She claimed gyms work hand in glove to keep prices high. The gap between the prices of men's and women's gyms is very wide. The same mid-level gym that charges women with a high-rate costs lesser for men.

## Kuwait Olympic Committee celebrates 65 years

**KUWAIT:** Since its establishment six decades ago, the Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC) has played a key role in developing local sports and has offered its services to the Olympic movement in the country, in accordance with the principles of the Olympic charter. KOC, which is celebrating its 65th anniversary, was established on Sept 28, 1958 by four local unions. Since then, it has always remained keen to support Kuwaiti athletes and their ambition to take part in Olympic competitions. The organization has also followed up on the latest international sports developments and has helped to organize pioneer programs and initiatives.

The KOC was established after recommendations were made by local sports bodies, namely the football, volleyball and handball unions, as they

found a need for an umbrella sports institution that monitored their affairs and activities especially during Olympic tournaments. Its first board of directors was headed by Jassem Al-Qitami, and the team was involved in boosting and enhancing relations with international sports institutions and entities. The national committee, which joined the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1966 and the Arab Federation for Sports in 1974, are founding members of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), which was established upon Kuwait's recommendation in 1982 by its president at the time, the late Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, the KOC Chairman, Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, praised the roles of the KOC heads and members in developing the local sports scenario. He credited their efforts to Kuwait's participation in international sports events and championships abroad. KOC is working to spread the values adopted in the Olympic games like competitive spirit, respect, determination, bravery, unity, solidarity, equality, sustainability, as well as neglecting all forms of discrimination, he said. It also calls for peace and women's participation in

sports and sheds light on environmental issues, he added. KOC, which cooperates with governmental and non-governmental institutions, is keen on maintaining good ties with such institutions to best serve Kuwaiti athletes, he added.

Al-Sabah also said that KOC works to overcome obstacles for Kuwaiti athletes in their competitions and encourage the Olympic spirit, while it does not take part in any activity contradicting with the Olympic charter, which, he added, is considered as the basis of the Olympic games. He expressed his deepest thanks and gratitude to the country's wise political leaders for their constant concern and care for the young generation, which was reflected in the many victories that the country gained over the years. He also hailed the roles of comprehensive and specialized local sports unions and clubs for training youngsters of various ages and offering support for them at all times. The first participation of the KOC in the international Olympic tournament was in Tokyo, Japan, in 1964 with only administrative members. Actual participation of Kuwaiti athletes in an Olympic championship came later in the games held in Mexico City, four years later. —KUNA

## Khalid Al-Saleh wins award for voluntary service in Riyadh

**KUWAIT:** Dr Khalid A. Al-Saleh, Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Society for Smoking and Cancer Prevention (KSCPC) and Chairman of Cancer Patients Fund was proud of the award the society received (the pioneer project in the voluntary field in Kuwait) at the GCC Social Affairs Ministers meeting in Riyadh. Dr Al-Saleh said that the fund's support for patients began in 1994 in order to reduce the burden of cancer on patients and their families. He said that the number of cancer patients according to recent statistics is over 2,800 patients annually, half of whom are residents. Al-Saleh said the aid covers monthly payments for patients whose files are received from KCCC as well as payment for the cost of examinations and x-rays for poor patients. The fund also helps patients in advanced cancer stages to travel to their country and bear the cost of travelling and hands the patient money to help him while in his country. He said the fund organized awareness trips outside Kuwait to train people on early cancer detection, in addition to the treatment of cancer patients in other countries, as was proved successful in Yemen, Sudan and Mauritania. The fund also built Al-Israa project for tumors treatment in Nablus in Palestine.



RIYADH: Dr Khalid A. Al-Saleh receives the award for voluntary service at the GCC Ministers Meeting.



Body of missing ski mountaineer found in Nepal

## Disappearing Bulgarians: Despair as young leave



PUNTA GORDA, United States: A sail boat lies on the bottom of Charlotte Harbor as the tide retreats ahead of Hurricane Ian in Punta Gorda, Florida on September 28, 2022. —AFP

# Hurricane Ian nears Category 5

## 'Conditions along Florida coast were rapidly deteriorating'

**PORT CHARLOTTE, United States:** Hurricane Ian intensified to just shy of catastrophic Category 5 strength Wednesday as its heavy winds began pummeling the US state of Florida, with forecasters warning of life-threatening storm surges after leaving millions without power in Cuba.

Mandatory evacuation orders had been issued in a dozen coastal Florida counties, with voluntary evacuation recommended in several others, according to the state's emergency officials as they girded for a potentially historic storm.

In a pre-dawn advisory the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said "Ian has strengthened into an extremely dangerous Category 4 hurricane," warning later of "catastrophic storm surge, winds, and flooding."

At 7:00 am (1100 GMT) it said "data from a Hurricane Hunter aircraft indicate that maximum sustained winds have increased to near 155 miles (250 kilometers) per hour"—just shy of Category 5, the strongest category on the Saffir-Simpson scale.

"This is going to be a nasty, nasty day, two days," Governor Ron DeSantis said early Wednesday as he warned residents of a "rough stretch" ahead for Florida. "It could make landfall as a Category 5, but clearly this is a very powerful major hurricane that's going to have major impacts, both on... southwest

Florida but as it continues to work through the state."

The NHC for its part said Ian was "rapidly intensifying," while conditions along the Florida coast were "rapidly deteriorating." Tropical storm-strength winds were already battering the Florida Keys, as the storm was expected to make landfall later Wednesday near Fort Myers and Port Charlotte, along the state's west coast, before moving across central Florida and emerging in the Atlantic Ocean by late Thursday.

With up to two feet (61 centimeters) of rain expected to fall on parts of the so-called Sunshine State, and a storm surge that could reach devastating levels of 12 to 16 feet (3.6 to 4.9 meters) above ground, authorities were warning of catastrophic conditions.

"This is a life-threatening situation," the NHC warned. DeSantis said on Tuesday night that there had already been at least two "radar-indicated tornadoes" in the state, and warned those in areas projected to be hit hardest that their "time to evacuate is coming to an end."

Calls to heed evacuation warnings were echoed by US President Joe Biden, who earlier said Ian "could be a very severe hurricane, life-threatening and devastating in its impact." White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said Biden had spoken

with DeSantis—a potential 2024 election challenger—Tuesday evening to discuss storm preparations.

### Widespread blackout

Ian plunged all of Cuba into darkness on Tuesday after battering the country's west as a Category 3 for more than five hours before moving back out over the Gulf of Mexico, the Insmet meteorological institute said.

The storm damaged Cuba's power network and left the island "without electrical service," state electricity company Union Electrica said. Only the few people with gasoline-powered generators had access to electricity on the island of more than 11 million people. Others had to make do with flashlights or candles at home, and lit their way with cell phones as they walked the streets.

In the western city of Pinar del Rio, AFP footage showed downed power lines, flooded streets and damaged rooftops. "Desolation and destruction. These are terrifying hours. Nothing is left here," a 70-year-old resident of the city was quoted as saying in a social media post by his journalist son, Lazaro Manuel Alonso.

About 40,000 people were evacuated across Pinar del Rio province, which bore the brunt of the storm, local authorities said. Cuban residents

described "destruction" and posted images on social media of flooded streets and felled trees. At least two people died in Pinar del Rio province, Cuban state media reported. In Consolacion del Sur, southwest of Havana, 65-year-old Caridad Fernandez said her roof was seriously damaged and water came through her front door. "Everything we have is damaged," she said. "But we'll get through this, we'll just keep moving forwards."

### 'Life and death'

In the US, the Pentagon said 3,200 national guardsmen had been called up in Florida, with another 1,800 on the way. Authorities in several municipalities were distributing sandbags to help residents protect their homes from flooding.

Tampa International Airport suspended operations from Tuesday at 5 pm. NASA, on the state's east coast, also took precautions, rolling back its massive Moon rocket into a storage hanger for protection. Like DeSantis, FEMA administrator Deanne Criswell highlighted the danger of storm surge, saying it was the agency's "biggest concern."

"If people are told to evacuate by their local officials, please listen to them. The decision you choose to make may be the difference between life and death," she said. —AFP

## Pope to visit Bahrain in November

**VATICAN CITY, Holy See:** Pope Francis will in November visit Bahrain, home to the biggest Catholic church in the Arabian peninsula, the Vatican said Wednesday. Francis, 85, will be the first pope ever to visit the majority-Muslim Persian Gulf country, according to Vatican News.

He has been under doctor's orders to slow down, after suffering from a painful knee that has forced him to use a wheelchair and cancel some events. Francis will visit the capital of Manama and city of Awali during the November 3 to 6 trip, and will attend the "Bahrain Forum for Dialogue: East and West for Human Coexistence".

Further details of the visit—the 39th international trip of Francis's papacy—will be released at a later date. But the pontiff is likely to visit the cavernous Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, in Awali, which opened its doors last year.



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis waves as the popemobile car drives down St. Peter's basilica at the end of the weekly general audience on September 28, 2022 at St. Peter's square in The Vatican. — AFP

The modern-style church lies about a mile (1.6 kilometres) from a large mosque and a stone's throw from an oil well, in the south of the state. It was built to serve the country's 80,000 or so Catholics, mainly workers from Asia, mostly India and the Philippines.

The pontiff received Bahrain's King Hamad bin

Isa al-Khalifa at the Vatican in 2014. The pair discussed "peace and stability in the Middle East" and the Christian community's positive contribution to the country, the Holy See said at the time.

The trip comes on the back of another journey to a Muslim-majority country, following Francis's visit to Kazakhstan earlier this month. — AFP

## Late shah's son hails 'revolution for and by women'

**WASHINGTON:** The son of the late shah hailed Iran's mass protests as a landmark revolution by women and urged the world to add to the pressure on the clerical leadership. Reza Pahlavi, whose father was toppled in the Islamic Revolution of 1979, called for greater preparation for a future Iranian system that is secular and democratic.

"It is truly in modern times, in my opinion, the first revolution for the women, by the women—with the support of the Iranian men, sons, brothers and fathers," Pahlavi, who lives in exile in the Washington area, told AFP.

"It has come to the point, as the Spaniards would say, basta—we've had enough." Demonstrations have swarmed major cities, with dozens killed, since 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died on September 16 in the custody of Iran's notorious morality police, allegedly for breaching the strict requirements that women wear headscarves in public.

While also condemning discrimination against minorities community, Pahlavi said, "The symbolism of today's repression is represented by women." "I think most Iranian women, when they look at the freedoms that women in the free world experience and exercise, are asking for the very same rights for themselves," he said.

His grandfather, Reza Pahlavi, banned all Islamic veils in 1936 as part of a Westernization drive inspired by neighboring Turkey. The last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, let the veil be a choice—which ended when the Islamic republic imposed requirements for women's "modesty" in public.

Pahlavi, the father of three daughters, said that Iranian society has come a long way from the days of "male chauvinism" and that women's choices should be respected. "Women may decide to wear or not wear the veil. But it ought to be a choice, a free choice, not imposed for ideological or religious reasons," he said. — AFP

## Typhoon Noru tears across Vietnam, Laos

**DANANG, Vietnam:** Typhoon Noru tore roofs from homes and caused power outages across central Vietnam Wednesday, with hundreds of thousands of people taking refuge, after the storm claimed at least 10 lives in the Philippines.

In Danang, Vietnam's third-largest city, high-rise buildings shook as the typhoon made landfall in the early hours of Wednesday, bringing winds of up to around 120 kilometres (75 miles) per hour, according to the national forecaster.

More than 300,000 people in Vietnam hunkered down in shelters overnight after experts predicted the storm would be one of the biggest to ever hit the country. By Wednesday evening, it weakened to a tropical storm as it crossed into southern Laos,

but forecasters in Vietnam warned of landslides and serious flooding in the typhoon's wake.

The defence ministry has mobilised around 40,000 soldiers and 200,000 militia members, equipped with armoured vehicles and boats in preparation for rescue and relief operations, state media said.

In the tourist city of Hoi An, the Hoai River was close to bursting its banks, while the ground was littered with metal roof sheeting and fallen trees that had damaged cars and blocked roads. Several streets in the old town were under water. "The typhoon was terrible last night. I could not sleep as the wind was so strong and loud," resident Nguyen Thi Hien told AFP. Around 300 houses in the coastal province of Quang Tri had their roofs blown off on Tuesday as the wind began picking up speed. "I heard the sound of fallen trees and signboards outside. I was scared. But we were prepared so luckily the losses were not that bad." Residents rushed to clean up the debris early on Wednesday, with some shops already open and tourists walking the streets, taking pictures of the floodwater. — AFP



HOI AN, Vietnam: A man clears fallen trees on a flooded street after Typhoon Noru made landfall in Hoi An, Vietnam's Quang Nam Province on September 28, 2022. — AFP

## International

# Disappearing Bulgarians: Despair as young leave

‘The explanation is simple — no employment, no young people, no babies’

**GABROVO, Bulgaria:** Empty corridors and only eight babies in their cribs. The maternity ward in the city of Gabrovo tells you everything you need to know about the drastic drop in the birth rate in Bulgaria. “There are not many people of childbearing age left around here. The young left looking for jobs in the big cities or abroad,” paediatrician Bistra Kamburova, 68, told AFP.

Gabrovo, huddled at the foot of the Balkan mountains, is symbolic of the population decline in the European Union’s poorest member. Once known as the “Bulgarian Manchester” for its booming industry, the town has lost half its people since 1985.

It is a familiar story across the country. Corruption, lack of prospects and a spiral of political crises that will see Bulgarians vote Sunday in their fourth general election in 18 months, have chased its disillusioned young people away.

Analysts predict the election will once again return a fragmented parliament with no party able to cobble together a strong coalition. Bulgaria has lost a tenth of its population in a decade, making it one of the world’s fastest shrinking nations. It now has 6.52 million people compared to close to 9.0 million inhabitants in 1989. And a quarter of the population is aged 65 or over.

## ‘It’s a desert’

Gabrovo’s industries employed thousands of workers during communism, before bankruptcies and pri-

vatizations laid the factories bare. Now it has become the region with the lowest birth rate and the highest number of almost uninhabited villages in the country.

“I started working here in 1985. At that time the number of births was still quite high—around 1,000 babies per year,” said Dr Kamburova, whose two grown-up sons are among those who have left Gabrovo.

“But the factories were working, working, working,” she added. Last year only 263 babies were born in the Gabrovo region and looked after by the energetic paediatrician, who works on long after her retirement age for “miserable pay”. “The explanation is simple—no employment, no young people, no babies,” said midwife Mariana Varbanova.

Many of those who remain are keen to leave. “In Gabrovo, you enjoy the peace and quiet and the fresh air, but it’s a desert where you only meet elderly people,” said Hristiana Krasteva, a 23-year-old speech therapist, who recently gave birth to a baby girl.

Her husband, who works as a carpenter, is getting ready to leave for Britain in search of a better future for his family.

## ‘Grandchildren for rent’

In front of the first public school in Bulgaria, founded in Gabrovo in 1835, high school student Ivo Dimitrov also wants to leave for western Europe to get “quality education and new horizons. “It’s chaos here,” he said,

## Harsh conditions aggravate Gaza burn injuries

**GAZA:** With bandages wrapped around his head and body, Attia al-Sawafiri was lying in the burns unit of a Gaza hospital, waiting for his first skin graft. The 50-year-old Palestinian has suffered chemical burn injuries not as a result of cross-border fighting, but while trying to unblock his drains—a common problem in the Gaza Strip, where many people live in cramped housing with dilapidated infrastructure. The harsh living conditions and unsafe energy supplies in the Palestinian enclave, blockaded by Zionist entity for 15 years, are contributing to the thousands of burn injuries requiring treatment each year. At Gaza City’s Shifa hospital, Sawafiri recalled how he tried to clear the drains at home with caustic soda and hot water.

“But “then the soda spread and burnt my head, my hands and my legs”. The plight of Gaza’s burns patients is compounded by shortages of medical equipment and supplies such as artificial skin. A four-year-old boy who dropped a lighter on spilled fuel, setting it ablaze, was calling feebly for his mother as he was wheeled out of the operating theatre at Shifa. “We’ve performed a lot of surgeries on this boy,” said Dr Jamal al-Assar, a burns specialist at the hospital, Gaza’s largest health centre. Medics, he said, had to clean the child’s wounds and apply skin grafts in multiple stages “because it’s not possible to do it all at once due to the lack of a skin bank”.

Some cases appear linked to a sense of hopelessness felt by many in Gaza, which has been under an Zionist-led blockade since 2007 when Islamist group Hamas took pow-

many as 305 candidates, including 22 women, are contesting the 50-seat parliament. They include 43 members of the dissolved Assembly and another 33 ex-MPs of previous assemblies.

Kuwait, with a native population of nearly 1.5 million, has around 770,000 eligible voters, a 35 percent jump from the Dec 2020 elections, mainly due to a government decision to allow residents of all new residential areas to vote. About 51.2 percent of the voters are women. Kuwait is divided into five electoral constituencies, with each district electing 10 MPs for the 50-member Assembly. Ballots open at 8.00 am and close 12 hours later. Counting of votes is still manual in Kuwait, so results are expected in the early hours of Friday.



**JENIN:** Palestinian protesters sit near burning tyres amid clashes with Zionist security forces in the city of Hebron in the occupied West Bank, on September 28, 2022. — AFP

Authority, in accordance with terms set out in the 1994 Oslo peace accords. Analysts have warned that the dramatic uptick in Zionist West Bank raids is further weakening the unpopular Palestinian Authority, with Palestinians increasingly condemning president Mahmoud Abbas’s administration for its security cooperation with the Zionist entity.

Following the latest Jenin unrest, Abbas’ spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeina accused the Zionist entity of “tampering with security and stability through pursuing a policy of escalation,” in a statement published by the official Palestinian news agency, Wafa. The European Union, in a tweet, said it was “alarmed by the spike in violence today in Jenin following the (Zionist) incursions”. — AFP



**GABROVO, Bulgaria:** A nurse taking care of a newborn boy in front of his mother in the maternity ward in the Gabrovo hospital. — AFP

denouncing the negligence of the political class.

Despite aid from Brussels since Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007 to help development, transport and tourism projects, Gabrovo needs fewer and fewer workers. “It will take time to reverse the demographic trend,” analyst Adrian Nikolov from the Sofia-based

Institute for Market Economy told AFP.

Only 35 people live in the picturesque 17th-century village of Zaya some 25 kilometres from Gabrovo. Apart from the locals, pensioners from France, Britain, Belgium, Russia, Italy and other countries have settled here attracted by the cheaper cost of living. — AFP

## Cyber warfare rife in Ukraine

**PARIS:** Hackings, network sabotage and other cyber warfare campaigns are being intensely deployed by both sides as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine grinds on, though the covert operations have not proved decisive on the battlefield—at least so far.

Western allies initially feared a tsunami of cyberattacks against Ukraine’s military command and critical infrastructure, hindering its ability to resist the Russian forces pouring across its borders. As of mid-September, the Cyber Peace Institute, an NGO based in Switzerland, counted nearly 450 attacks—roughly 12 a week—carried out by 57 different entities on either side since the invasion was launched in February.

Yet with European and US help, Kyiv has largely withstood the high-tech onslaught. “Large-scale cyberattacks have indeed occurred, but it’s generally agreed that they have clearly failed to produce the ‘shock and awe’ effect some predicted,” according to Alexis Rapin, a researcher at the University of Quebec.

Writing for the strategic studies site Le Rubicon, he said the most devastating attacks often take months or even years to plan and execute, “making it very difficult to synchronise them with a conventional military campaign.” Another factor may be the massive help Ukraine has had from its allies, including software and expertise to protect its systems as well as counterattacks that may be hampering Moscow’s cyber strategy. — AFP



**GAZA CITY:** Four-year-old Yasser Khila is comforted with a lollipop after a dressing was applied to his wounds from spilled hot stew, at a clinic run by the charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) in Gaza City. — AFP

er. The restrictions on Gaza’s 2.3 million people, which Zionist entity says are necessary to contain militant groups, have crippled the economy and limited the movement of people and goods. One of the hospital’s patients was a 20-year-old man who survived a suicide attempt two months ago in which he had doused himself in fuel and set it on fire. He lay in bed with a pained expression while holding aloft his bandaged arms. Dr Medhat Saidam, another burns expert, said his department is seeing an increasing number

of such suicide attempts, which are “linked to financial problems”. Many injuries are the result of Gaza’s precarious power supply, including utility workers hit by power surges and children who touch unsafe outlets and appliances, said Dr Assar. In the past, Gaza had suffered “a catastrophe from candles” used for lighting during power outages, with entire families being killed in fires, Saidam explained. But the electricity supply has become more stable and people rely less on unsafe generators and candles. — AFP

## Kuwaitis vote in ‘election of hope’...

Continued from Page 1

two occasions, reflecting high instability in the country, which has a sovereign wealth fund worth some \$700 billion. Since 2011, Kuwait changed three prime ministers, all senior members of the ruling family, and five Cabinets were formed since Dec 2019, in addition to many Cabinet reshuffles. As

## Zionists kill 4 in Jenin...

Continued from Page 1

opened around two years ago. “It’s not only the number of deaths but those wounded and their gravity,” he told AFP.

Hundreds gathered for funerals in Jenin and its refugee camp later on Wednesday. At a mosque in the camp, hundreds mourned Abed Hazem, whose body was wrapped in a Palestinian flag, while young men kissed his forehead. Earlier this month, Zionist security forces destroyed the home of Hazem’s brother Raad, whose image is carried on posters in the camp glorifying him as a “lion”. “We’re not afraid of anything,” said a young Palestinian man, who requested anonymity due to security concerns. “If (Zionists) want an escalation, we are ready to face them,” he added.

Since March, the Zionist entity has launched hundreds of operations in the northern West Bank in pursuit of alleged militants, including in Jenin and nearby Nablus. The raids have sparked clashes that have killed dozens of Palestinians, including fighters. Palestinian-American reporter Shireen Abu Akleh was shot dead in Jenin while covering a Zionist military raid in May.

The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967 but parts of the territory are nominally controlled by the Palestinian

## Iran strikes kill 9 in Iraqi...

Continued from Page 1

ambassador to protest the deadly strikes, while the UN mission in Iraq deplored the attack, saying “rocket diplomacy is a reckless act with devastating consequences”. “These attacks need to cease immediately,” the UN mission said on Twitter.

Other strikes Wednesday destroyed buildings around Zargzew, where several exiled leftwing Iranian Kurdish parties maintain offices. “The area where we are has been hit by 10 drone strikes,” Atta Nasser, an official from Komala, one exiled Iranian group, told AFP, blaming Iran for the strikes. “The headquarters of the Kurdistan Freedom Party has been hit by Iranian strikes,” Hussein Yazdan, an official from the party, told AFP, about the site in the Sherawa region, south of Arbil.

Another group, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, said its bases and headquarters in Koysinjaq, east of Arbil, were struck by “missiles and drones”. “These cowardly attacks are occurring at a time when the terrorist regime of Iran is unable to crack down on ongoing protests inside and silence the Kurdish and Iranian peoples’ civil resistance,” it tweeted.

Amini, 22, died in Tehran on Sept 16, three days after being arrested for allegedly violating Iran’s strict dress code for women that demands they wear hijab headscarves and modest clothes. Her death sparked Iran’s biggest protests in almost three years and a crackdown that has killed at least 76 people, according to the Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights, or “around 60”, according to Iran’s semi-official Fars news agency.

Protests have rocked especially Kurdish communities in western Iran that share strong connections with Kurdish-inhabited areas of Iraq. Many Iranian Kurds cross the border into Iraq to find work, due to a biting economic crisis in Iran driven in large part by US sanctions. Iranian state television had said Sunday about earlier attacks that the “Revolutionary Guards targeted the headquarters of several separatist terrorist groups in northern Iraq with missiles and precision-guided attack drones”.

Two days later the Guards’ General Abbas Nilforoushan, deputy for operations, said “the establishment of a base by the enemies of the Islamic Revolution in this region is not acceptable,” Tasnim news agency reported. “For some time now, counter-revolutionary elements have been attacking and infiltrating Iran from the northwest of the country to sow insecurity and riots and spread unrest.” He added that several of “these anti-revolutionary elements were arrested during some riots in the northwest (of Iran), so we had to defend ourselves, react and bomb the surroundings of the border strip.” — AFP



**ARBIL, Iraq:** A bloodstained ambulance is pictured outside a hospital following strikes by Iran on the village of Altun Kupri in Iraq’s autonomous Kurdistan region on Sept 28, 2022. — AFP

## International

# North Korea fires two ballistic missiles on eve of Harris trip

## Japan's coast guard also identified a possible ballistic missile launch

SEOUL: North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles on Wednesday, Seoul's military said, just days after Pyongyang's last test and ahead of a visit to South Korea by US Vice President Kamala Harris. The launches, part of a record-breaking blitz of weapons tests this year by North Korea, came after Seoul's spy agency warned that Pyongyang was close to conducting another nuclear test.

South Korea's military said it had "detected two short-range ballistic missiles fired from the Sunan area in Pyongyang". "Our military has reinforced monitoring and surveillance and is maintaining utmost readiness in close coordination with the United States," Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.



### Record-breaking blitz of weapons tests this year

Japan's coast guard also identified a possible ballistic missile launch, citing information from Tokyo's defence ministry, and warned ships to be aware. The latest launch comes after North Korea test-fired a short-range ballistic missile on Sunday. Harris is due to arrive in Seoul on Thursday for a brief visit, during which she will go to the heavily fortified border between North and South Korea.

The White House has said Harris' visit intends to underscore the importance of the alliance with Seoul. Washington is Seoul's key security ally and stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea to help protect it from the North.

#### 'Harbinger'

South Korean and US officials have been warning for months that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is preparing to conduct another nuclear test. Earlier Wednesday, Seoul's spy agency said Pyongyang appeared to have completed "a third tunnel at its Punggye-ri nuclear site", MP Yoo Sang-bum told



SEOUL, South Korea: People watch a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul. — AFP

reporters after a briefing from Seoul's National Intelligence Service.

Pyongyang is likely to choose the window between "China's upcoming Communist Party Congress on October 16 and the midterm elections in the United States on November 7" for its next nuclear test, Yoo said.

The isolated regime has tested nuclear weapons six times since 2006. Its last and most powerful one in 2017 — which Pyongyang claimed was a hydrogen bomb — had an estimated yield of 250 kilotons. Seoul has also detected signs the North is preparing to fire a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), the president's office said Saturday, a weapon Pyongyang last tested in May.

"Today's launch makes it clear the North is

attempting to gain an upper hand on the peninsula with a nuclear arsenal at its disposal," Kim Jong-dae of the Yonsei Institute for North Korean Studies told AFP.

The repeated tests are "a harbinger of Pyongyang's aggressive posturing to come next month — with missile launches and a possible nuclear test", he added. Last week the nuclear-powered USS Ronald Reagan conducted joint drills with South Korea's navy in waters off the Korean peninsula.

South Korea's President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, has vowed to beef up joint military exercises with the United States after years of failed diplomacy with North Korea under his predecessor.

The two countries have long carried out joint exercises, which they insist are purely defensive but North Korea sees them as rehearsals for an invasion. — AFP

## Body of missing ski mountaineer found in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Nepal: The body of top US ski mountaineer Hilarie Nelson was retrieved from the Himalayas by a search team on Wednesday, two days after she disappeared on the slopes of Nepal's Manaslu peak. Nelson slipped and went missing while skiing down the world's eighth-highest mountain after a successful summit with her partner Jim Morrison on Monday. Morrison led the search operations and had left Wednesday morning on a helicopter to resume efforts to locate her at an elevation of around 6,200 metres (20,000 feet).

"They returned to the same area and found her body. They have now flown to Kathmandu," Jiban Ghimire of Shangri-La Nepal Trek, which organised the expedition, told AFP. Nelson, 49, is described by her sponsor, The North Face, as "the most prolific ski mountaineer of her generation".

A decade ago, she became the first woman to summit both the highest mountain in the world, Everest, and the adjacent Lhotse peak within the span of 24 hours. She returned to Lhotse and made the first ski descent of the mountain in 2018, which earned her the National Geographic Adventurer of the Year award.



KATHMANDU, Nepal: People remove the body of US ski mountaineer Hilarie Nelson from a helicopter after it was airlifted following her recovery from Mount Manaslu, in Kathmandu on September 28, 2022. — AFP

## India bans Islamist group for five years

NEW DELHI: India banned an Islamist group and its affiliates for five years on Wednesday over alleged terrorism links, after a nationwide crackdown that saw hundreds of the organisation's members arrested.

A government notice said the Popular Front of India (PFI) had been outlawed for its ties to extremist organisations, including the Islamic State group, and for violent attacks attributed to its members. The PFI denies involvement in extremist

activity and says it is the subject of a "witch hunt" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government.

Police have arrested more than 300 PFI cadres in raids across the country since Friday. A home affairs ministry statement announcing the ban outlined a laundry list of charges accusing the group of violent and subversive activities.

Members had engaged in "cold-blooded killings of persons associated with organisations espousing other faiths, obtaining explosives to target prominent people and places and destruction of public property", Wednesday's notice said.

The ministry said PFI members had been responsible for at least 10 murders in southern India since 2016 and accused the group of "pursuing a secret agenda" to radicalise society and undermine democracy.

Hardline Hindu groups have long campaigned for

## Iranian drones bring back fear for Ukrainians

ODESSA: In Ukraine's port city of Odessa, residents have recently found themselves hiding not from the thunder of rocket attacks but from the whir of buzzing Iranian drones in the sky. The machines have been playing an important role since Russia invaded seven months ago — forming part of reconnaissance operations, missile firings or bomb drops.

Awakened with a start on Saturday morning by a roar from the sky, Maryna Kondratieva ran to hide in the cellar with her two young children, fearing the worst. "I understand now that everything can change in five minutes," Kondratieva, who lives in a well-to-do part of the city and whose terrace overlooks the Black Sea, told AFP.

Odessa — the 'capital' of the southwest and Ukraine's main port — had seemed largely safe from Moscow, whose troops failed to take it at the beginning of the war. The sandbags and other checkpoints that had blighted the old town have largely been removed and bombings became less frequent.

But an increasing number of drones taking to the sky has made city residents fear a return to darker days. In a video filmed by Kondratieva's husband, shown to AFP, a drone continues its flight around their home, accompanied by the sound of heavy gunfire.

Kondratieva only recently returned to Ukraine from Cyprus after taking her five- and six-year olds to seek refuge with her in-laws. The successful counter-offensive by Kyiv forces in the northeast, more sluggish in the south, had restored hope.

Hearing the "buzzing noise around the house" of the drone made her feel that the war had once again come extremely close to home.

#### 'Low' effectiveness

Since September 13, when Kyiv says it shot down its first Iranian drone, about "two dozen" have been spotted in southern Ukraine, military spokeswoman Nataliya Houmeniouk told AFP. Half of them have been neutralised, she said.

Russia's drone industry has been hit by international sanctions and a number have been shot down since the start of the war — prompting Moscow to import drones from Iran. Iran's observation and attack machine the Mohajer-6 and its Shahed-136 ("Martyr-

community", CPIML Liberation, a communist political party in India, wrote on Twitter.

But the PFI has been implicated in violent attacks before, with 13 members jailed in 2015 for hacking off the hand of a university lecturer accused of insulting the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Wednesday's ministry notice said some PFI activists had joined Islamic State and participated in terror activities in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

It also linked the PFI to Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), an extremist group that carried out several bombing attacks in India's eastern neighbour in 2005 that left at least 28 dead.

Investigators had recovered incriminating materials including bomb-making manuals and videos related to Islamic State from raids on the group's top leadership, broadcaster NDTV reported Wednesday, quoting officials. — AFP

## Fire in China restaurant leaves 17 dead

BEIJING: A fire at a restaurant in northeastern China on Wednesday killed 17 people and injured another three, according to local authorities. The blaze broke out at 12:40 pm (0440 GMT) in an eatery in the city of Changchun, the local government said in a statement posted on the Weibo social media platform.

Firefighters "rushed to the scene" and completed search and rescue work by 3 pm, the statement said. "The injured have been sent to hospital for treatment while posthumous care for the victims is being carried out," it added.

Authorities said the cause of the incident is under investigation. Deadly fires occur frequently in China, where lax enforcement of building codes and widespread unauthorised construction can make it hard for people to flee burning buildings.

Earlier this month, a huge blaze in the central city of Changsha engulfed part of a skyscraper housing an office of state-owned telecommunications company China Telecom, but no casualties were reported.

In July last year, a warehouse fire in northeastern Jilin province killed 15 people and injured 25 more, according to state media reports. The month before that, a fire killed 18 people — mostly children — at a martial arts school in central Henan province, causing an uproar over fire safety standards. A further two dozen people died in a pair of blazes in Beijing's migrant neighbourhoods in 2017, while 58 perished when a huge fire swept through a 28-storey Shanghai housing block in 2010. — AFP

136") — small kamikaze drones with a very long range of 2,500 kilometres — were "likely" involved in Middle East attacks last summer including against an oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman, according to a note by the British defence ministry.

The Shahed are "very difficult to detect because they fly very low. But they make a lot of noise, like a chainsaw or a scooter", which means that they can be heard from afar, Houmeniouk said. Although their effectiveness is "very low", they mainly put "psychological pressure on the population," she added.

"The Iranian defence industries tend to prioritise affordability over quality control, so typically their systems suffer a fairly high rate of failure as part of this trade off," Jeremy Binnie, an analyst at the British-based Janes defence intelligence group, told AFP.

The Shahed targets are also locked by GPS, and "these have a very long range, but relatively small warhead," he said. Their impact will depend on the Russian military intelligence's ability to work out the co-ordinates of suitable targets behind the frontlines, said Binnie — something which is difficult to do without suitable reconnaissance aircraft. For the time being at least, he said the Iranian drones won't have a major impact on the war.

#### Feeling of dread

For Ukraine's part, it has relied partly on the ingenuity of civilians, who have transformed quasi-toy drones into weapons of war. The popular Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones have also carried out strikes against the Russians — gaining such domestic fame that a song was made about them on social media.

And Kyiv has also used American kamikaze machines, the Switchblades, whose on-board cameras show them crashing into an enemy taken by surprise. But while the Russian drones might not be a major part of the war effort, their use has a significant psychological impact on war-weary Ukrainian civilians.

Former businesswoman Iryna Koroshenkaya moved to Odessa to find some semblance of tranquility. Originally from Mykolaiv, two hours away — where Russian strikes continue on a daily basis — the 57-year-old says she was "thrown against a garage" by a bomb blast in April.

At dawn on Sunday, she heard an anti-aircraft alarm and two explosions, before seeing a drone from her balcony buzzing above a 23-storey building. This was followed by another new explosion and a "big cloud of smoke," she recalled. For Koroshenkaya, the drones are linked to a recurring feeling of "dread". "What will happen next" she asked. "Will Odessa remain safe?" — AFP

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2022

## Business

## BoE steps in to shore up market as IMF criticizes British budget

## Pound tumbles despite central bank's intervention

**LONDON:** The Bank of England stepped in Wednesday to shore up market confidence after the International Monetary Fund criticized Britain's inflation-fighting budget. Reacting to markets turmoil, the BoE announced it was temporarily buying up long-dated UK government bonds "to restore orderly market conditions".

However, the British pound tumbled against the dollar Wednesday despite the Bank of England snapping up UK government bonds to try and bring calm to markets. Sterling dropped 1.5 percent to \$1.0570 shortly after the BoE intervention.

The BoE intervention followed criticism Tuesday from the IMF, which argued that Britain's budget could increase inequality and worsen inflation. Credit ratings agency Moody's also waded in overnight with a warning about soaring debt.

Finance Minister Kwasi Kwarteng's big tax cuts and energy price freeze, aimed at boosting the UK's recession-threatened economy, appeared to have had the opposite effect as traders warn of ballooning debt to pay for the incentives. Following last Friday's budget, UK government bond yields have soared and the pound hit a record low at \$1.0350.

Critics added that Kwarteng's measures would benefit the rich more than the poorest, as millions of Britons suffer from a cost-of-living crisis. "We have acted at speed to protect households and businesses through this winter and the next, following the unprecedented energy price rise," the Treasury said as it sought to defend itself.

"We are focused on growing the economy to raise living standards for everyone," it added, blaming

ing sky-high oil, gas and electricity prices on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

## IMF advice

In a highly unusual intervention, the IMF late Tuesday said it was "closely monitoring" developments and urged the government in London led by new Prime Minister Liz Truss to change tack. The Fund added: "We understand that the sizable fiscal package announced aims at helping families and businesses deal with the energy shock and at boosting growth via tax cuts and supply measures."

"However, given elevated inflation pressures in many countries... we do not recommend large and untargeted fiscal packages at this juncture." The IMF said the "UK measures will likely increase inequality" and stressed the importance of fiscal policy not working "at cross purposes to monetary policy".

Analysts warned that Britain's controversial measures could force the Bank of England to hike interest rates far higher than forecast. "Expectations that there will be a super-size interest rate hike coming from the Bank of England to try and counter the government splurge on tax cuts and spending have increased," Hargreaves Lansdown analyst Savannah Streeter noted Wednesday.

Many central banks, including the BoE, are aggressively hiking interest rates in a bid to cool decades-high inflation.

## Tax cuts

In his budget, Chancellor of the Exchequer



**LONDON:** A handout photograph released by the UK Parliament shows Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Kwasi Kwarteng unveiling an anti-inflation budget plan at the House of Commons in London. —AFP

Kwarteng cut the highest rate of income tax and scrapped a cap of banker bonuses. He also, however, announced a plan to lower income tax for all workers.

Conservative party head Truss appointed Kwarteng to replace Rishi Sunak, who reached the final two in the race to be prime minister. Sunak had hit out strongly at Truss's promise of tax cuts, argu-

ing that the UK priority was to first bring down the nation's inflation rate that stands at a near 40-year high of 9.9 percent. Moody's called Britain's new fiscal policy regime "credit negative", adding that a sustained confidence shock could "permanently" weaken its debt affordability. Kwarteng has said he would wait until November 23 to outline plans on controlling government debt. —AFP

## Cyprus drivers fill up in breakaway north as prices soar

**NICOSIA:** The queue of Greek Cypriot motorists waiting to cross a checkpoint into breakaway northern Cyprus is much longer than it used to be—a plummeting Turkish lira means cheaper petrol prices there. For many Greek Cypriots, buying goods in the north of the divided Mediterranean island is tantamount to treason.

Turkish troops invaded in 1974 after a Greek-engineered coup seeking to unite the island with Greece, and tens of thousands of soldiers from mainland Turkey are still posted in its northern third.

The self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was unilaterally declared in 1983 and is recognized by Turkey alone. But now more and more people are giving in to temptation and driving north to buy cheaper fuel from the Turkish Cypriots.

"My salary is only 700 euros (\$680) monthly, said Fanourios Michail, a 60-year-old carpenter waiting at a Nicosia crossing. "I save about 200 euros a month by refueling in the north." The internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus—the European Union's easternmost member—uses the euro.

But the Turkish Cypriots use the lira, which has sunk to historic lows this year. And the north also has much lower taxes on fuel.

## Checkpoint congestion

According to police figures collated between January and August this year and compared with 2021, the number of cars going north through one of the island's vehicle crossings has more than tripled



**AGIOS DOMETIOS, Cyprus:** Vehicles queue up ahead of the Ayios Dometios/Metehan checkpoint facilitating access between the internationally-recognized Republic of Cyprus and the proclaimed "Turkish Republic of North Cyprus" (TRNC), recognized only by Turkey, through the United Nations buffer zone in Cyprus, in the divided capital Nicosia's southern Greek neighborhood of Ayios Dometios. —AFP

from 197,230 to 601,749. Normally, moving between the two sides should not take more than a few minutes. Drivers present their passport or ID card to police on the Greek Cypriot side, and then drive a few dozen meters (yards) to do the same with Turkish Cypriot police, who also verify that the car has valid insurance for the north.

But for the past several months, congestion at the checkpoints means it is now more common to have to wait half an hour to cross the narrow UN-controlled buffer zone. "Half of my customers are now Greek Cypriots, representing half of my turnover," said Turkish Cypriot Mehmet Tel, who runs a petrol station about 500 meters from one of Nicosia's crossing points.

A liter of fuel in the north is about 25 percent

ment of mild cognitive impairment due to Alzheimer's disease.

Apple fell 4.3 percent following a Bloomberg report that it is retreating on a plan to boost production of its new iPhone due to lackluster demand.

The haven dollar held at multi-year highs against rival currencies, with the euro plumping a new 20-year low at \$0.9536. The British pound slumped 1.7 percent against the greenback—despite the Bank of England snapping up UK government bonds to try and bring calm to markets.

However, the UK government's 30-year bond yield managed to retreat to 4.44 percent, having hit a 1998 peak at 5.14 percent. The BoE intervention followed criticism Tuesday from the International Monetary Fund, which argued that Britain's recent budget could increase inequality and worsen inflation. New finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng's tax-cutting plan last week sent shockwaves through markets, pushing the pound to a record low and leading to dire warnings for Britain's economy.

The dollar remains the go-to unit as the US Federal Reserve leads the way in raising interest rates.

Observers are betting that US borrowing costs will peak at around 4.75 percent next year, and are expected to remain elevated for some time. The prospect of such tight monetary policy has battered equities, as US 10-year Treasury yields—a gauge of future rates—hit four percent for the first time since

cheaper than in the south. "With four kids and a relatively low salary, I just can't make ends meet otherwise," admitted a 45-year-old Greek Cypriot woman who asked not to be identified.

Christodoulos Christodoulou, spokesman for the association of petrol station owners in the south, estimated their annual losses at seven million euros.

The rush for cheaper fuel in the north also costs the republic 80 million euros in lost tax revenues every year, he said. "We want this illegal activity stopped."

He accused the government of failing to enforce regulations put in place in 2004 when Cyprus joined the EU to regulate the transfer of goods across the Green Line separating the two sides of the island. —AFP



**US dollar and euro bills are pictured in Best, western France.** —AFP

2010. Sentiment was also rattled by worries about developments in Ukraine, after Kremlin-installed authorities in four regions under Russian control claimed victory in annexation votes, with Moscow warning it could use nuclear weapons to defend the territories.

Ukraine and its allies have denounced the so-called referendums as a sham, saying the West would never recognize the results. —AFP

## Crisis-hit Lebanon to devalue currency: Central bank official

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon will weaken its official exchange rate for the first time in more than two decades, a central bank official said, as part of efforts to tackle a crippling financial crisis. The exchange rate has been officially pegged at 1,507 Lebanese pounds to the dollar since 1997, but will drop to 15,000 to the greenback at the end of October, the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The pound, however, traded at more than double that value on the black market on Wednesday, selling for more than 38,400 to the dollar—nearing its all-time record low—money exchangers said. Lebanon's local currency has lost more than 95 percent of its value on the black market since the 2019 onset of Lebanon's financial crisis, branded by the World Bank as one of the planet's worst in modern times.

The decision to shift the peg follows a visit last week by a delegation from the International Monetary Fund, which is pressing Lebanon to implement reforms to unlock billions of dollars in loans. The unification of several central bank exchange rates and the establishment of a credible and transparent monetary and exchange rate system are among the IMF's demands. However, analysts expressed skepticism that the shift would lead to a unified exchange rate. —AFP

## German consumer mood falls further as inflation bites

**FRANKFURT:** German consumer confidence remains on a record downward slide as Europe's largest economy faces soaring inflation and an energy crisis heading into winter, a key survey published Wednesday showed. Pollster GfK's forward-looking barometer fell to minus 42.5 points for October, hitting a record low for the fourth month in a row, following a revised September reading of minus 36.8 points.

"The currently very high inflation rates of almost eight percent are leading to large real income losses among consumers and thus to a significant reduction in purchasing power," said GfK consumer expert Rolf Buerkl. "Many households are currently being forced to spend significantly more on energy," he added.

The leaders of Germany's 16 states will meet on Wednesday to discuss additional relief measures to help tackle the energy crisis—but without Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who tested positive for COVID-19 earlier this week. Inflation in Germany reached 7.9 percent in August, driven by soaring energy costs, with the pace expected to increase further by the end of the year. —AFP

## US stocks advance after BoE moves soothe fears

**NEW YORK:** Wall Street stocks rose early Wednesday after the Bank of England's surprise intervention in the British bond market pushed down bond yields in Britain and the United States. Following a historic slump in the pound, the BoE announced it was temporarily buying up long-dated UK government bonds "to restore orderly market conditions."

The pound was lower after the announcement, but the UK government's 30-year bond yield retreated to 4.44 percent, having hit a 1998 peak at 5.14 percent. The yield on the 10-year US Treasury note—a closely-watched proxy of US interest rates—also pulled back as analysts said the BoE maneuver had "soothed" investors in the short run. About 20 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.4 percent at 29,246.42.

The broad-based S&P 500 gained 0.4 percent to 3,660.12, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index edged up 0.1 percent to 10,838.47. Among individual companies, Biogen surged 40 percent after announcing positive clinical results for treat-



Business

# Pie from the sky: Drone delivery lands in America

## Skeptics question whether drone drop-offs can work on a large-scale

**FRISCO, United States:** The little aircraft appeared out of the blue sky above a Texas home, deposited its payload of a mid-morning snack in the yard and zoomed off, as deliveries by drone start becoming a reality in America. Flying shipments of pizzas and birthday gifts have still not become the norm that tech leaders predicted, but the service is available in parts of the United States and government regulation is catching up.

Skeptics question whether drone drop-offs can ever work on a large scale, but backers argue they are safer and better for the planet than hulking, greenhouse-gas-spewing delivery trucks—and faster.

The parcel lowered to the ground from an electric drone hovering above Tiffany Bokhari's Frisco, Texas, house was in her hands minutes after she placed an order on a smartphone app. "On the soda, you can even see the condensation on it because it's still cold," she told AFP after the drone from Alphabet-owned Wing had flown off. Service was new in the area and remained small-scale, but Wing offered the comparison of the up to 1,000 deliveries per day it's doing in just one part of the Brisbane metro area in Australia.

### Blood and tooth brushes

A handful of firms already have operations running or will by year's end in parts of Texas, North Carolina or California, with providers including Israeli startup Flytrex, Wing and e-commerce behemoth Amazon. In fact, it was Amazon founder Jeff Bezos who in 2013 unveiled a delivery drone in a CBS interview, predicting that within five years airborne shipments would be routinely zipping from fulfillment centers to customers' doorsteps. Things haven't quite gone that way for the company that has otherwise seeped ubiquitously into aspects of modern life, from streaming and food shopping to health care. When an Amazon delivery drone

crashed during a test last year and started a brush fire, it was another setback for the company's stumbling drone ambitions. The work has advanced more steadily for others, and in April, Wing announced what it calls "the first commercial drone delivery service" in a major US metro area: Texas's Dallas-Fort Worth.

Wing, which also offers deliveries to some areas in Australia and Finland, has a weight limit of 2.5-3 pounds (just over one kilo). "An entire roasted chicken... that's actually a good visual for the size of what fits," said Jonathan Bass, who heads marketing and communications for Wing. Take-out food, prescriptions and household items like toothbrushes are the type of small and light products that have worked for airborne drop-offs, though drones have for years delivered essential items like medical goods in parts of Africa. Drone drop-offs of perishable substances like blood make sense in places where infrastructure is lacking and air transport is the best option, yet some experts are skeptical of whether it works everywhere.

### Government rules

For example, a drone can carry one delivery from a warehouse or store to generally one place, which means a steep drop in efficiency in comparison with an old-fashioned parcel delivery driver. "It would take a small army of drones to service the 150-200 packages that just one truck normally takes on a route," wrote Bloomberg Opinion columnist Thomas Black, who still saw potential for "premium" emergency deliveries. But Flytrex CEO Yariv Bash asserted that electric drones, in addition to being more efficient than take-out food deliveries done by a fossil fuel-powered car, were safer. "Drones don't get tired. They don't try to text while driving. They don't drink and drive," he told AFP. "You just get much better service."

The question of safety has been at the heart of long



LITTLE ELM, US: In this file photo taken on August 31, 2022, a drone secures an order before flying from Wing facility during a demonstration in Frisco, Texas. — AFP

processes of getting government approvals to work in the United States. Bass, from Wing, noted that although they use a 10-pound foam drone, the company had to get the same certification that firms like DHL or UPS need for their delivery aircraft.

But he noted the Federal Aviation Administration transport regulator has launched a committee that's made recommendations for regulating drones in the United States, adding: "I think that would really unlock

faster growth" in the country. Growth in the United States wouldn't be a surprise, as McKinsey & Company figures show the global number of commercial deliveries spiking from around 6,000 in 2018 to nearly half a million last year.

"But the path ahead is not yet clear," the firm's March report said. "Regulations, customer acceptance, and cost will all determine whether the industry reaches its potential." —AFP



LONDON: Rocketing inflation and dwindling gas supplies fuelled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine will hammer growth in the ex-Soviet bloc next year, Europe's development bank forecast Wednesday.

## Ukraine war cripples growth in ex-Soviet bloc: EBRD bank

**LONDON:** Rocketing inflation and dwindling gas supplies fuelled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine will hammer growth in the ex-Soviet bloc next year, Europe's development bank forecast Wednesday.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development cut its 2023 growth guidance, with Ukraine facing a much weaker rebound than expected. The bank's investment zone is set for growth of three percent next year. But the EBRD had previously forecast a stronger expansion of 4.7 percent for its region that includes nations ranging from Albania to Poland and Morocco. Founded in 1991 to help former Soviet bloc countries switch to free-market economies, the EBRD has since extended its reach to include nations in the Middle East and North Africa. "Negative factors related to high energy prices, the Ukraine war, inflation and the anticipated slowdown in western Europe, make the prospects for next year bleaker," chief economist Beata Javorcik told AFP in an interview.

The zone is nevertheless expected to expand by 2.3 percent in 2022, upgraded from 1.1 percent on a "temporary" boost from strong post-pandemic consumer spending. Yet the bank remains mindful that many EBRD nations are "highly" dependent on gas for their energy needs. "These are very worrying times for the EBRD regions and many advanced economies," added Javorcik. "As we head towards winter, the economic

cost of Russia's war against Ukraine is growing clearer with every day that passes." Global inflation has surged this year, largely on runaway oil, gas and food prices after Russia launched its assault on neighboring Ukraine in February. Inflation for the EBRD's zone hit 16.5 percent in July, the highest level since 1998. "Inflation may not have peaked in the EBRD regions as in many countries the increase in producer costs and high natural gas prices have not yet been fully reflected in consumer prices," noted Javorcik. The EBRD expects Ukraine's economy to contract 30 percent this year, unchanged from its prior estimate, before growing by eight percent in 2023.

The bank had in May forecast a much stronger 25-percent rebound for next year. The London-headquartered bank explained that it had expected Ukraine reconstruction work to be under way.

### Russia sanctions to bite

The EBRD added that Russia's sanctions-hit economy would shrink three percent next year, downgraded from zero growth, after contraction of an upwardly revised five percent in 2022. "In general we believe that sanctions will bite going forward," added Javorcik. The lender stressed that its projections were subject to "major downside risk" should the Ukraine war escalate—or Russia slash gas exports further. If Moscow cuts off all supplies of gas to Europe, then EBRD nations will also encounter major supply-chain problems. "The effects of the war are becoming visible in the (EBRD) economies," said Javorcik. "We are seeing much higher energy prices, increased inflation, and the expected slowdown in western Europe is going to hit exports quite hard." Analysts are increasingly predicting a global recession for 2023 as central banks ramp up interest rates to cool decades-high inflation. — AFP

## Turkey bows to US pressure, cuts Russian bank ties

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey's booming wartime trade with Moscow took a giant step back on Wednesday with confirmation that the last three banks still processing Russian card payments were pulling out under pressure from Washington. The decision follows weeks of increasingly blunt warnings from the United States for NATO member Turkey to either limit its economic relations with Russia or face the threat of sanctions itself.

The US Treasury said last week that Turkish banks working with Russian Mir bank cards "risk supporting Russia's efforts to evade US sanctions". Two private Turkish lenders that began processing Mir after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in August suspended the transactions earlier this month.

But three state lenders—Halkbank, Vakifbank and Ziraatbank—still worked with the cards. A senior Turkish official did not say when Russians would no longer be able to access their cards in Turkey at all. The three banks "are still processing (the outstanding) payments, but they have set a future date" for pulling out, the official said on condition of anonymity because no formal decision by the three bank has been announced.

The Kremlin on Wednesday condemned Washington for forcing Turkish banks to cut their Russian ties. "They are threatened with secondary sanctions on the banking system. And this decision, of course, was made under this unprecedented pressure," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

### Shift in tone

The explosion of Turkish trade with Russia during the seven-month war in Ukraine has been a source of growing irritation for Washington. The value of trade between the two rose by more than 50 percent. Turkey has also agreed to pay for a quarter of its Russian natural gas imports in rubles.

US Deputy Secretary of the Treasury Wally Adeyemo paid a rare visit to Ankara and Istanbul in June to express Washington's worries that Russian oligarchs and big businesses were using Turkish entities to evade Western sanctions. The Treasury sent a follow up letter to Turkish banks and businesses in August

warning that they cannot expect to have "access to the US dollar and other major currencies" if they trade with sanctioned Russians. Turkey has tried to stay neutral in the Ukrainian conflict and refused to sign up to Western sanctions against Russia. It has used this status to strike a range of economic agreements that have helped prop up the ailing economy in the run-up to June elections in which Erdogan will struggle to extend his two-decade grip on power. Mir cards offer millions of Russians that vacation in Turkey each year a way to access their rubles and pay for everything from restaurants to hotels.



MOSCOW: A photo taken on March 14, 2022, shows the logos of Visa, Mastercard and Russian Mir payment systems on bank cards in Moscow. — AFP

They are also increasingly important to Russians who are fleeing to Turkey as part of a new migration wave of men trying to avoid the draft.

### 'Fear of secondary sanctions'

Prominent Russian sanctions campaigner Bill Browder—a businessman who left Moscow after one of his associates died in jail—said the Turkish bank decision showed that the "fear of secondary sanctions is starting to work". "Turkish banks have abandoned Putin's Mir payment system out of fear of being punished by the US," Browder tweeted. "We need to roll this out far and wide. Chinese, Indian UAE and many other countries should understand there will be consequences."

Russia developed Mir in 2015 to circumvent Western sanctions imposed following its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula. But Russian central bank chief Elvira Nabiullina conceded earlier this month that Moscow was encountering "difficulties" expanding its payment system around the world. Uzbekistan suspended Mir transactions last Friday citing unspecified "technical procedures". —AFP



## Al Mulla Exchange launches money transfers with Visa

**KUWAIT:** Al Mulla Exchange, a member of Al Mulla Group, and the leading foreign exchange and remit-

tance company in Kuwait, reaffirms its leadership position in the market through a strategic business alliance with Visa. The announcement was made at a special official ceremony held recently in Kuwait in the presence of Dr Saeeda Jaffar, Senior Vice President and Group Country Manager for GCC at Visa, and Hormuzda Davar, Managing Director -Trading, Manufacturing and Financial Services at Al Mulla Group. Through the newly signed agreement with Visa (NYSE: V), Al Mulla International Exchange Co enhances its remittance services and offers by launch-

ing cross borders money movement with Visa for its customers in Kuwait.

Now, customers of Al Mulla Exchange can transfer funds conveniently, securely and reliably to holders of Visa cards in 34 countries and very soon this service would be available to other territories around the world. Customers can also enjoy this service through the Al Mulla Exchange mobile application, website, or by visiting any of our 107 branch locations across Kuwait. In a few easy steps customers only need to provide the recipient's name, Visa card number, and

the amount to be sent, and the transactions can be completed in near real-time.

Al Mulla Exchange has always been at the forefront in offering seamless remittance experience to its customers. The company has been ranked two times in a row among the "Top 5 Exchange Companies in the GCC Going Digital" according to recent Forbes Middle East's rankings. Al Mulla Exchange currently offers money transfers to countries in MENA, Europe, USA, Canada, and Asia with plans to expand to more countries across the globe in the near future.



## Business

# Sales of new US homes surge but gain may be short-lived

## US consumer confidence jumps again in September: Survey

WASHINGTON: Sales of new US homes soared in August to the highest rate since early this year as prices fell, according to government data released Tuesday, but analysts cautioned the gain is unlikely to last. Defying widespread expectations of another slowdown, sales of new single-family houses jumped 28.8 percent compared to July to an annual rate of 685,000, seasonally adjusted, the Commerce Department reported.

That was only slightly below the sales pace a year earlier, as the median price for a new home fell by more than \$30,000 to \$436,800, the lowest since December.

The trend in the small new home segment was the mirror image of the much bigger existing home sales market, which last month fell to its lowest point in two years, marking a seventh straight monthly decline. Sales soared during the pandemic as Americans, flush with savings, took advantage of bargain mortgage rates to snap up homes, while supply was constrained by lack of materials and workers.

But the sector has been cooling as the Federal Reserve raises lending rates aggressively to try to tamp down soaring inflation, which has accelerated at the fastest pace in 40 years. The central bank last week announced its third consecutive super-sized increase, and said more hikes are coming.

Nancy Vanden Houten of Oxford Economics said the "end-of-summer surge in new home sales unlikely to repeat."

"We don't expect the August pace of sales to be sustained in the months ahead, as the latest rise in mortgage rates will take an added toll on home-buying affordability," she said. "Further price declines may bring in buyers, however, keeping a floor under activity."

The figures have a huge margin of error, and Ian

Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics called the increase "either unbelievable ... or unsustainable."

### Consumer confidence

Boosted by rising wages and falling gas prices, US consumers were much more upbeat about the state of the American economy now and in the months ahead, according to a closely-watched survey released Tuesday. The consumer confidence index jumped nearly five points to 108.0 the second straight monthly gain, according to The Conference Board. The result was the highest level since April and far better than the modest improvement economists had expected.

The US Federal Reserve has been raising borrowing costs aggressively this year, and last week announced its third consecutive, 0.75 percentage point increase in the benchmark interest rate as it tries to cool the world's largest economy to bring down the fastest inflation in 40 years.

So far progress has been slow, as resilient consumers, flush with savings have continued to spend, supporting economic activity. But the survey showed expectations about inflation fell for third straight month, which is good news for the central bank. "Concerns about inflation dissipated further in September-prompted largely by declining prices at the gas pump-and are now at their lowest level since the start of the year," said Lynn Franco, senior director of economic indicators at The Conference Board. Buoyed by a strong job market, respondents felt better about their present situation as well as expectations for the coming six months, the survey showed, but Franco cautioned that "recession risks nonetheless persist." Intentions to make big-ticket purchases were mixed, with plans to buy cars and appli-



LAS VEGAS: In this file photo taken on May 07, 2022, customers browse racks of clothing as they shop inside a discount department retail store in Las Vegas, Nevada. —AFP

ances increasing, but more reluctance to invest in a home, which Franco said reflected rising mortgage rates and the cooling housing market.

"Looking ahead, the improvement in confidence may bode well for consumer spending in the final months of 2022, but inflation and interest-rate hikes remain strong headwinds to growth in the short term," Franco said in a statement.

Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics cautioned that the good feelings "might not last as people absorb the hit from the recent drop in stock prices and the Fed's latest rate hikes, with the promise of more to come." "For now, though, people's views of both the current and future economy have perked up, and the headline index is now just a few points shy of the pre-Ukraine invasion peak," he said. —AFP

## Yellen: Biden's green energy push will boost economy

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's push for green energy tax credits will help boost a massive ramp up in private investment that will create jobs and lower energy costs for American families, Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Tuesday.

Yellen called the administration's plan "the most aggressive action that we've ever taken to address the climate crisis." She traveled to North Carolina to tour a solar plant and tout policies included in the recently approved Inflation Reduction Act, which together with the Infrastructure Law includes more than \$430 billion in energy investments.

The legislation provides tax credits to households to make their homes more energy efficient or switch to cleaner sources, which will help lower costs, Yellen said. But the administration's approach also "rests on harnessing the engagement of the private sector," the official said in her speech, delivered in front of an array of solar panels.

"Beyond the consumer tax credits, we expect a significant mobilization of private investment into the clean energy sector," she said. "These investments will accelerate the transition to our green energy future and lower energy costs for American households and businesses."

### Economic stability

In addition, "They will secure our energy supply against global price shocks. And they will provide good-paying, high-quality jobs across America." Yellen said the transition is critical to address climate change which has seen more costly storms arise across the globe.

"Climate change poses a grave risk to the productive capacity of our economy while also impacting its stability," she said. But the transition to a clean energy economy also brings lower costs and "significant economic opportunities in high-growth industries, while building economic resilience and creating good-paying jobs across the country."

She said these new programs also will serve the "important goal" of boosting domestic capacity to produce solar panels, batteries for electric vehicles and even the minerals needed to make the batteries. "I think the legislation will be effective. And we're already hearing announcements about new activities starting up in the United States," Yellen told reporters.

Global supply chain snarls have hit manufacturers which rely on imported components and have struggled to meet demand for goods and cars in the United States. Ford said recently it will have to store more than 40,000 partially built vehicles which are awaiting parts.

"We're seeing a lot of supply chain issues that continue that's limiting the production of electric vehicles and other cars," Yellen said, adding that "I think that will resolve over time, and EVs will become quite affordable especially with the support from the Inflation Reduction Act." —AFP



## ITS to offer digital expertise for KCB smart branches

KUWAIT: ITS is proud to announce that they have been entrusted by the Kuwait Credit Bank to provide the digital technology and expertise for the development of Smart Branches for the institution.

"We are excited on this opportunity to support Kuwait Credit Bank to become the first Kuwait government financial institution to embark on a major

## Deliveroo thanks riders with a taste of Kuwait

KUWAIT: Over the past week, Deliveroo hosted 200 riders for lunch at Shemam Restaurant, a local favorite. The riders enjoyed the day at Shemam Restaurant in the company of the rest of the Deliveroo team. The riders' lunch was an excellent opportunity for riders to socialize while enjoying some of the country's best seafood.

"We are so excited to have been able to plan a lunch event of this size for our riders and to offer them a taste of one of the most beloved local restaurants in town. Team events are an excellent chance for us to get together and thank our riders for their outstanding work throughout the year," said Seham Al-Husaini, General Manager of Deliveroo Kuwait. "Hard work does not go unnoticed at Deliveroo, and we feel very thankful to have such a devoted team of riders delivering our favorite foods in Kuwait."

The riders' lunch is one of multiple initiatives that Deliveroo has organized to give back to its riders. Last month, Deliveroo set up water distribution stations across the country to provide riders with access to cold water throughout the summer. In addition, Deliveroo regularly collaborates with popular restaurant partners to treat riders, with past partnerships including Starbucks, AZ Kitchen, Rock House Sliders, and more. During special annual

## China's offshore yuan hits record low against dollar

BEIJING: China's yuan hit a record low against the surging US dollar in offshore trading Wednesday, despite recent efforts by the country's central bank to shore up the

currency. The offshore yuan—which is circulated outside mainland China and is more freely traded than currency in the domestic market—fell to 7.2386 against the dollar on Wednesday, according to Bloomberg.

That is its weakest level since clearing banks in Hong Kong were given the go-ahead to open renminbi accounts freely in 2010.

The US Federal Reserve's increas-



digital transformation journey," stated Esam Al-Kheshnam, ITS Group CEO. "This new partnership comes as a timely response to the complex changes that the global economy is undergoing in these times of fast-evolving digital innovation; ITS provided the needed technology and services to support Kuwait Credit Bank in their digitization journey to ensure operational excellence and growth."

"This was achieved through the deployment of the latest digital solutions for the actualization of the fully electronic Smart Branches. This innovative digital platform will provide customers with a personalized, efficient access to their banking services that will be robust and consistent across devices used. As such, it will greatly facilitate customer transac-

tions, payments, credit cards operations, and management of loans or other fiscal products. Most importantly, the customer will be able to do all the transactions through digital platform unrestricted without constraints imposed by limited working hours or physical location."

This innovative digital transformation will not only elevate customer experience to a next level of efficiency and convenience but will also drive the bank's growth by enabling wider accessibility to its services across the market. With this state-of-the-art Smart Branch project, ITS continues to be a pioneer in building innovative digital bridges to better connect customers, financial institutions, and markets," he concluded.



occasions such as Ramadan, Deliveroo also treats its riders to annual iftars to celebrate the holy month.

This year, Deliveroo celebrated its third year of business in the Kuwaiti market, delivering hundreds of thousands of meals to hungry customers around the country. Since its launch, Deliveroo has set itself apart with its unbeatable customer service and was

recently named the "Best Delivery App" by Service Hero. With exclusive restaurant partners, special offers, and meal deals, Deliveroo is always here to deliver. To keep up with the latest restaurant offers in Kuwait, download the Deliveroo application from the App Store (for iOS devices) and Google Play (for Android devices).

low of 7.2297 per dollar Wednesday. The depreciation comes despite recent efforts by the Chinese central bank to protect the currency's value without directly intervening, including a decision to raise the foreign exchange risk reserve ratio.

The move, announced by the People's Bank of China on Monday, effectively makes it more expensive for financial institutions to sell yuan and buy dollars. —AFP

Lifestyle | Features



## Half world's birds in decline, species moving 'ever faster' to extinction

Almost half of all bird species are in decline globally and one in eight are threatened with extinction, according to a major new report warning that human actions are driving more species to the brink and nature is "in trouble". The four-yearly State of the World's Birds report, which provides a snapshot of the plight of species globally and more broadly a barometer for biodiversity, comes as the United Nations steers an international process to protect nature. "One in eight bird species is threatened with extinction, and the status of the world's birds continues to deteriorate: species are moving ever faster towards extinction," said the report released this week by BirdLife International.

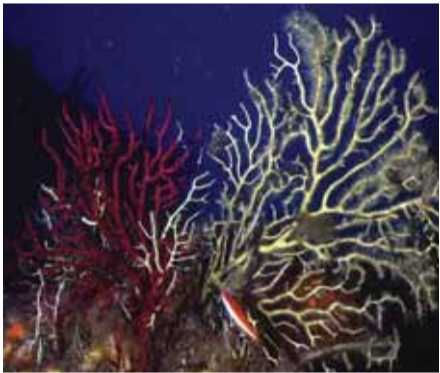
Using data from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN),

the report said 49 percent of bird species worldwide have declining populations, with populations falling even in species not normally rare or at risk. Roughly 13 percent are considered threatened.

The main threats include the growth of unsustainable agriculture, logging, invasive species, over-exploitation and climate change. Most bird populations face a combination of human-caused threats. "The natural world is in trouble. Human actions are driving species rapidly towards extinction, undermining ecosystem functions and services vital to our own survival," the report said. BirdLife International, which has decades of survey data, said there are now 2.9 billion fewer individual birds in North America than there were in 1970, an estimated drop of 29 percent.

The European Union has seen a net

loss of around 600 million birds, roughly 18 percent since 1980. In both cases, the losses are most acute among long-distance migrants and farmland birds. Birdlife said many key bird preservation zones were in a poor state and called for a global push to protect and restore habitats. In December, nations gather to finalize a treaty to halt the decline of biodiversity and set humanity on a path to "live in harmony with nature" by mid-century. BirdLife International chief Patricia Zurita said the framework under negotiation was "the world's best and perhaps last chance to halt the loss of nature" and restore biodiversity. "The birds and the rest of nature are depending on us. And we are depending on them," she said. — AFP



This file photo taken on October 18, 1999, shows an underwater view of Purple Gorgonian (*Paramuricea clavata*) coral, victim of an epidemic of unknown origin. — AFP

## Underwater heat 'inferno' ravages Mediterranean corals

In the temperate shallows of the Mediterranean, once-vibrant red and purple coral forests that provide a crucial haven for biodiversity now stand bleached and brittle, transformed into skeletons by record summer temperatures, scientists say. Holding naked branches of gorgonian coral, Tristan Estaque of marine conservation group Septentrion Environnement is returning despondent from an exploratory dive off the coast of Marseille in southern France. "It is heartbreaking, the deterioration is so fast," he tells AFP.

Dive surveys just two months earlier found an intact landscape, lush with violet-fringed fans of gorgonian coral. Now it is a "ghost forest", says Estaque, with the majestic fans largely bare of living tissue. "You have to imagine a tree where there are no more leaves, no more bark."

### Fragile forests

Gorgonian corals, which have flexible skeletons encrusted with polyps, are found across the planet. Those found in the Mediterranean are said to create "forests", sheltering a huge array of species. But they are acutely vulnerable to human activities. Fishing nets, anchors and careless divers can rip their delicate structures, while exposure to continuous and intense heat can be lethal. Marine heatwaves are becoming more common, according to a report this year by UN climate experts. This summer a major marine heatwave hit the western Mediterranean, with water up to five degrees Celsius (41 degrees Fahrenheit) hotter than normal, according to Mercator Ocean International, the organization that runs the European ocean monitoring service.

In some places water reached 30C. Recent Septentrion Environnement surveys have shown that between 70 and 90 percent of the red gorgonian population in the 10 to 20-metre zone off Marseille have since died. The effect was like "an underwater inferno", according to Solene Basthard-Bogain, another of the group's specialists. And it is not just near the southern French coast. — AFP

## Oldest chimp from renown Guinean group dies

Guinea's oldest chimpanzee and one of the last members of a globally famous endangered community has died in solitude around the age of 71, the environment ministry said. Fana, a female chimp born around 1951, was part of a troop that gained global fame for uncanny abilities to use tools. The tiny community of apes lives in a forest around the village of Bossou, in the far southeastern corner of the country.

Scientists have trekked to the remote location for decades to study the chimps' remarkable use of stone hammers and anvils to crack open nuts—the most sophisticated act ever observed of humanity's genetically closest relative. But Fana's death brings the number of Bossou chimpanzees down to just six or seven.

Half are females, though two are no longer able to reproduce. Fana had been showing signs of exhaustion over the past few months, the environment ministry said on Facebook Tuesday. Her left upper limb has been paralyzed since she took a bad fall nearly 25 years ago

and she had long since stopped climbing trees.

She lived alone as she became less mobile. Her body was found on September 19 and she was buried the next day in the presence of local villagers. The Bossou apes have a unique relationship with the village population. The great apes live in the wild but share the territory and its resources with the locals, who protect them, believing them to be reincarnated ancestors.

Up until 2003, the Bossou chimp group had been relatively stable at around 21 animals. But it lost seven members to the flu that year. It has also been affected by human activities in the area. Locals traditionally use slash-and-burn agriculture, and though they had preserved a 320-hectare block of forest around Bossou, surrounding deforestation has cut it off from the rest of the Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve, where there are more numerous chimp communities.

Slash-and-burn agriculture sees people cultivate lands until they become depleted, then clear forests to create new lands, and repeat the cycle. The UNESCO World Heritage-listed reserve straddles Guinea's borders with Liberia and Ivory Coast. Fana leaves behind two sons, Foaf and Fanwa. She is predeceased by her daughter, Fotayou. — AFP



## Swiss glaciers melting away at record rate

Switzerland's glaciers lost six percent of their total volume this year due to a dry winter and repeated summer heatwaves, shattering previous ice melt records, a report revealed Wednesday. The study by the Cryospheric Commission (CC) of the Swiss Academy of Sciences laid bare the drastic scale of glacial retreat—which is only set to get worse.

"2022 was a disastrous year for Swiss glaciers: all ice melt records were smashed," the CC said, adding that a two percent loss in 12 months had previously been considered "extreme". Three cubic kilometers of ice—three trillion liters of water—have melted away, the report said.

"It's not possible to slow down the melting in the short term," said glaciology professor Matthias Huss, head of Glacier Monitoring in Switzerland, which documents long-term glacier changes in the Alps and is coordinated by the CC. If carbon dioxide emissions are reduced and the climate protected, "this might save about one third of the total volumes in Switzerland in the best case", he told AFP. Otherwise, the country "will be losing almost everything

by the end of the century".

### Saharan dust speeds melt

At the start of the year, the snow cover in the Alps was exceptionally light, then a large volume of sand dust blew in from the Sahara Desert between March and May, settling on the surface. The contaminated snow absorbed more heat and melted faster, depriving the glaciers of their protective snow coating by early in the European summer. The continuous heat between May and early September therefore ravaged the glacial ice.

By mid-September, the once-thick layer of ice that covered the pass between the Scex Rouge and Tsanfleuron glaciers had completely melted away, exposing bare rock that had been frozen over since at least the Roman era. And in early July, the collapse of a section of the Marmolada glacier, the biggest in the Italian Alps, killed 11 people and highlighted how serious the situation had become. According to an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report published in February, the melting of ice and snow is one of the 10 key

threats from climate change.

### Smallest glaciers hardest hit

"The loss was particularly dramatic for small glaciers," the CC said. The Pizol, Vadret dal Corvatsch and Schwarzbachfirn glaciers "have practically disappeared—measurements were discontinued", the commission said. In the Engadine and southern Valais regions, both in the south, "a four to six-meter-thick layer of ice at 3,000 meters above sea level vanished," said the report. Significant losses were recorded even at the very highest measuring points, including the Jungfrauoch mountain, which peaks at nearly 3,500 meters.

"Observations show that many glacier tongues are disintegrating and patches of rock are rising out of the thin ice in the middle of glaciers. These processes are further accelerating the decline," said the report. "The trend also reveals how important glaciers are to the water and energy supply in hot, dry years," the report stressed—something to consider given that hydroelectricity provides more than 60 percent of Switzerland's total energy production.

The glacial meltwater in July and August alone would have provided enough water this year to completely fill all the reservoirs in the Swiss Alps. But Huss said that if the country experienced this year's meteorological conditions in 50 years' time, "the impact would be much stronger, because in 50 years, we expect that almost all glaciers are gone and therefore cannot provide water in a hot and dry summer".

### Melt reveals macabre finds

The melting of the glaciers has also had some unexpected consequences. Hikers are regularly making macabre discoveries as bodies are being freed from the ice they have been encased in for decades or even centuries.

The melting can also be a boon for archaeologists who suddenly have access to objects that are thousands of years old. Meanwhile the melting of a glacier between Italy and Switzerland has moved the border that ran along the watershed, forcing lengthy diplomatic negotiations. — AFP



Glaciologist and head of 'Glacier Monitoring in Switzerland' (GLAMOS) network Matthias Huss (in yellow shirt) during a visit with his team on the Gries glacier to take readings of measuring equipments.



## DIOR TURNS HEELS AND CORSETS INTO 'IRONIC POWER DRESSING'

Women have spent centuries trying to liberate themselves from heels and corsets, but the latest Dior collection at Paris Fashion Week on Tuesday presented them as a sort of "ironic power dressing". An outspoken feminist, Dior's womenswear designer Maria Grazia Chiuri said the corsets, crinolines and other historical items, inspired by 16th-century French queen Catherine de Medici, remained modern and functional despite their appearance.

"The idea that amused me was that there are elements in the clothes that create a regal imagination," Chiuri told AFP ahead of the show. She presented the spring-summer 2023 collection against the backdrop of a grotto in the Jardin des Tuileries on the second day of Paris Fashion Week. With dancers twirling in the background, the show sought to bring a "baroque party" atmosphere, reflecting the key inspiration of the collection.

Short in stature, Italian aristocrat Catherine de Medici was a pioneer of platform shoes to give her more height, and used structured silhouettes to create a more imposing presence when she arrived at the court of France in the 1530s on her

way to becoming queen. The corsets in Dior's new collection were not hidden—"They're an object to play with and have fun," said Chiuri.

The basket-like dresses have a "functional" dimension, she added, intended to mimic the power dressing trend of the 1970s and 1980s. There was also plenty of embroidery and lace, which Catherine de Medici made sure were produced in large quantities by French royal artisans. Even the venue for Tuesday's show was a nod to the Italian aristocrat, who organized parties in the Jardin des Tuileries.

As usual, the Dior show attracted a slew of stars including K-Pop superstar Cha Eun-woo, Australian model Elle Macpherson and US actor-director Maggie Gyllenhaal. Chiuri said she was well aware that there was not a party mood in the world right now, but said this was all the more reason to take a playful tone with fashion. "In this heavy historical moment, fashion is the only place where we can still play—that's what I wanted to do at the moment," she said. "The situation is tragic, we have to find motivation to work." — AFP



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

## Burberry replaces creative chief Riccardo Tisci with Daniel Lee

Italian designer Riccardo Tisci will step down this week as creative director, Burberry said Wednesday, announcing his unexpected and sudden departure. Tisci, who transformed and modernized the British fashion house since his arrival in 2018, is to be replaced by Briton Daniel Lee, who was formerly at Bottega Veneta.

"Riccardo has decided to leave after almost five years, during which he spearheaded Burberry's creative transformation," it said in a statement. Under Tisci, the group added that it had "modernized and elevated its product offer, attracting a younger, more diverse and fashion-forward community of customers". The Italian's Spring-Summer 2023 collection, which was presented this week in London, was his last for Burberry.

Lee, who will now oversee all Burberry collections, will present his debut runway collection at London Fashion Week in February 2023. "Riccardo has played a pivotal role in repositioning Burberry," noted chief executive Jonathan Akeroyd. "He has enhanced our creative language, modernized and elevated our product offer and brought a new generation of luxury customers to our brand."

Tisci said he was "incredibly proud" of his time at the fashion house. "Burberry is a very special place with a magical past and a very promising future," he said. "The



Daniel Lee

chapter I was asked to write in its long story is one that I am incredibly proud of. He had strived to "continue a legacy of innovation, and consistently championed for creativity and diversity, in order to always keep Burberry moving forward," added Tisci.

### Uncertain economic context

Lee, who was born in Bradford in northern England, will take up his new role on

Monday at the group's London headquarters. He was creative director at Bottega Veneta between 2018 and 2021, when he helped reinvigorate the Italian brand. Lee has also previously worked at Celine, Maison Margiela, Balenciaga and Donna Karan. "I am honored to join Burberry," he said Wednesday.

"Together with the team, we will write the exciting next chapter for this legendary British luxury brand, continuing its historic heritage and building on Riccardo's legacy." Lee added he was "very excited" to return to London, adding that the British capital "champions pioneering creativity and that continues to inspire me".

Tisci's final act was to present Burberry's Spring-Summer 2023 collection at London Fashion Week on Monday. It had been due to take place on September 17 but was postponed due to the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The fashion house in May posted net profits of £396 million (\$422 million, 442 million euros). That was up five percent compared with its previous financial year ending in late March 2021. However, it said at the time that future performance depended on the extent of economic recovery in China, a key market that has been hit by Covid lockdowns. — AFP

## David Bowie's handwritten 'Starman' lyrics sell for over £200,000

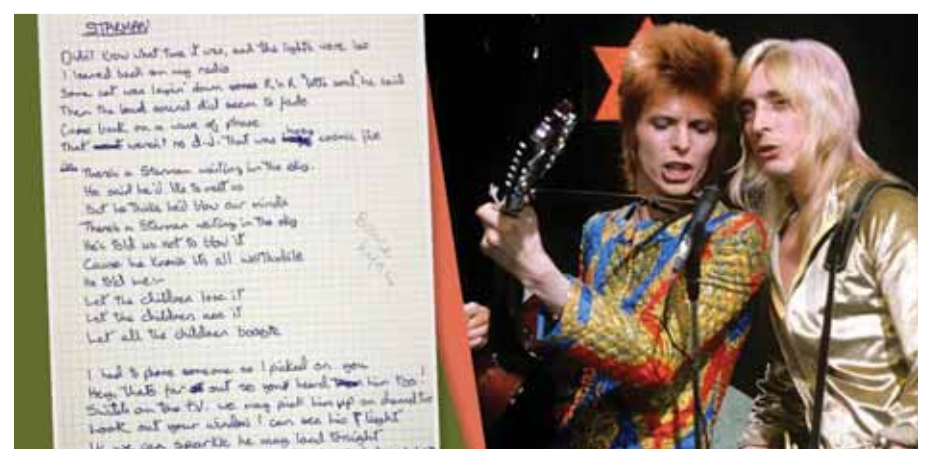
David Bowie's original handwritten lyrics for the pop classic "Starman", part of an album that catapulted him to international stardom, on Tuesday sold at auction in Britain for £203,500. Released as a single in 1972, the song about a Starman who would "like to come and meet us but he thinks he'd blow our minds" featured on the Ziggy Stardust concept album.

The handwritten lyrics sold for five times as much as the £40,000 estimate. The winning bidder was Olivier Varenne, director of acquisitions and alliances and collections at the Museum of Old and New Art in Tasmania, on behalf of a private collector. "We had almost unprecedented

interest from around the world for this historic piece of memorabilia," said Paul Fairweather of Omega Auctions. "We're very pleased with the incredible price achieved and are sure the lyrics will be rightly prized and treasured by the winning bidder."

The lyrics were previously on display as part of the V&A Museum's David Bowie Is collection. They had been owned by the same person since the 1980s. The A4 page features handwritten amendments and edits by Bowie, including corrected spelling mistakes and additions.

The lyrics were sold as part of a David Bowie and glam rock sale on Tuesday. In 2019, the first demo of Bowie singing Starman sold for 51,000 pounds after gathering dust in a loft for nearly five decades. Bowie can be heard telling his guitarist Mick Ronson, who died in 1993, that he has not finished singing the song when he tries to end the demo. The singer, born David Jones, died aged 69 in New York in 2016. — AFP



## Austria returns looted Indigenous remains to New Zealand

The remains of scores of Indigenous Maori and Moriori people began a journey home to New Zealand on Tuesday, officials said, most of them stolen by a notorious 19th-century Austrian graverobber. The bones of about 64 Maori and Moriori—the Indigenous people of mainland New Zealand and the Chatham Islands, respectively—are being returned by the Natural History Museum Vienna. They will be received at Te Papa, the national museum of New Zealand in Wellington, on Sunday as part of a government-funded programme to bring Indigenous remains back to the Pacific nation.

The remains, including skulls, were

housed for decades in Austria's capital after being plundered from New Zealand's "iwi" (tribes) more than 130 years ago, officials from the two countries said. Records show that most of the bones were collected by Austrian taxidermist and graverobber Andreas Reischek, who toured New Zealand for 12 years until 1889. Reischek's diaries recount how he looted graves without permission in several locations including the Chatham Islands, Christchurch and Auckland. "These ancestors were stolen by those with no regard for the Maori communities they belonged to," said William "Pou" Temara, chairman of Te Papa's Repatriation Advisory Panel, in a

statement Tuesday. "In his diary entries, Reischek boasts of eluding Maori surveillance, looting sacred places and breaking 'tapu' (sacred rules) — he knew exactly what he was doing. "His actions were wrong and dishonest."

### 77 years of negotiations

The remains began their long journey home on Tuesday at a ceremony attended by New Zealand's ambassador to Austria. On Sunday a Maori welcoming ceremony, the Powhiri, will mark the repatriation in Wellington—the biggest so far from Austria. It will conclude 77 years of negotiations between New Zealand and Austria, which began in 1945 when Maori

leaders sought the remains' return. The remains will be kept at Te Papa's "wahi tapu" (sacred space) while the museum consults with Maori and Moriori iwi to determine the final resting place.

Te Papa's Maori co-leader Arapata Hakiwai said the repatriation was the result of lengthy discussions. "This historic repatriation helps to reconcile the colonial past and opens a new chapter in relationships between Maori, Moriori, and the New Zealand and Austrian governments," he said. Katrin Vohland, the director of Vienna's natural history museum, said the process was "driven by the wish for reconciliation". "I am happy we can contribute to the healing process," she

said.

Sunday's ceremony is the latest return of Indigenous remains since New Zealand created a government-funded repatriation program in 2003. In July, the Natural History Museum in London returned the ancestral remains of 111 Moriori and two Maori ancestors to Wellington. Washington's Smithsonian Institution returned the remains of 54 Maori people, including four mummified heads, as part of another significant repatriation in 2016.— AFP



Dr Dafallah Al-Haj Ali Mustafa, 51, founder and general director of the Sudanese Traditional Music Centre and assistant professor of music and drama, plays a traditional 'Wazza' instrument at the centre in the Sudanese capital's twin city of Omdurman. — AFP photos



Dr Dafallah Al-Haj Ali Mustafa plays a traditional 'Wazza' instrument.



This picture shows a view of the set of traditional 'Wazza' instruments (right), the 'Qarrn' instrument made from an animal horn (left top), and the 'Affeh' (left bottom) on display at the Sudanese Traditional Music Centre in the Sudanese capital's twin city of Omdurman.

## Sudan traditional wind instrument trumpets harvest time

Near the lush fields of his village in Sudan's southern Blue Nile state, Youssef Ismail has crafted a traditional horn-like instrument used for generations to usher in the harvest season. "We make new wazza instruments every year," Ismail, in his 70s, told AFP about the wooden wind instrument that is often longer than a grown man. "We learned this craft from our parents."

He assembled pieces of the conical gourd plant, meticulously cut and

washed, to create a long trumpet with a bell-shaped end which produces a bright, loud and festive sound. In the village of East Ganis, like in some other Blue Nile communities, "we use it to celebrate the harvest season", which typically begins in November after the wet season, Ismail explained. Agriculture is a major economic sector in Sudan, a country of 45 million people and one of the world's poorest. About 43 percent of its labor force works in agriculture which makes up 30 percent

of the economy according to UN and World Bank estimates.

After more than 120 people were killed in clashes over access to land in Blue Nile state in July, the wazza was also played to celebrate a halt in violence, resident Ahmed Idriss said. Little is known about its history, but the wazza "has strong links to rituals performed by the communities of the Blue Nile", explained Mohammed Soliman, a music professor at Sudan University of Science and Technology.

Dafallah Ali Mustafa, 51, founder of the Sudanese Traditional Music Centre in the capital's twin city of Omdurman, has reserved pride of place for the wazza. Wazzas, which are particularly common among the ethnic Funj people in Sudan's south, vary in size, with some as long as two meters (6.5 feet). The size of each instrument determines its tone range, and wazza players perform in a band of up to 13 members.

The band leader "usually plays the smallest instrument", Soliman said. Some of the players would also use animal horns to tap their wazza for percussive effect. Ismail, himself a member of a wazza band, said he expects future generations will carry on the tradition. "We taught our children how to make and play the instrument," he said. "They will keep it alive after we are gone." — AFP



Dr Dafallah Al-Haj Ali Mustafa pours water down the pipe of the traditional 'Wazza' instrument to wet and soften it before playing, at the centre in the Sudanese capital's twin city of Omdurman.



A view of traditional musical instruments stacked atop each other (top to bottom): the 'Qarrn' made from a cow horn, the 'Wazza' instrument, and the 'Affeh', on display at the Sudanese Traditional Music Centre in the Sudanese capital's twin city of Omdurman.



A view of a set of varied sizes of the traditional 'Wazza' instrument, on display at the Sudanese Traditional Music Centre.



Dr Dafallah Al-Haj Ali Mustafa pours water down the pipe of the traditional 'Wazza' instrument to wet and soften it before playing.



Dr Dafallah Al-Haj Ali Mustafa looks on as he stands outside the centre.



A view of the set of traditional 'Wazza' instruments (right), the 'Qarrn' instrument made from an animal horn (third left), and the 'Affeh' (left) on display at the Sudanese Traditional Music Centre in the Sudanese capital's twin city of Omdurman.



Dr Dafallah Al-Haj Ali Mustafa plays a traditional 'Wazza' instrument.

## Sports

# San Siro demolition on table; Milan Inter's stadium dream put to public

## Inter post 140 million-euro loss in 2021-22 accounts

### News in brief



John Obi Mikel

### John Obi Mikel retires

**PARIS:** Former Nigeria and Chelsea midfielder John Obi Mikel announced his retirement after a long and decorated career on Tuesday, saying "all good things must come to an end". "I look back at the past 20 years of my career, and I must say that I am very satisfied with all that I was able to achieve and more importantly the human it has helped shape," the 35-year-old posted on his Instagram account. Among his many achievements was helping Chelsea to their first Champions League title in 2012. And his former club were quick to pay tribute to the player who joined them "as a fresh-faced 19-year-old". In a decade of service, he clocked up 372 appearances in a Chelsea shirt, winning the Champions League, two Premier League titles, four FA Cups, the Europa League and two League Cups. "Enjoy your retirement, John!" said the Chelsea statement. In his retirement post Mikel wrote: "There is a saying that 'all good things must come to an end', and for my professional football career, that day is today."

### Bangladesh beat UAE

**DUBAI:** Mosaddek Hossain played a key role with both bat and ball as Bangladesh beat United Arab Emirates by 32 runs in Dubai on Tuesday to sweep the two-match T20 series. Bangladesh made 169-5 after opener Mehidy Hasan's 46 off 37 balls provided a solid platform before Mosaddek (27) and Liton Das (25) kept the runs flowing. Yasir Ali and Nurul Hasan gave the innings some late impetus in an unbroken stand of 32 over the final three overs. Sixteen-year-old Aayan Afzal Khan, a left-arm spinner, took 2-33 with Aryan Lakra sending down three tidy overs to return figures of 1-14. UAE slumped to 29-4 in response after losing three wickets for just two runs, with Mosaddek removing Aryan Lakra and Vriitya Aravind with successive deliveries. Captain Chandangapoyil Rizwan and Basil Hameed battled gamely in a partnership of 90 but the required run rate was too much for UAE.

### Midfielder Delph retires

**LONDON:** Former Manchester City and England midfielder Fabian Delph announced his retirement on Tuesday. Delph made 204 Premier League appearances for City, Everton, Aston Villa and Leeds. The 32-year-old won two Premier League titles during four years with City between 2015 and 2019. He also appeared in the FA Cup and League Cup finals with Villa, finishing as a runner-up on both occasions. Delph, who played 20 times for England, left City to join Everton three years ago but injuries restricted him to just 21 appearances in all competitions over the last two seasons. His contract with Everton expired at the end of last season and he has opted to hang up his boots after failing to find a new club. "So today I announce my retirement with nothing but happiness and gratitude for what this beautiful game has given me," he posted on Instagram.

### S Korea beat Cameroon

**SEOUL:** Son Heung-min scored for the second straight match on Tuesday to give South Korea a 1-0 home victory over Cameroon in their latest World Cup tune-up. The Spurs striker headed the ball home after a shot from Kim Jin-su was deflected by goalkeeper Andre Onana in the 35th minute. South Korea hung on for the win in front of 59,000 fans at Seoul World Cup Stadium. On Friday, Korean skipper Son netted a free-kick in a 2-2 draw against Costa Rica. With the World Cup less than two months away, South Korea's Portuguese coach Paulo Bento was pleased with the workout. "In general, we made a good game, better in the first half, when we had good chances to score," he said. "It was a good game and a fair victory," he added. South Korea are in Group H at the World Cup with Uruguay, Ghana and Portugal. The home side had the first attempt of the game when Lee Jae-sung's diving effort in the fifth minute forced a difficult save from Onana. — From AFP

**MILAN:** A crucial step towards the demolition of the iconic San Siro begins on Wednesday when Milan hosts the first of a series of meetings with the public necessary for the new stadium proposed by the city's two footballing giants. AC Milan and Inter Milan both insist that they can no longer stay in the current, city-owned San Siro and have drawn up plans for a new 60,000-capacity ground flanked by sport and leisure facilities on the same site, which will be completely remodelled.

Should it go ahead the project is scheduled to be completed in 2030, with 1.3 billion euros (\$1.24 billion) being jointly invested in the development by both clubs, who say they cannot afford to build separate new grounds and need the increased revenue this project would bring.

Over three years after presenting their initial project the public will now be able to scrutinize it and have their say at 10 meetings held over a month, after which a report will be presented to the city by the meetings' independent organizers in mid-November. The city can then decide whether to insist on further changes to a project which has had 50,000 square meters of development cut from it since it was first proposed, or proceed with approval.

The project is divided into two main sections: construction of the new stadium in the area immediately west of the San Siro currently occupied by car parking and a local park, which the clubs want finished by September 2027. After that is built the current stadium, set to host the opening ceremony of the 2026 Winter Olympics, will then be demolished before the new facilities—including shopping, convention and sports centers, are built around a new public park.

### 'Property speculation'

It's these facilities and the destruction of a symbolic stadium which have attracted the ire of some Milan residents and a sizeable portion of the city council, who are also angry at the granting of public land to private investors for a fraction of the rent the pair currently pay. Other criticisms include the

## China replicates Olympic 'bubble' for rare sports

**SHANGHAI:** China will replicate its COVID-secure Olympic bubble when it hosts its first major international sports event since the Beijing Winter Games - with organizers calling it a "roller-coaster ride". Chengdu, which until recently was under lockdown and was also rattled by an earthquake earlier this month, will stage the table tennis world team championships from Friday for 10 days. Much like the Beijing Olympics and Paralympics in February-March, the tournament will unfold in a "closed loop" to satisfy the strict zero-COVID policies which have seen most other major sports events in China cancelled throughout the pandemic.

The chief executive of the ITTF, the governing body of table tennis, called it "one of the most - if not the most - complex and important table tennis events in ITTF history". Nearly 1,300 people will be encased in the championships' bubble. "The road to Chengdu was indeed bumpy or a roller-coaster ride," Steve Dainton said. The competition was pushed back once because of an upsurge in coronavirus cases driven by the Omicron variant at the beginning of the year.

Then, with under a month to go, the southwestern city of Chengdu found itself under a tight lockdown that closed schools, disrupted businesses and forced residents to stay home for over two weeks.

## Tropical storm adds pressure on Quartararo

**BANGKOK:** A tropical storm forecast to batter Thailand this weekend could shake up the three-way fight for the MotoGP world championship after leader Fabio Quartararo failed to capitalize in Japan. The French reigning world champion could only finish eighth at Motegi on Sunday in a race to forget for the title-chasing trio.

That was at least better than chief rivals Francesco Bagnaia, who crashed out on the last lap trying to overtake Quartararo, and Aleix Espargaro, who came 16th after a malfunction with his Aprilia. Quartararo extended his championship lead over Italy's Bagnaia from 10 points to 18 in Japan, despite being well off the pace of race winner Jack Miller.

The Yamaha rider has not won a race since June in Germany and seen his lead at the top whittled away. Heavy rain and lightning badly impacted practice at Motegi and the elements look set to play another significant role in Thailand for all three days including Sunday's race. Super typhoon Noru is expected to bring rain and storms as MotoGP returns to the International Circuit at Buriram, about 400 kilometers (250 miles) northeast of Bangkok, for the first Thai GP since 2019 after Covid.

"We will have to push to the maximum," said Quartararo, who has been suffering in the second half of 2022, recording only one podium finish in the last six races. The title race is in the home straight and too close to call. After Thailand there are only grands prix in Australia, Malaysia and Valencia. Prior to Motegi, hard-charging Bagnaia appeared to be the rider to beat despite being second in the



MILAN: AC Milan's supporters cheer during the UEFA Champions League at the San Siro stadium in Milan. —AFP

significant reduction in the number of seats of which over 10,000 could be reserved for hospitality-way down not just on the San Siro's capacity but also the number of fans currently packing the ground.

Both Inter and Milan have been regularly getting crowds of over 70,000 as a post-pandemic wave of enthusiasm among fans has led to supporters flocking back to stadiums in big numbers across Serie A. Some pressure groups are pushing for the renovation of the current ground and dismiss Milan CEO Paolo Scaroni's claims on Tuesday that it would be "impossible and dangerous to get 50,000 fans into a building site", citing the redevelopment of the San Siro ahead of the 1990 World Cup which added a whole new tier to the stadium.

### Inter post loss

Meanwhile, Inter Milan announced on Wednesday that they had posted a loss of 140 million euros (\$133.9 million) for the 2021-22 season, a

significant reduction in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The loss, which Inter say in a statement was due to virus restrictions still being in place for the first half of last campaign, was around 105 million euros less than the previous season's record losses. Revenue was also up 75 million euros on the previous season to 439.6 million euros. Inter said if the end of the 2019-20 season (which ran into the following financial year after the pandemic ravaged Europe) is not taken into account the revenue increase stands at 140 million euros.

Owner Suning "has already formally expressed his commitment to backing the group" by covering the losses, Inter said. "The club's two primary objectives remain steadfast: maintaining the team's competitiveness at the highest level in every competition and strengthening its financial position," said Inter. On Friday Inter's Serie A rivals Juventus posted record losses of 254.3 million euros, the fifth straight year their accounts have been in the red. — AFP



BEIJING: A woman prepares to skate as she walks past Bing Dwen Dwen, mascot of the Beijing 2022 Olympic Games at the National Speed Skating Oval, also known as the 'Ice Ribbon', the venue being used for speed skating events at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. — AFP

"Obviously we were also looking for contingencies if finally we could not make it, but... the popularity and history that our sport has in China gave us always a strong sense of hope," said Dainton. ITTF president Petra Sorling said "words cannot express" the excitement at the tournament finally kicking off.

### 'Hard restrictions'

More than 250 table tennis players from across the globe, including the United States, arrived on

specially chartered flights. They, along with coaches, officials and other staff, will be in the closed loop for the duration of the championships. They will stay in specific hotels, be shuttled to and from event venues, and must take a PCR test every day. So far, the ITTF said all participants had tested negative since their arrival. "It's great that we will be able to play this championships even if the restrictions are hard," Sweden's Kristian Karlsson was quoted as saying by the ITTF website. — AFP



TOCHIGI PREFECTURE: Aprilia Racing rider Maverick Vinales of Spain (right) leads Prima Pramac Racing rider Johann Zarco of France, Mooney VR46 Racing Team rider Luca Marini of Italy and Monster Energy Yamaha MotoGP rider Fabio Quartararo of France during the MotoGP class race at the Japanese Grand Prix in Motegi, Tochigi prefecture. —AFP

standings. Going into Japan he had won four of the last five races, but crashing out last weekend checked his momentum.

"I made an overambitious manoeuvre," said Bagnaia in a Twitter apology to his Ducati team. "I will reflect on my mistake." Spain's Espargaro had to dump his ailing Aprilia after the Motegi warm-up lap and jump on his spare bike. He could not recover from emerging last and now sits 25 points behind Quartararo. Australia's Miller took advantage of the top trio's woes to scorch from seventh on the grid to a fourth MotoGP victory and is fifth in the standings, but out the title running. Italian Danilo Petrucci, a two-time MotoGP race winner, is lined up to stand in at Suzuki for Spain's Joan Mir, who is recovering from an ankle injury sustained during the Austrian GP in August. —AFP

## Verstappen on verge of 2nd world title; F1 returns to Singapore

**SINGAPORE:** Red Bull's dominant Max Verstappen can clinch a second world championship when the Singapore Grand Prix returns this weekend after a three-year absence because of COVID. The flying Dutchman has a mathematical chance to seal back-to-back world titles under lights around the spectacular and demanding Marina Bay street circuit.

To do so, the 24-year-old must win the race - something he has never done in Singapore - and needs his closest rivals to falter badly. If that does not happen, the championship fight will move on to the Japanese Grand Prix a week later. It looks a case of when, not if. "You need a bit of luck for that as well," Verstappen told Sky Sports of retaining his crown in Singapore. "I don't think about it."

Verstappen opened up a 116-point lead in the drivers' standings over Ferrari's Charles Leclerc following his victory at the Italian Grand Prix. He is 125 clear of third-placed Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez. He needs to extend his lead to 138 points by Sunday's chequered flag to be crowned with five races to spare - the earliest championship win since Michael Schumacher's in 2002 with six GPs remaining. Monza was Verstappen's 11th victory in 16 races of a potentially record-breaking season. He needs two more wins to equal the single-season mark of 13 jointly held by Schumacher (2004) and Sebastian Vettel (2013). "I want to go to Singapore and try to win that race as well," Verstappen said. "We are having a great season, so we should really try and appreciate it and enjoy the moment." —AFP

Sports

# European giants struggle for form as WCup looms

## Doubts linger over England, France, Germany, Spain

LONDON: Just weeks away from the start of a World Cup like no other, the poor form of Europe's powerhouses suggests there could be a changing of the guard in Qatar. European nations have won every World Cup since Brazil lifted the last of their five titles in Japan and South Korea in 2002.

Europe has supplied 13 of the 16 semi-finalists at the past four World Cups, with Italy, Spain, Germany and France coming out on top. But reigning European champions Italy have failed even to qualify for Qatar, while there are doubts over the chances of England, France, Germany and Spain. England's six-game winless run is their worst ever heading to a major tournament, with the Three Lions relegated from the top tier of UEFA's Nations League.

World champions France only avoided the same fate thanks to other results going their way as Les Bleus and Germany won just one of their six

Nations League group games. Spain have progressed to the semi-finals of that competition, but were beaten 2-1 at home by Switzerland last week. Adding to the uncertainty is a first-ever mid-season World Cup for European teams, with no time for pre-tournament training camps and friendlies.

Between now and the break for the World Cup on November 13 - a week before the tournament starts-players at Europe's top teams could play up to 13 times for their clubs. "Everybody has got the same challenge. It's a strange period because so many teams are a little bit up in the air," said England manager Gareth Southgate. "There's very few teams that have been able to find form. 'We've all had the players for three or four days, two games in quick succession, and now this gap where you are sitting hoping you don't pick up big injuries, but we're going to pick up some.'"

### 'High-level opposition'

Injuries, fatigue and the competitive nature of the Nations League have been pinpointed as the reasons for the struggles of some of the traditional giants. England, Germany and Italy were all in the same Nations League group, as were Spain and Portugal. "We're playing and have been playing some top-level sides and we will be better for that," said Southgate.

"In the past we've had runs of friendlies or whatever the matches are and then we've gone into tournaments. This is the first time we've hit high-level opposition." France were without a host of stars that Didier Deschamps hopes will be fit for the World Cup for their 2-0 defeat to Denmark on Sunday. "The important thing is to be able to recover all our strength in the next two months," said Deschamps.

As the European contenders struggle for conti-

nity with little time to prepare, Argentina and Brazil head to Qatar as the form teams. In what could be his final World Cup at 35, Lionel Messi is enjoying playing in the best Argentina side of his international career. Lionel Scaloni's men are on a national record 35-game unbeaten run stretching back to 2019, which includes Messi's first major international trophy at the Copa America last year.

Defeat in that Copa America final on home soil is Brazil's only defeat in 29 matches. The vast majority of those games for both nations have come against inferior opposition in friendlies and South American World Cup qualifiers. But any questions over the quality of the current Argentina squad disappeared in a dominant 3-0 victory over Italy in June in the first-ever "Finalissima" between the champions of Europe and South America. "I see Argentina above the rest and Brazil too," said Spain boss Luis Enrique. "Well above the rest." — AFP



## Kuwait Futsal team eye quarter finals

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Futsal team seek to reach the quarter finals when they play against Thailand on Thursday in the second round of group one matches of AFC Futsal Asian Cup Kuwait 2022. Kuwait is hosting the games with participation of 16 teams. Kuwait are on top of the group after defeating Oman Tuesday with 3 points, ahead of Thailand team which defeated Iraq 3-2.

Kuwait's match today is considered a cross-roads for the team, as if the team win, they will move to the next round, or qualify directly if Oman draw with Iraq. Kuwait's coach will rely on the excellent performance during Oman match especially goal keeper Mohammad Al-Hazeem, and



Abdelrahman Al-Taweel, Abdellatif Al-Abbasi and Abdelrahman Al-Wadhi.

In group 2, Bahrain seek to make up for the bad performance in the first round when they meet Turkmenistan. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan will go for a second win when they meet. Bahrain earlier lost to Tajikistan 3-4 while Uzbekistan defeated Turkmenistan 8-0.

Kuwait's player Abdelrahman Al-Taweel who was selected 'Man of the Match' against Oman said the players are looking forward to qualify for the semi-finals - adding that their goal is to compete for the championship. Oman's coach Younis Al-Fahdi said Kuwait team deserve to win. He admitted that his team were not up to their usual level.

Saudi Arabia's team surprised Japan by defeating them 2-1 during the first round of Group 4. Japan scored early in the 3rd minute, but Saudi Arabia's Nasser Al-Harthy and Muhsen Faqih answered quickly with one goal each. Saudi Arabia's coach said the team were determined to win and were able to score two goals in 5 minutes.



## Kuwait Badminton Challenge 2022 on October 6-8

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The stage is set for the 7th edition of the Kuwait Badminton Challenge (KBC 2022) which will be hosted by the Indian Badminton Association (IBAK) on October 6, 7 and 8. Teams from many countries including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, India, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia will participate in this three-day-long tournament in addition to the participation of many local clubs from Kuwait.

"Many leading badminton players of the world, past and present will glamorize the event. The IBAK officials have been on their toes for the last couple of months to ensure a smooth conduct of the event," said IBAK Chairman Dr Manimara Chozhan while addressing a press conference. "Since KBC 2022 is taking place after the break caused by the COVID

pandemic, we hope to relaunch the tournament in a big way and provide an exciting time to all the participants. The first match of the tournament will start on October 6 at 2.30 pm at the state-of-the-art facility in IBAK Salwa gym.

Kuwait's badminton loving fraternity is going to witness some high-octane badminton in the coming week," he said. He said IBAK will have representations in the tournament. "The IBAK All Stars have been five times champions and are the defending champions. IBAK will additionally be represented by two more teams; the IBAK Challengers and IBAK Torpedoes," he said.

Team Victor who were runners up in many previous editions, Team 5.30 and Shuttle Stingers from India will be the teams competing in the team event and players from these events will also be taking part in the open events as well. This annual tourney hosted by IBAK has become a popular spectacle amongst the badminton fraternity in Kuwait and is looked forward to with great zest, he added. IBAK was founded in April 2010 as a non-profit organization committed to the popularization of badminton in Kuwait, nurture young talent and serve as a place for members to improve their game.



KUWAIT: Dr Manimara Chozhan, Anesh Mathew and Ajaykumar with IBAK office-bearers during the press conference.

## Spain snare Nations League semis spot

BRAGA: Alvaro Morata's late strike snatched Spain a 1-0 Nations League victory over Portugal in Braga on Tuesday and sent them into the semi-finals. La Roja needed to win to finish top of League A Group 2, but struggled on another difficult night for the Euro 2020 semi-finalists, until Morata's 88th-minute breakthrough. Spain have not been able to hit top form in the internationals leading up to the Qatar 2022 World Cup, but this hard-fought victory provides a welcome morale boost.

Portugal had the better of the game but Spain brightened in the final stages, with the introduction of several substitutes, including Nico Williams, who headed across goal for Morata to gleefully turn in at the back post. "When we had to stand up, we did," Morata told TVE. "If we had lost, it had to be giving everything we had on the pitch, and that's what we

did. "I'll remember the attitude of the team, we fought until the end. And Nico Williams, in his second game for the national team, was key and I put it over the line."

Spain will join Italy, Croatia and the Netherlands in the semis in June 2023, although attention now switches to the fast-approaching World Cup. Luis Enrique made wholesale changes to the side that suffered Spain's first home defeat since 2018 against Switzerland on Saturday, retaining only four starters. Morata was brought in to lead the line, while the Asturian coach rotated his entire midfield trio.

Spain still dominated possession, as their game-plan demands, but to little effect as Portugal created the more dangerous openings. Athletic Bilbao goalkeeper Unai Simon made a solid save to deny Ruben Neves and then a brilliant one to keep Liverpool striker Diogo Jota at bay. With Portuguese confidence increasing, Bruno Fernandes lashed an effort narrowly off-target, celebrated prematurely by swathes of the stadium as the ball appeared to settle in the net. —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

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, SIBI THAMPI, holder of Indian Passport No. S4165484, issued at Trivandrum, on 28/08/2018, having permanent residence address Ebenezer Thekanal, Elampal, PO Punalur, 691322 Kerala, India, residing now in Kuwait, hereby change my daughter name from HAZEL SIBI (Passport No. V7432079, issued in Kuwait on 30/05/2022) to PEARL DALIA SIBI with immediate effect. (C# 2411) — 29-09-2022.

I, Tejinder Singh S/o Manna Singh holder of Indian Passport No. M7064950 issued at Kuwait on 09/08/2015 permanent resident of Village Johal 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: Joyce Anthony Piedade to New Name: Joyce Fernandes. (C# 2410) -28-09-2022

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 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

in the name RAWOOT MUSAAB HIDAYATULLAH and I 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



PARIS: Brazil's forward Richarlison shoots the ball during the friendly football match between Brazil and Tunisia at the Parc des Princes in Paris on September 27, 2022. — AFP

## Banana thrown at Richarlison as Brazil overpower Tunisia 5-1

### Neymar edges closer to Pele's all-time scoring record

PARIS: Richarlison was the target of a banana thrown from the crowd as Brazil thrashed Tunisia 5-1 in a friendly in Paris on Tuesday, while Neymar edged closer to Pele's all-time scoring record for the five-time world champions. The game at the Parc des Princes was also briefly paused in the first half as the crowd were twice implored not to point laser pens at Brazil players.

"Unfortunately... a banana was thrown on the pitch towards Richarlison, scorer of the second Brazilian goal," the Brazilian football confederation (CBF) said on Twitter. "The CBF reinforces its position to combat racism and repudiates any prejudiced act." The Selecao produced a dominant first-half display in their final outing before travelling to Qatar for the World Cup, with Raphinha netting twice and Neymar moving to within two of Pele's record.

Richarlison also found the net, while Pedro scored as a second-half substitute before responding to more boos and missiles from the crowd by bowing in front of them in celebration. "It's a shame, it's difficult to see images like that," said Brazil captain Thiago Silva, whose team posed for a team photo before the match with a banner bearing an anti-racism message. "Unfortunately it seems that we can't change people's mentality. I hope they will realise that this doesn't work, it's the

past, we have to change. Unfortunately, people continue with this mentality."

Tite's Brazil will head into their World Cup Group G opener against Serbia on November 24 on a 15-match unbeaten run, dating back to their Copa America final loss to Argentina last year. The scene for a bad-tempered match was set when the vast numbers of Tunisia fans jeered the Brazilian national anthem before kick-off. "I was puzzled, I was saying 'No, it's a lack of respect'. Football is a sport that promotes inclusion," said Tite.

Brazil took the lead in the 12th minute, though, as Casemiro clipped the ball over the top and Barcelona winger Raphinha directed a wonderful looping header over Tunisia goalkeeper Aymen Dahmen and into the net. Jalel Kadri's men hit back six minutes later. Defender Montassar Talbi met Anis Slimane's outswinging free-kick to send a powerful header into the bottom corner past keeper Alisson.

Incredibly, Brazil were back ahead just seconds after that setback, as Raphinha sent Richarlison in behind to drill a strike through the legs of Dahmen to score his third goal in two games after a double against Ghana. The Tottenham forward celebrated in front of the Tunisian supporters, who responded by throwing a banana and plastic cups in his direction. Fred kicked the banana off the pitch, before extra security guards

took up residence on the side of the field.

#### Neymar nets penalty

Brazil almost extended their advantage as Paqueta followed a fine turn with a low shot which Dahmen tipped wide. But from the resulting corner, Casemiro was hauled down in the box and Neymar stepped up to roll home his 75th international goal from the penalty spot, despite having lasers pointed at his face. Brazil continued to cut through the visitors' defense with ease and Raphinha scored again in the 40th minute by firing in off the post from the edge of the box. Things went from bad to worse for Tunisia before half-time as Dylan Bronn brought down Neymar and was harshly sent off after a brief melee between the two teams.

Tunisia were much improved after the break but Brazil still scored again with 16 minutes remaining through Flamengo forward Pedro's maiden goal for his country. Earlier on Tuesday, World Cup hosts Qatar survived a late penalty miss by Alexis Sanchez to hold Chile to a 2-2 draw in Vienna. Canada, who are preparing for their first World Cup since 1986, lost 2-0 to Uruguay in Bratislava as Liverpool's Darwin Nunez scored his third international goal. Sardar Azmoun scored as a substitute to earn Iran a 1-1 draw with African champions Senegal. Morocco drew 0-0 with Paraguay in Seville. — AFP

### Protests shadow Iran's WCup push

PARIS: The protests that have erupted in Iran are shadowing the national football team's bid for a breakthrough to the World Cup, with rumours of a split in the squad, social media posts that mysteriously disappear and former legends weighing in to support the demonstrations. Team Melli are preparing to battle in a competitive and also politically loaded Group B in Qatar, where they will face the United States, England and Wales in a bid to reach the knock-out rounds for the first time.

But the protests that have shaken Iran since the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini following her arrest by the notorious morality police have raised uncomfortable questions for the team, who are hugely influential in a football-mad country. There has been immense scrutiny of the team's star forward Sardar Azmoun, who plays in the Bundesliga for Bayer Leverkusen. He initially appeared to allege a gag order on the team speaking out and condemning the authorities' deadly crackdown but he then stepped back.

Meanwhile, one of the biggest names in Iranian football, former national team star Ali Karimi, has become a hero for many of the protesters in Iran by vociferously supporting the protests on social media in defiance of bitter criticism in pro-government media. Echoes of the protests reached Iran's pre-World Cup friendly match against Senegal in Vienna on Tuesday, when protesters outside the stadium shouted slogans against the Islamic republic and chanted the names of Karimi and Azmoun.

"We are here to just beg (the team): please support us instead of standing against us. Please support us," said Mehran Mostaed, one of the organizers of the protest. "Sure there are consequences for a football player to express support, because the consequences in Iran for the people who are against the regime are really high. But for sure they have to face the consequences."

Azmoun began the game on the bench, fuelling rumors he may have been sidelined. But he appeared in the second half, and scored with a neatly taken header to the pleasure of Iran's newly rehired Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz. Azmoun's celebrations were muted and the team had remained wrapped in their black tracksuits during the anthems rather than exposing the national strip.

Earlier in the week, Iranian football bloggers took screenshots of an Instagram post from Azmoun saying that because of "restrictive rules on the Team Melli, I could not say anything". But he added that could not stay silent due to the crackdown against the protests that activists say has killed over 75 people. —AFP

### Messi in the 100 club as Argentina streak continues

HARRISON: Lionel Messi marked his 100th international victory with two goals as Argentina edged closer to Italy's world record unbeaten streak with a 3-0 defeat of Jamaica in a World Cup warm-up friendly in New Jersey on Tuesday. Paris Saint-Germain superstar Messi took his international goals tally to 90 in 164 appearances after coming on as a second-half substitute at the Red Bull Arena.

Messi's goals capped an emphatic win for the South Americans, who have now gone 35 games unbeaten in a streak stretching back to 2019 - just two shy of Italy's world record unbeaten run of 37 set between 2018 and 2012. Messi, who also scored twice during a friendly win over Honduras in Miami on Friday, delighted the crowd with an electrifying cameo after coming on in the 56th minute for Inter Milan's Lautaro Martinez.

He bagged his first of the night in the 86th minute, darting forward before caressing a shot into the bottom corner past Jamaica goalkeeper Andre Blake. The 35-year-old seven-time Ballon D'Or winner then produced an impish second goal, craftily curling a low shot underneath the Jamaican wall into the bottom corner from a free-kick.

Messi's presence left the crowd in a frenzy. On three different occasions spectators sprinted onto the pitch in an effort to get close to the Argentinean icon. One shirtless fan attempted to get Messi to autograph his back before he was bundled to the



NEW JERSEY: Argentina's Lionel Messi (right) dribbles past Jamaica's Damion Lowe during the international friendly football match between Argentina and Jamaica at Red Bull Arena in Harrison on September 27, 2022. —AFP

floor by security staff. Messi's late double crowned another assured performance from Lionel Scaloni's Argentina, who are rapidly emerging as one of the favorites for the World Cup in Qatar in November.

The Argentineans had dominated throughout a one-sided first half, and took the lead on 13 minutes when Martinez jinked past Jamaica's Damion Lowe and cut back for Manchester City's Julian Alvarez,

who tucked away a low finish from close range. Alvarez almost had a second soon afterwards but curled his shot just wide. Midfielder Guido Rodriguez also went close, but was unable to direct his volley at the back post on target, instead shooting over the bar. Giovanni Lo Celso also threatened with a long-range effort that flew just wide of the top corner in the 33rd minute. — AFP