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## Iranian FM preaches unity, dialogue during Saudi trip

First visit since Mideast rivals announced surprise rapprochement

OP-ED

### Black Sea Grain Initiative

As representatives of our respective countries, we are very aware that for import-dependent countries across the Middle East, Africa and other regions, food security is national security. All our leaders are grappling with the challenges of inflation, increasing household spending and global food insecurity. More than a year has passed since Russia began its illegal invasion of Ukraine, in clear contravention of international law.

Its actions were an unequivocal violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and integrity, rendering stark the challenge to international law and the principles of the UN Charter. Aside from the terrible damage and loss of life the conflict has wrought in Ukraine, it has intensified the global food security crisis. The UN and Turkey brokered the Black Sea Grain Initiative in July 2022 to help protect the world from the worst of the ensuing crisis precipitated by Russia's war, allowing shipments of Ukrainian grain and other foodstuff to exit ports in the Black Sea.

Since its establishment, the Black Sea Grain Initiative has enabled more than 32 million tonnes of grain to be exported from three Black Sea ports in Ukraine to 45 countries across three continents. It has supported the stabilization of global food prices, preventing over 100 million people worldwide from falling into extreme poverty and hunger. The Initiative has been crucial in addressing global food insecurity and for ensuring predictable supplies of food reach the most vulnerable countries. The leaders of our and other countries agreed in Hiroshima in May to work together and respond to the worsening global food security crisis, calling on all participants to fully implement the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

Despite this call, and the efforts of the UN and Turkey to salvage this initiative, Russia withdrew unilaterally from the deal last month, effectively ending the Black Sea Grain Initiative. With this decision, the world has lost a key instrument of addressing global food security, leading to a further increase in food prices. Russia's withdrawal shows that it does not regard the increase in food prices and the threat of hunger and famine as collateral damage of the war, but as tools to maximize its own exports of cereals and revenues. It is crucial that all countries reject this attempt. The consequences of Russia's withdrawal will be felt everywhere, but most acutely by those most vulnerable countries.

For these reasons, we call on Russia to immediately re-join the Black Sea Grain Initiative to avoid any further shocks to global food systems. Russia must stop weaponizing food and take steps in good faith to support the resumption of the Initiative.

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RIYADH: Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian (left) and his Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan hold a joint press conference in Riyadh on August 17, 2023. — AFP

RIYADH: Iran's top diplomat preached unity and dialogue during a visit to Saudi Arabia on Thursday, his first since the two Middle East rivals announced a surprise rapprochement in March. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian also took the opportunity to reiterate the Islamic republic's support for the Palestinian cause at a time when Riyadh is in discussions with the United States about potentially normalizing ties with the Zionist entity.

Ties between Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia and Shiite-majority Iran "are progressing in the right direction," Amir-Abdollahian told reporters at a press conference with his Saudi counterpart Prince Faisal bin Farhan, touting economic and security cooperation without announcing any new agreements. Thursday's meeting in the Saudi foreign ministry's Islamic Solidarity Hall "will be a prelude to the meeting of the

heads of the two countries", he added, without specifying when President Ebrahim Raisi would visit Saudi Arabia at King Salman's invitation. "We are sure that these meetings and cooperation will help the unity of the Islamic world." The foreign ministers did not take questions.

The two countries severed ties in 2016 after Saudi diplomatic missions in Iran were attacked during protests over Riyadh's execution of Shiite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr. But in March, a China-brokered deal saw the long-time rivals agree to restore diplomatic relations and reopen their respective embassies. In June, Iran reopened its embassy in Riyadh with a flag-raising ceremony. Its new ambassador, Alireza Enayati, travelled with Amir-Abdollahian to Riyadh on Thursday. Earlier this month, Iran said the Saudi embassy in Tehran had begun

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### Kuwait pearl diving season ends in style

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and in the presence of Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom Belinda Lewis and Chairman of Board of Directors of Kuwait Sea Sports Club Major General Fahad Al-Fahad, the Sea Club on Thursday concluded the ceremony of "Al-Qaffal", marking the end of the 32nd annual pearl diving heritage trip. The ceremony that was organized by the Naval Heritage Committee of the club, is aimed at celebrating the end of Kuwait's diving season, and saw the return of the old diving ships to the club's shore. The ceremony began with "Al-Qaffal" which means opening the sea oysters that contains earnings of pearls from the divers. The event was attended by the families of the divers and featured several sea arts and cultural music at the end of the ceremony.



### Saudi executes US national convicted of killing father

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia on Wednesday executed a US national convicted of torturing and killing his father, state media reported, bringing to at least 19 the number of foreigners put to death this year. The death sentence for Bishoy Sharif Najeef Naseef was carried out in the Riyadh region, the official Saudi Press Agency said. The Gulf kingdom is frequently criticized for its prolific use of capital punishment, which human rights groups say undermines its bid to soften its image through a sweeping "Vision 2030" social and economic reform agenda.

A court found that Naseef, whose age was not given, beat and strangled his Egyptian father to death and mutilated him after he died, and that he also used drugs and attempted to kill another person, SPA said. The mode of execution was not specified, but Saudi Arabia has in the past often used beheading when implementing the death penalty.

Riyadh's ally the United States did not immediately comment on the execution. "We are aware of those reports and are monitoring the situation but don't have any specifics," State Department spokesman Vedant

Patel told reporters. He said a US consular official last visited Naseef in July. Saudi Arabia was the world's third most prolific executioner last year, Amnesty International has said. More than 1,000 death sentences have been carried out since King Salman assumed power in 2015, according to a report published earlier this year by the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights and the Britain-based group Reprieve.

A total of 91 people - 19 of them foreigners - have been executed so far this year, according to an AFP tally based on state media reports. As well as the US national, those put to death came from countries including Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Jordan, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Yemen. Last year's announced figure of 147 executions was more than double the 2021 figure of 69. Executions for drug crimes resumed in 2022, ending a moratorium that lasted for almost three years.

The 2022 total included 81 people put to death on a single day for offences related to "terrorism", an episode that sparked an international outcry. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, King Salman's son and the de facto ruler, has said on multiple occasions that the kingdom was reducing executions. In a transcript of an interview with

The Atlantic magazine published by state media in March 2022, Prince Mohammed said the kingdom had "got rid of" the death penalty except for cases of murder or when someone "threatens the lives of many people". — AFP

### Government urged to diversify economy

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Hasan Jowhar on Thursday asked Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah on the reasons for the delay in establishing the Public Warehouse and Border Crossings company 15 years after the law was passed by the National Assembly. Jowhar said that based on the latest budget, oil income is estimated at KD 17 billion while wages and salaries are projected at KD 15 billion, or 90 percent of total oil revenues.

He said that for Kuwait to meet increasing demands for improving the standard of living for citizens, it has become urgently necessary to diversify sources of income away from oil. Jowhar said that feasibility studies on the project show it will post an annual profit of around KD 140 million, besides creating jobs for citizens and helping Kuwait in its endeavor to become a regional hub for logistics.

In the meantime, National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun sent a series of questions on Thursday to Oil Minister and Acting Finance Minister Saad

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## Local

# Kuwaiti women launch initiative to scrap prewedding and graduation celebrations

## Campaign aims to reduce heavy costs to hosts and guests

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** With the high cost of marriage that is affecting the Kuwaiti community due to social obligations that many locals are indirectly forced to adhere to, an initiative was recently launched by a number of Kuwaiti women from a well-known tribe calling to cancel unnecessary prewedding parties that place a heavy burden on families. The initiative, which has gone viral among citizens, aims to reduce the cost of numerous celebrations that have become mandatory over time, in addition to unnecessary spending on sweets, flowers and gifts by the host family and guests, who are socially compelled to bring gifts.

The initiative also calls to cancel graduation celebrations held by individuals that waste lots of money and are merely held to show off. Several other Kuwaiti tribes announced that they will also adopt the initiative as they consider it a positive step to cut costs, especially for those who cannot afford prewedding celebrations, which can reach two to three events before the main marriage party.

A statement by the Kuwaiti women stressed many women spend huge amounts of money at bridal shops only to show off among their peers,

which has enabled wedding shops to take advantage and increase prices to reap the maximum benefits.

Nasser, a citizen who supports this initiative, considers the campaign as an "awakening and women's revolution against wasteful spending". Another citizen Maram expressed her gratitude for the initiative, saying she has been implementing this step for a long time. "I stopped receiving gifts at weddings and other celebrations to not embarrass anyone who can't afford to buy gifts," she said.

Sarah, a citizen who has pledged to implement this initiative, said it is clear and outstanding. "We have a duty to the people whom we love to celebrate or grieve with to do so in a reasonable way," she said, adding, "we witness many silly compliments that have exhausted the people's pockets."

Several citizens revealed the cost of prewedding celebrations can reach the cost of the wedding itself. For instance, if a wedding reception costs KD 10,000, multiple prewedding celebrations cost almost the same. But some Kuwaiti women oppose this initiative and believe people should reject it, arguing it is not fair to force the entire tribe to act in the same way, stressing it should be a matter of choice and everyone should do what they think is right.



### News in Brief



### 15 kilos of marijuana seized

**KUWAIT:** Security officials in cooperation with the General Administration of Customs have arrested two women of Asian nationality who tried to bring in parcels of marijuana by air freight - in an innovative way. After interrogation, the two defendants confessed and admitted that the parcels belonged to them. They were referred to the competent authorities for necessary legal measures. The Ministry of Interior said that security efforts are ongoing to combat drug trafficking. In another development, criminal security department arrested 13 people on charges of selling homemade alcoholic substances. Eight people were caught an apparent state of drunkenness while nine others were detained for violation of residency law.

### Opening of 18 schools

**KUWAIT:** Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education Osama Al-Sultan issued decisions to open 18 schools in Farwaniya Educational Zone and Ahmadi Educational Zone, as part of preparations and readiness for the academic year 2023/2024. The decision included the opening of 4 schools for all stages in the residential area of Khairan, 2 kindergartens in Sabah Al-Ahmad area, 7 schools for all educational levels in the West Abdullah Al-Mubarak area, a primary religious institute for girls in West Abdullah Al-Mubarak area, the reopening of 2 kindergartens in the Al-Dhahar area, and the reopening of a primary school for boys in the Al-Dhahar area.

### Registration for medical grads

**KUWAIT:** The Civil Service Commission has completed the automation procedures for registering and nominating graduates of medical qualifications automatically to the Ministry of Health through the website of the Bureau as from August 24th. This will be applied to graduates of Kuwait University and the colleges of the Public Authority for Education Application.

## Kuwait's new envoy to UAE submits credentials



**ABU DHABI:** Kuwait's new ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Jamal Al-Ghurnaim on Wednesday submitted a copy of his credentials to President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, citing the proximity shared between the Gulf Arab countries. History is dotted with incidents that served as a testament to the amity between Kuwait

and Abu Dhabi, the ambassador said amid a ceremony to usher him into his new post, underlining his commitment to propel bilateral relations to greater levels. The UAE president received a bevy of newly-appointed ambassadors to the Gulf Arab emirate, saying Abu Dhabi looks forward to closer ties with its international partners. — KUNA

## Family, language, nationality define identity: Youths

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti youth say their family, language and nationality, are most important to their personal identity, with nearly three-quarters (71%) also saying preserving their religious and cultural identity is more important to them than creating a more tolerant, liberal, and globalized society. This is one of the key findings under the theme 'My Identity' of the 15th annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey, the most comprehensive study of its kind of the Arab world's largest demographic, its over 200 million youth, conducted by ASDA'A BCW, the Middle East and North Africa's leading communications consultancy.

When asked what defines their personal identity, 20% each of Kuwaiti youth said 'my family' and 'my language' followed by 18% citing 'my nationality', 13% 'my gender', 12% 'my religion', and 11% 'my Arabic heritage'. Across all respondents in the survey, 'my religion' and 'my family/tribe' were each named by 27% of respondents, followed by 'my nationality' (15%), 'my language' (11%), 'my Arabic heritage' (8%), 'my gender' (7%) and 'my political beliefs' (4%).

Religion was named as most important to personal identity by 30% of the respondents in Levant, 27% in North Africa, and 25% in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, while family/tribe was deemed most important by 37% of youth in North Africa, 21% in Levant and 20% in the GCC. Over three-quarters (76%) of Arab youth said they are concerned about the loss of traditional values and culture, the highest percentage saying so in five years, while nearly two-thirds (65%) said preserving their religious and cultural identity is more important to them than creating a more tolerant, liberal, and globalized society. This sentiment rises to nearly 74% in Levant, 72% in the GCC states and 68% in North Africa.

Interestingly, while 11% said language is most important to their identity, over half (54%) of the respondents said the Arabic language is less important to them than it is to their parents. This trend is seen across the three regions surveyed, with 59% of GCC youth, 51% in North Africa and 52% in Levant all saying it is less important to them. In Kuwait, however, more than half (54%) said the Arabic language is more important to them than it is to their parents.

Reflecting the importance they place on their faith, a majority (73%) disagreed that religious values are holding the Arab world back, but nearly two-thirds

(65%) said religion plays too big a role in the Middle East. Fewer Arab youth than in previous years feel the region needs to reform its religious institutions - down to 58% this year from 77% last year. This year, the face-to-face interviews with Arab youth were conducted from March 27 to April 12, coinciding with the Holy Month of Ramadan.

This sense of young Arabs embracing their religious identity is further reinforced by the finding that nearly two-thirds (62%) say the laws of their country should be based on Sharia standards and not civil or common law. This sentiment is consistent across the three regions covered, with 68% in GCC, 53% in North Africa and 68% in Levant saying they prefer Sharia laws to govern their nations.

Sunil John, President, MENA, BCW and Founder of ASDA'A BCW, said: "These findings reveal that Generation Z remain guided by faith, with their affinity toward their religion stronger than ever and many being concerned about what they see as the loss of traditional values and culture. What is evident is that Arab youth increasingly view their personal identity through the lens of religion, family and nationality."

"Another compelling finding is that the Arabic language is not as integral to their sense of tradition or their cultural values as one might have thought, with a majority of young people across the Arab world agreeing that the Arabic language is less important to them than it is to their parents," John added. "The loss in importance given by Arab youth to the Arabic language is inevitably a symptom of the pervasive spread of the Internet and social media. It is a cause for concern, most importantly, because of the Arabic language's potentially diminished role as a unifying force among Arab nations."

ASDA'A BCW commissioned Sixth Factor Consulting, a leading research company, to conduct the 15th edition of the Arab Youth Survey through face-to-face interviews with 3,600 Arab citizens aged 18 to 24 in their home nations, the largest sample in the survey's history. The survey covered 53 cities across 18 Arab states, including for the first time South Sudan. The interviews were conducted in person rather than online to maximize accuracy and to reflect the nuances of Arab youth's opinion across the region as much as possible.

'My Identity' is the fourth sub-theme of the 2023 ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey, whose overarching theme is 'Living a New Reality'. Findings on 'Global Citizenship' were announced in June, followed by 'My Politics' and 'My Livelihood' in July. Insights into the lifestyle of Arab youth, as well as their perceptions on topics as diverse as climate change, mental health and gender will be revealed in the coming weeks, making this year's survey the most comprehensive in its 15-year history.

— arabyouthsurvey.com

## Kuwait identifies martyr's remains

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared on Thursday that Kuwait, in its quest to establish destiny of the prisoners and the missing by DNA tests, has determined identity of one of the martyrs, Hamdan Mohammad Hamdan Al-Mutairi. Ambassador Rabie' Al-Adsani, the assistant foreign minister for the prisoners and missing affairs, said in a statement to KUNA that the martyr

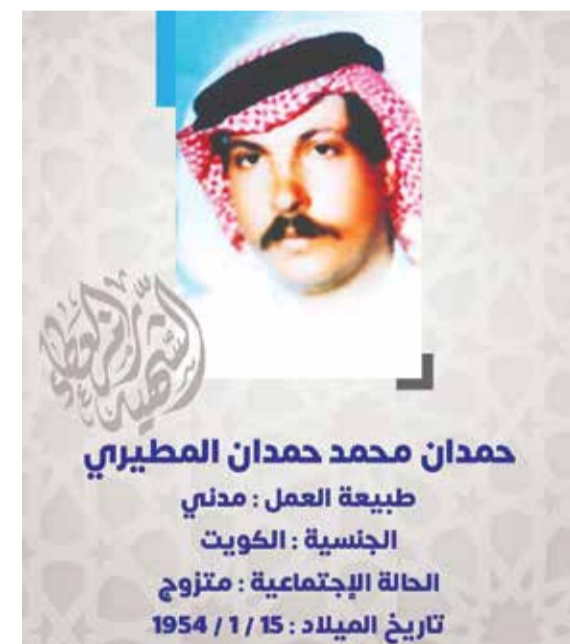


Rabie' Al-Adsani

had been detained by troops of the flagrant Iraqi aggression on Kuwait in 1990 and his remains were found recently, indicating that the corpse was quite disfigured and made forensics' task quite hard.

However, relentless efforts by the public department of forensic evidences and its use of state-of-art techniques resulted in determining the corpse identity, the latest to be listed among Kuwait's martyrs. The ministry, in cooperation with the martyrs' bureau, informed next of kin after the DNA tests, he said, affirming that informing martyrs' families is a humanitarian and legal right.

Al-Adsani praised the martyr Al-Mutairi who sacrificed himself for Kuwait and set an example to follow in patriotism. He thanked the forensics department for its prime role in determining destiny of the prisoners despite difficulties in forensic examination and affirmed Kuwait's resolve to determine destiny of all Kuwaiti and third country prisoners, missing (whether alive or deceased). — KUNA



## Commerce Ministry warns against online scammers

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti Ministry of Commerce and Industry, on Thursday, warned against various dubious entities trying to pose as representatives of the ministry online and scamming consumers. A statement by the ministry said that acts of fraud against citizens and residents were on the rise due to scammers using fake ministry accounts on the web and social media platforms. The ministry is monitoring the situation and will bring fraudsters to justice via legal means in coordination with the Ministry of Interior, indicated the statement, noting that there were efforts to block fake sites and accounts. It went on to stress that citizens and residents should not interact with fake accounts or respond to mysterious messages asking for One Time Password (OTP) or bank data. All of the ministry services could be found in the Sahel application, it concluded. — KUNA



## Local

# SCPD conference aims to change stereotyped image of the disabled

## 'Integrating persons with disabilities in the community'

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) announced, on Thursday, the upcoming conference on 'Integrating persons with disabilities in the community' within the framework of New Kuwait Vision 2035. In a press statement, the Secretary-General of SCPD, Dr Khaled Mahdi, said that the meeting is aimed at discussing the objectives and goals of the conference that will be held from November 13 to 15 at the Sabah Al Salem University City Conference Center.

He explained that the conference aims to present the achievements and future projects of the competent authorities in improving the lives of people with disabilities in the fields of media, entertainment and health, adding that the "main committee will include a work team from SCPD, Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Training Gate International, in addition to a team from Yarmouk Health City." Mahdi indicated that one of the objectives of the conference is to raise media awareness to contribute to changing the stereotyped image of people with disabilities, to motivate them to play their roles in society, and to ensure easy access for them to all entertainment venues.



Dr Khaled Mahdi

"The conference will also enhance the mental health of persons with disabilities by ensuring their access to health services, in addition to contributing to achieving the goals of the pillars of the New Kuwait Vision 2035 and some articles of international agreements regarding persons with disabilities. We are also developing interactive partnerships between governmental institutions and the private sector, civil society, and individuals to adopt useful strategies to improve their lives," he stressed.

Mahdi affirmed that Kuwait is keen to integrate persons with disabilities into society and into the state's national plan in accordance with the existing policies in the pillar of creative human



**KUWAIT:** The Supreme Council for Planning and Development on Thursday held the second coordination meeting to organize the upcoming conference (Integration of Persons with Disabilities in the Goals of Sustainable Development). — KUNA photos

capital and the program to enhance the capabilities of citizens and institutions, indicating that integrating them into society is a prerequisite for the development and success of projects. He stressed the importance of the case of people with disabilities and considered it a priority issue to focus on, pointing out that the

integration of people with disabilities in various sectors is the first basis for improving their lives.

The conference will include a series of interactive scientific lectures, dialogue sessions, panel discussions, and an exhibition on the sidelines of the conference. Several topics will be discussed, focusing

on the importance of developing awareness about the situation of people with disabilities. As well, recommendations will be presented at the end of each session, and competent authorities will follow up on the implementation of these recommendations as soon as possible to provide people with disabilities with a decent life.



## Land force holds lecture

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti Army Land Force on Thursday organized a lecture entitled 'The Art of Leadership'. The lecture was delivered by the commander of the force, Major General Mohammed Al-Suwait, with the participation of the commander of the ground forces of the US Central Command, Lieutenant General Patrick Frank. The Ministry of Defense said in a press release that the lecture is aimed at exchanging field and administrative experiences and raising awareness of the concepts of leadership at different levels. — KUNA



Commander of the force, Major General Mohammed Al-Suwait with the commander of the ground forces of the US Central Command, Lieutenant General Patrick Frank.

## Social affairs forms committee for small projects

**KUWAIT:** Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs Abdulaziz Sari Al-Mutairi announced the formation of a higher committee for small projects headed by the Assistant Undersecretary for Cooperation Affairs and the membership of the Director of the Cooperative Development Department, representatives of the National Fund for the Care and Development of Small Projects, and other members. Al-Mutairi said: "The formation of this committee was based on the directives of the Minister of Social Affairs, Family Affairs, and Childhood, Sheikh Firas Al-Malik Al-Sabah, regarding supporting small business owners to invest in cooperative societies."

Al-Mutairi stressed the need to commit to meeting the prescribed percentage of 10 percent of investment shops in cooperative societies for owners of small projects in accordance with the executive regulations of the law regarding the National Fund. "The committee is concerned with supporting, developing, and following up on the work of small business owners in cooperative societies, in addition to choosing the type of investment activities and diversifying investment opportunities for entrepreneurs, as well as considering and deciding on all obstacles facing small business owners," he explained.

Al-Mutairi pointed to the directive to address the Union of Cooperative Societies to brief all societies on the need to form and activate the role of the Small Projects Committee in cooperative societies as well as in the Union of Societies to carry out their tasks specified in accordance with the ministerial decision.

## Weather changes, scattered clouds, drizzles expected



**KUWAIT:** The weather in Kuwait will be hot and humid over the weekend, particularly in seaside regions, Director General of the meteorological department Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi said on Thursday. The seasonal Indian depression continues to weigh in, coupled with hot and humid winds, along with scattered clouds and drizzles. Today's heat will be maximum 45 degrees and drops to 31-34 degrees

at night. On Friday, the highest temperature will range between 44 and 47 degrees. At night, it will fall to the level of 32-35 degrees. On Saturday, Al-Qarawi said the weather will be hot, partially cloudy and wet in coastal regions, and the highest forecast heat will be at the level of 45-48 degrees, but will taper off at night to the level of 32-35 degrees. — KUNA

## Arab Parliament hails Venezuela over Palestine diplomatic upgrade

**CAIRO:** The Arab Parliament on Thursday welcomed Venezuela's recent decision to upgrade the level of diplomatic representation in Palestine from merely a representative office to an embassy. "The decision is a translation of Venezuela's recognition of the State of Palestine in 2009 and continuation of its support and backing to the Palestinian people and their just cause, and contribution to establishing the State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital," the parliament said in a press release.

This step gives significant signs of fresh trends and changes by world countries and international attitudes towards the occupation and a Palestinian state, especially amid violations and aggressions by occupation authority and its settlers on Palestinian people, it lamented. In this context, the parliament called on all world countries to take follow suit by standing side by side with the Palestinian people in order to regain their just and legitimate rights, including an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Malaysian President Nicolas Maduro on Friday, welcoming a high-level Palestinian delegation, had vowed to upgrade the level of his country's diplomatic representation in Palestine to the embassy level, restating absolute support for the government and people of Palestine. — KUNA



# Commerce Ministry team supervises market prices



**KUWAIT:** The technical administration team at the commerce and industry ministry has launched an investigative campaign to monitor the prices of commodities through the administration's electron-

ic system to supervise products and compare their original prices with the selling prices. Faisal Al-Ansari, director of the administration, said: "We have compared the prices of products in one of the coop-

erative shops, and it has been clarified that it was adhering to the prices. Moreover, the teams monitored wholesale food products and meat stores to find out how much they adhered to the specified prices."

## Kuwait concerned over Libya clashes

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday expressed Kuwait's concern over military clashes in Libya's capital Tripoli that resulted in civilian casualties. In a statement, the ministry affirmed Kuwait's stance of supporting Libya's stability and its political path, within the UN Security Council resolutions, aiming for international endeavors to maintain its unity, interests in peace and prosperity.

Meanwhile, a Libyan militia leader whose detention sparked clashes that killed 55 people in the capital Tripoli this week has been released, a military official said Thursday. Gun battles had raged on the streets of Tripoli from Monday night through Tuesday after 444 Brigade leader Mahmoud Hamza was apprehended by the rival Al-Radaa Force. Hamza "was released on Wednesday night and returned to his headquarters south of Tripoli", an official at army headquarters in western Libya told AFP.

"He was released under a government-sponsored ceasefire agreement" which also provides for the "withdrawal of fighters from the front lines", said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity. Videos circulated on social media on Wednesday night showed Hamza dressed in military fatigues and surrounded by his fighters at the Tekbali barracks south of the Libyan capital.

Fighting broke out in Tripoli after Hamza's detention on Monday, killing 55 people, wounding 146 and forcing the closure of the capital's only civilian airport - the worst armed clashes seen in Libya for a year. The two armed groups are among the myriad of militias that have vied for power in the North African country since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi. A period of relative stability had led the United Nations to express hope for delayed elections to be held this year.

Calm returned to Tripoli and the Mitiga airport reopened after the ceasefire agreement reached late Tuesday between Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah's government and a social council in the Al-Radaa stronghold of Souq El-Joumaa in the capital's southeast. "The situation is stable, with police patrols having been deployed" in the areas that had seen fighting, allowing people to move around, the military official said. Libya is split between Dbeibah's UN-backed government in the west and another in the east backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar. — Agencies

## Kuwait, Google Cloud discuss cooperation and cybersecurity

**KUWAIT:** The National Center for Cyber Security and Google Cloud Platform discussed in a Kuwait meeting on Thursday ways to address mounting challenges through cooperation and coordination. In a press statement, Head of the National Center for Cyber Security, Mohamad Bouaraki and Dominick Delfino - global

vice president of cybersecurity sales - focused their meetings on the rapid global development in cloud services and IT especially within the domain of cybersecurity.

Bouaraki affirmed that it was important to benefit from Google's technology in analyzing data and cybersecurity in accordance with the best systems and global practices. He also noted that it was vital to train international cadres in Kuwait to handle matters of cybersecurity in cooperation with Google cloud and other global companies. The center is keen on cooperating with Google to develop the country's cybersecurity apparatuses in line with Kuwait's Vision 2035 for development. — KUNA



Head of the National Center for Cyber Security, Mohamad Bouaraki and Dominick Delfino, global vice president of cybersecurity sales pose for a photo. — KUNA



## Lulu Hypermarket collaborates with Thailand Embassy

**KUWAIT:** In a significant step towards enhancing economic relations, officials from the Thailand Embassy in Kuwait visited the regional office of Lulu Hypermarket on August 14th, 2023. The purpose of the visit was to bolster bilateral business connections between Kuwait and Thailand, spotlighting Lulu Hypermarket's pivotal role in advancing Thai products within the Kuwaiti market.

Welcoming the delegation, Mohamad Haris, Director of Lulu Hypermarket Kuwait, along with representatives from both sides, engaged in productive discussions. The talks centered around the substantial trade partnership between Kuwait and Thailand, with particular emphasis on the expansive assortment of Thai goods featured within Lulu Hypermarket's diverse product range.

Lulu Group's establishment of product sourcing centers in Thailand underscores its unwavering commitment to bringing premium Thai merchandise to Kuwaiti consumers. Notably, Lulu Hypermarket in Kuwait stands as a cornerstone of the economic alliance, importing a diverse array of over 1000 products from Thailand. These encompass a wide spectrum of categories such as food, fresh produce, non-food items, garments, accessories, and more.

The meeting provided an opportune platform for the exchange of ideas and visions. The embassy officials expressed their admiration for the flourishing partnership between Lulu Hypermarket and Thailand, stressing the significance of such collaborations in fostering cultural exchange

and bolstering economic ties between the two nations. They highlighted Thailand's steadfast dedication to providing top-notch products tailored to the preferences of Kuwaiti consumers. Haris extended his appreciation for the pivotal role played by Thai products in enriching Lulu Hypermarket's offerings. He reiterated Lulu Hypermarket's unwavering commitment to sustaining the import of an eclectic range of Thai goods, thereby enriching the shopping experience for Kuwaiti residents.

Amidst discussions, a momentous decision was made to host a dedicated Thailand Promotion Festival at the end of September 2023, in collaboration with the Thailand Embassy in Kuwait. This initiative aims to celebrate the richness of Thai culture and products, with the embassy providing a Thai chef to prepare authentic dishes for the public during the promotional period. The festivities align with Thailand's national day celebrations in December, where Lulu Hypermarket will host events across its hypermarkets, spotlighting Thai fresh items such as fruits, vegetables, groceries, and fresh juices etc. In line with its commitment to cultural diversity, Lulu Hypermarket traditionally conducts an annual ASEAN Festival, highlighting the products and culture of ASEAN member countries. This year, the festival is planned for the month of September, showcasing the vibrant tapestry of ASEAN nations and further enhancing cultural exchange.

The meeting concluded on a note of optimism, underlining the shared commitment of both parties to nurturing mutual growth and cooperation. It marks the beginning of a strengthened relationship that not only fosters economic ties but also celebrates the cultural tapestry shared by Kuwait and Thailand. The collaborative efforts between Lulu Hypermarket and the Thailand Embassy in Kuwait are set to invigorate the market and provide Kuwaiti residents with an enhanced selection of superior Thai products.

## Municipality calls for 'location' allowance

**KUWAIT:** The Director General of Kuwait Municipality, Saud Al-Dabbous, sent a letter to the president of the Civil Service Bureau that included adding the distant location allowance to the salary certificate. Al-Dabbous wrote in his letter that the request came based on what is required by public interest and to facilitate administrative procedures for the public benefit of workers who are doing engineering jobs with supplementary insurance.

Since the administrative procedures regarding the payment of the location allowance led to the non-appearance of the allowance in the salary certificate and

the instability of the monthly contribution for this type of allowance in the supplementary insurance, there was a request from the Society of Engineers on May 11 stating that Kuwaiti engineers working in the municipality should be able to include the site allowance in the salary report certificate, similar to what has been implemented in some government agencies.

Al-Dabbous added that the inclusion of the distant location allowance, which is paid at the full monthly value, is included in the elements of the supplementary salary for social insurance in accordance with the provisions of the article regarding the jobs, allowances, and bonuses of engineers. The mechanism followed by the municipality is the disbursement according to the conditions of entitlement, and the allowance is deducted automatically in the event that the employee enjoys one of the types of leaves through integrated systems.



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'In a sauna': Hong Kong's laborers swelter as temperatures soar

## Ten killed in plane crash near Malaysian capital

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# Zionist raid kills Palestinian man, wounds health worker

## Kastouni shot while confronting Zionist forces: Jenin Brigades



JENIN: A relative weeps during the funeral of Mustafa al-Kastouni, 32, killed in a Zionist military raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank on August 17, 2023. — AFP

JENIN: Zionist forces on Thursday killed a Palestinian man and shot a health worker during a raid on the occupied West Bank city of Jenin, Palestinian and Zionist officials said. The West Bank has seen a surge in violence since early last year, with repeated Zionist army raids, violence by Jewish settlers against Palestinian communities and a string of attacks by Palestinians on Zionist targets.

"Mustafa al-Kastouni, 32, was killed after being shot in the head, chest and abdomen by the occupation (Zionist forces) during an aggression on Jenin," the Palestinian health ministry said in a statement. Mahmud Saadi, director of the Palestinian Red Crescent in Jenin,

told AFP that two people were injured in the raid, including a female medic who was shot in the chest and kidney.

Jenin's deputy governor, Kamal Abu al-Rub, said the woman was in a critical condition. Jamil Hardan, the owner of one of the buildings destroyed in the raid, told AFP that Zionist forces had entered Jenin at around 07:15 am. "A car stopped ... followed by another silver car. Army special forces in military uniforms jumped out," he said. "They kidnapped two young men from the street," he said, adding that they shot Kastouni in the process.

The Zionist army said its forces entered Jenin to detain wanted Palestinians but provided no immediate comment

when asked by AFP about the reported shooting of a healthcare worker. The military said the victim, whose last name it gave as Kumbua, "was shot and killed after shooting at the forces and attempting to flee during the apprehension attempt". Zionist forces came under live fire as they detained two people and one soldier was lightly wounded by shrapnel, the army said in a statement. Forces "immediately responded with live fire and breached the building" where they found weapons, it added.

### Rubble in the street

An AFP photographer saw Palestinians gathered following the raid around

a heap of shattered timber and rubble in a narrow street of the city. The Jenin Brigades, a local armed group, said Kastouni was killed when fighters had confronted Zionist forces with "salvos of bullets and explosive devices" as the troops "infiltrated" Jenin.

Kastouni himself was a fighter from the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, a militant group linked to Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah movement, the Jenin Brigades said. Zionists have occupied the West Bank since 1967 and their forces regularly carry out incursions into areas such as Jenin which are nominally under Abbas's Palestinian Authority security control. At

least 48 Palestinians including civilians and militants have been killed so far this year in Zionist raids on Jenin city and its refugee camp.

They are among at least 217 Palestinians killed this year in violence linked to the Zionist occupation, along with 28 Zionists, one Ukrainian and an Italian, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources on both sides. On the Zionist side, the figures include three members of Arab minority. Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, the West Bank is home to nearly three million Palestinians and around 490,000 Zionists, who live in settlements considered illegal under international law. — AFP

## Muslims sheltered Christian neighbors from Pakistan attack

JARANWALA: Pastor Javed Bhatti was roused from his sleep by the mosque's loudspeaker — not the usual Islamic call to prayer, but a thundering call to protest against alleged blasphemy by Christians. Instinctively, he gathered his family and ran to the street, where fellow Christians were already spilling from their homes into narrow alleyways.

"Some were running barefoot and some fled in rickshaws. There was chaos everywhere," he told AFP on Thursday, a day after hundreds of Muslim men rampaged through the streets, burning homes and churches. "The children were shouting, 'Run, run, the clerics are coming! They will attack us,'" his sister Naila Bhatti added.

Blasphemy is a flashpoint issue in Pakistan, where vigilante mobs have killed people accused of insulting Islam or the Prophet Muhammad. Christians make up around two percent of the population and occupy one of the lowest rungs in Pakistani society. More than 5,000 live in the Christian quarter in Jaranwala, most of them sanitary workers on meagre wages who occupy cramped

homes shared by up to 18 relatives.

As panic spread across the neighborhood, Muslims also rushed to the streets to warn and shelter their neighbors. "The crowd came from outside (this area), but the local Muslims here helped us and tried to save us," Pastor Bhatti said. Tariq Rasool, in the same narrow street as Bhatti, said Muslims had quickly pinned Quranic verses on the doors of Christian homes in the hope they would be spared the violence.

"Two women were running. I opened the door of my house for them and let them inside. They were very worried but I consoled them," the 58-year-old Muslim told AFP. The mob swelled in size and anger throughout the day, with hundreds at its peak rioting through the streets. By nightfall, at least four churches and a dozen houses and shops had been burned and ransacked, according to an AFP team at the scene.

### 'You are safe here'

Imran Qadri, a Muslim shopkeeper, said both faiths had long lived peacefully alongside each other in the neigh-



FAISALABAD: Christians pray beside the torched Salvation Army Church in Jaranwala on the outskirts of Faisalabad on August 17, 2023. — AFP

borhood: "They are our brothers. They share our sorrow and joy and we share their sorrow and joy." He opened his home to two Christian women as they fled the foreseen destruction. "They are still inside our house. My family helped them, provided them with food and they spent the night with us," Qadri said, standing alongside Bhatti.

Further down the street, Parveen Bibi

said she was woken up by her young children screaming: "Muslims are coming to burn our houses!" "We took rickshaws to the home of our Muslim neighbors. The door was open and we all went inside. I was accompanied by women, my two daughters-in-law and children. The women said: 'You are safe here, don't worry,'" she explained tearfully, standing in the rubble of her home. — AFP

## West African military chiefs weigh Niger mission after coup

ACCRA: West African military chiefs met in Ghana on Thursday to discuss a possible armed intervention to reverse a coup in Niger, as Germany called for EU sanctions against the rebel leaders. Alarmed by a series of military takeovers in the region, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has agreed to activate a "standby force to restore constitutional order" in Niger.

ECOWAS is demanding Niger's coup leaders release President Mohamed Bazoum after his July 26 ouster, warning that the bloc could send in troops if negotiations fail. "Democracy is what we stand for and it's what we encourage," Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Gwabin Musa, told the meeting in Accra. "The focus of our gathering is not simply to react to events, but to proactively chart a course that results in peace and promotes stability," he said.

ECOWAS troops have intervened in other emergencies since 1990, including in wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Benin and Nigeria are expected to contribute troops, but little detail has emerged over a potential Niger operation. Abdel-Fatau Musah, an ECOWAS commissioner for political affairs, peace and security, said the Accra meeting would "fine tune" details in case the bloc "were to resort to the ultimate means of force".

The two-day meeting will conclude on Friday when the defense chiefs are expected to announce any next steps. "The military junta in Niger is playing a cat-and-mouse game with ECOWAS," Musah said. "They have flouted their own constitution and ECOWAS protocols. The military authorities in Niger appear to remain defiant."

The generals who have detained Bazoum blamed deteriorating security in the country for the coup. They have threatened to charge him with treason, but also say they are open to negotiations. Russia and the United States have urged a diplomatic solution to the crisis. ECOWAS has already applied trade and financial sanctions while France, Germany and the United States have suspended aid programs.

On Thursday, Germany's foreign ministry said it



ACCRA: Ghana's Chief of Defense Staff Vice Admiral Seth Amoama welcomes Senegal's Chief of Defense Staff Mbaye Cisse during the Extraordinary meeting of the ECOWAS committee of chiefs of the defense staff on August 17, 2023. — AFP

wanted the EU to impose sanctions on the coup leaders, adding on social media that Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock had held talks with her French and US counterparts. "Germany supports the regional efforts to resolve the crisis in Niger. Our goal is to restore the constitutional order," the ministry said. — AFP

## Violence against aid workers shows no respite: UN

UNITED NATIONS: A total of 62 humanitarian aid workers have died this year around the world, the United Nations said Thursday as it prepared to mark 20 years since a devastating attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad. The UN observes World Humanitarian Day on August 19 each year as it remembers the suicide bombing, which claimed 22 lives, including that of Sergio Vieira de Mello, then the UN high commissioner for human rights and the head of the UN mission in that country.

Besides the 62 deaths this year in the world's conflict zones, another 84 aid workers were wounded and 34 were kidnapped, according to the Aid Worker Security Database, compiled by the consulting firm Humanitarian Outcomes. The fatality figure for all of 2022 was 116. For several years running South Sudan has been the world's most dangerous place for aid workers. As of August 10, there had been 40 attacks on humanitarian staffers there with 22 lives lost, said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Next on the list was Sudan to the north, with 17 attacks on aid workers and 19 deaths so far this year. Such high figures had not been seen since the Darfur conflict from 2006 to 2009. Other countries where humanitarian workers died include the Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia, Ukraine and Yemen. "The risks we face are beyond human comprehension," states a report compiled by NGOs including Doctors of the World, Action Against Hunger and Handicap International, with help from the European Union.

Every year more than 90 percent of the people who die in attacks on aid workers are locals, according to the International NGO Safety Organization. This year World Humanitarian Day marks 20 years since the bombing in Baghdad against the Canal Hotel, which was serving as the UN headquarters in the Iraqi capital. That 2003 blast, carried out amid the chaos of the US-led invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein, killed 22 people, including the Brazilian Vieira de Mello, and wounded around 150 local and international aid workers.

"World Humanitarian Day and the Canal Hotel bombing will always be an occasion of mixed and still raw emotions for me and many others," said the UN's humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths. "Every year, nearly six times more aid workers are killed in the line of duty than were killed on that dark day in Baghdad, and they are overwhelmingly local aid workers," he added. "Impunity for these crimes is a scar on our collective conscience." — AFP



## International

# Ten killed in plane crash near Malaysian capital

## Plane veered off landing path, slammed into ground

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A light plane crashed into a four-lane road near Malaysia's capital on Thursday, killing eight people on board and two motorists on the ground, the local police chief said. The plane exploded into a fireball on impact, with thick black smoke seen rising from the site, video clips from the scene showed. "For now, I can say at least 10 people were killed in the plane crash. Two passing motorists — one in a car and one on a motorcycle — also perished together with the eight on board the plane," Mohamad Iqbal Ibrahim told AFP.

Johari Harun, a state assemblyman in central Pahang state in charge of housing and the environment, was among the plane passengers killed, police said. Malaysia's civil aviation authority said in a statement that six passengers and two flight crew were on board the Beechcraft Model 390 aircraft when it crashed. The plane took off from the northern resort island of Langkawi and was approaching Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, in Selangor state west of the capital Kuala Lumpur, civil aviation authority chief Norazman Mahmud. "No mayday call was made," he said.

An investigation into the crash will be made by the Air Accident Investigation Bureau, he said. Mohamad Syahmie Mohamad Hashim, a former member of the Malaysian air force, said he saw the plane flying erratically. "Not long after that I heard a loud boom," he told reporters. "I sped to-

wards the location and saw the remains of an aircraft. I also saw (a) human body on fire. I couldn't do anything," he said.

Transport Minister Anthony Loke said the plane had been cleared to land but "veered to the right of the landing flight path" before it crashed. He said the main mission for investigators would be to find the plane's black box containing its flight data. "For now, we cannot say what was the cause of the crash since investigations are underway. We do not want to make any speculation at the moment," he told a news conference.

"Forensic officials are identifying the remains of all the victims." Witnesses said the plane burst into flames as it hit the road leading to an expressway in Elmina Estate near the suburb of Shah Alam, which houses a mix of residential homes and factories. An explosion was also heard, they said. One user of X, formerly called Twitter, shared a brief video showing fire and black smoke billowing from the crash site, which was covered with dark soot.

Debris was scattered around and houses could be seen in the background. Another video taken by a motorist's dashcam circulating on social media showed a fireball erupting as the plane slammed into the ground. In September 1977, a Japan Airlines plane bound for Singapore crashed near the site of Thursday's disaster. Forty-five people survived and 34 were killed. — AFP



**SHAH ALAM:** Members of the fire and rescue department inspect the crash site of a plane on a street in Shah Alam, Malaysia's Selangor state on August 17, 2023. — AFP

## 'Nuclear' material found in Australian home raid: Media

**SYDNEY:** Australia's border police raided a home in the south of Sydney on Thursday, finding what local media described as "nuclear isotopes". The home, in the suburb of Arncliffe, was the target of an early morning raid and remains cordoned off with tape warning of a toxic, nuclear, or biological hazard inside.

The small brown-brick apartment building was cut off from the road by red and yellow tape saying: "Contaminated area - do not enter - hot zone". Local commercial broadcaster Channel 10 reported that mercury and uranium isotopes were found inside, while the Daily Telegraph said officers had found nuclear isotopes.

The Australian Border Force (ABF) would not confirm media reports about the presence of radioactive material at or near the property. "The ABF can confirm it is conducting an operation today in Arncliffe, New South Wales, with the support of ... emergency services," a border force spokesperson said in a statement.

"All appropriate safety measures are being implemented. "People in the vicinity of the location are urged to follow all directions from emergency services." Sam Abraham, 19, was trying to get home when he came



**SYDNEY:** Tape surrounds a building after the Australian Border Force raided an apartment block amid media reports "nuclear isotopes" had been found, in Sydney on August 17, 2023. — AFP

across the closed road. "It's scary finding uranium in your neighbor's house, you come into the street and there's police," he told AFP. "It's not something that usually happens in Arncliffe."

Nemr Khamis, 60, told AFP: "In the morning I heard the loud trucks and all that stuff, I looked out of the window, and I saw the ambulance and the fire brigade. "Then I had to come out and look, then I went inside again. I had a shower and came back and when I came back I had a baby with me and the police told me to go inside." Khamis phoned relatives who told him: "There's some uranium in the street just off the unit", he said. — AFP

## Canada left out as China lifts tourism travel restrictions

**OTTAWA:** China — a major source of outbound tourists — has left Canada off a list of countries now approved for travel by tour groups, its embassy in Ottawa said Wednesday, due to anti-Beijing rattling by Ottawa. Last week Beijing lifted a Covid-era ban on group tours to dozens of countries including the United States, Germany, Japan, and Australia, but not Canada.

Travel agents turn to the list of approved destinations when promoting and arranging foreign vacations for Chinese nationals. There are currently 138 countries on the list. The Chinese Embassy in Ottawa said in a statement that the reason behind the snub was "the Canadian side has repeatedly hyped up the so-called 'Chinese interference.'"

It said "rampant and discriminatory anti-Asian acts and words are rising significantly in Canada" and "the Chinese government attaches great importance to protecting the safety and legitimate rights of overseas Chinese citizens and wishes they can travel in a safe and friendly environment."

The United Nations tourism agency (UNWTO) says China grew to be the biggest tourism source

market in the world prior to the pandemic. In 2019, Chinese tourists spent a collective US\$255 billion on international travel. Group tours from China to Canada were first approved in 2010. In 2018, nearly 700,000 Chinese visitors came to Canada, spending an average of Can\$2,600 (US\$1,922) per visitor, or a total of Can\$2 billion — out of Can\$22 billion spent collectively by all foreign travelers, according to a report by the Canada China Business Council.

That same year, tit-for-tat arrests of a top Huawei executive in Vancouver on a US warrant and two Canadians living in China, accused of espionage, dealt a serious blow to bilateral relations. Ottawa accused Beijing of engaging in "hostage diplomacy," before a deal was eventually reached with US prosecutors that saw all three people released in 2021.

China-Canada relations hit a new low this year amid accusations of Chinese meddling in Canadian elections and the attempted intimidation of MPs that led to the expulsion of a Chinese diplomat in May. Beijing responded by sending home a Canadian diplomat from Canada's consulate in Shanghai. Canadian government officials did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Janice Thomson, the head of tourism in Niagara Falls — the top tourism destination in Canada — said China's decision to leave Canada off its approved destinations list was "disappointing." She expressed hope that Canada would make it onto the list in a future round of country additions. — AFP

## Iranian FM preaches...

Continued from Page 1

operations, but Riyadh has yet to confirm this or announce an ambassador of its own.

Amit-Abdollahian's one-day stop in Riyadh came two months after Prince Faisal became the first Saudi foreign minister to travel to Iran since 2006. The visits and the reopening of embassies represent "important confidence-building measures", said Anna Jacobs, senior Gulf analyst for the International Crisis Group.

"Saudi-Iran rapprochement is still in its early phases, and it's still very unclear how the two sides will address their many points of friction," Jacobs said. "Resuming diplomatic ties and engaging in more dialogue is a good start, but it's difficult to tell if this will be enough to resolve the long-standing issues in their relationship." Iran and Saudi Arabia have backed opposing sides in conflict zones across the Middle East for years, including in Yemen, where in 2015 Riyadh mobilized an international coalition against Iran-backed Houthi rebels who had toppled the

internationally recognized government the previous year.

Since the March deal, Saudi Arabia has ramped up a push for peace in Yemen, holding direct talks with Houthi leaders in April in the Yemeni capital Sanaa. It has also championed the return of key Iran ally Syria to the Arab fold at a summit in May. On Wednesday, Iranian state media said Iranian and Saudi military officials met in Moscow on the sidelines of a security conference. At the same time, the two sides have exchanged competing statements over a disputed gas field that Saudi Arabia plans to develop jointly with Kuwait.

Iran also wants to explore and exploit the field, known as Arash in Iran and Dorra in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which has long been point of contention between the three countries. "The dispute over the Dorra/Arash gas field shouldn't be a major obstacle to improving ties, and it could even be an opportunity for dialogue," Jacobs said. "But from the Saudi perspective, they are more concerned about Yemen, threats to maritime security in the Gulf, and regional files like Syria." Riyadh is also engaged in negotiations over a possible deal - still widely seen as a long shot - that would see it recognize the Zionist entity in exchange for conditions including security guarantees from the United States and concessions from the Zionist entity on the Zionist-Palestinian conflict. — AFP

its own invasion, we are proud that we stood with Kuwait shoulder to shoulder against aggression. Let's stand together now in support of Ukraine's legitimate demand that Russian forces withdraw completely and unconditionally - this is vital for global peace and security, on which our collective prosperity and futures depend.

*Melissa Kelly* Ambassador of Australia  
*Aliya Mawani* Ambassador of Canada  
*Irina Gusacenko* Chargé d'Affaires - European Union Delegation  
*Claire Le Flecher* Ambassador of the French Republic  
*Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz* Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany  
*Carlo Baldocci* Ambassador of Italy  
*Morino Yasunari* Ambassador of Japan  
*Belinda Lewis* Ambassador of the United Kingdom  
*James Holtsnider* Chargé d'Affaires - United States of America

establish the company, called the Health Assurance (Dhaman) Hospitals Company, was passed in 2008 and then was officially launched in 2011 but later procedures were delayed due to some legal problems. Saadoun asked for the cost of the technical feasibility study on the project.

He also inquired why Kuwait Investment Authority, the country's sovereign wealth fund, had insisted on establishing the company outside the legal framework before retreating. The speaker also asked if the issue was sent to court and demanded to know the number of cases filed in this regard. The company has already established a number of hospitals and clinics in several areas and appears to be ready to start operations.

## Bahrain to build walls against the rising sea

**MANAMA:** Already battling extreme heat, Bahrain is scrambling to ward off another environmental threat: rising seas that could swallow parts of its coast, the island nation's oil and environment minister told AFP. By next year, the tiny Gulf state will begin building its coastal defenses against sea levels that have begun advancing, by widening beaches, constructing taller sea walls and elevating land.

"Bahrain is vulnerable," Mohammed bin Mubarak bin Daina, Bahrain's oil and environment minister and special envoy for climate affairs, said in an interview. "The main threat is a silent threat, which is the sea level rise," he said at his office in the capital Manama. According to official estimates, an extreme rise of five meters would swamp most of the country, including its international airport.

Even a rise of 0.5 to two meters could submerge five to 18 percent of Bahrain's total area, according to Sabah Aljainaid, an assistant professor at the Arabian Gulf University in Manama. Bahrain is the only island nation among the resource-rich countries lining the Gulf. Most of its population and major facilities are located in low-lying coastal areas less than five meters above the water. Other islands around the world are also threatened by rising seas as global warming melts ice sheets and glaciers. Ironically, Bahrain is a producer of the oil whose pollutants have triggered the climate crisis.

Bahraini authorities have already recorded sea levels rising between 1.6 millimeters to 3.4 millimeters every year since 1976, bin Daina said. But by 2050, sea levels could rise by at least 0.5 meter, according to the minister, citing the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Some experts view the estimate as conservative.

Rising seas aggravate flooding, threaten coastlines and could pollute Bahrain's already scarce groundwater reserves with salty seawater. "That's why one of Bahrain's

top priorities is the sea level rise," bin Daina said. "Either we make the beaches (wider)... or a rock wall for certain areas, or reclaim lands before the shore." It is part of a "detailed plan" that will be completed in "under 10 years" and funded by the government, according to the minister.

Ranked by the University of Notre Dame's Global Adaptation Initiative as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries among Arab states in the Gulf, Bahrain must also contend with hazardous temperatures in one of the hottest regions on Earth. Extreme temperatures due to accelerated climate change could make parts of the Gulf unliveable by the end of the century, according to experts. Bahrain is already feeling the heat. This month, it has twice broken its record for energy consumption as temperatures topped 44 degrees Celsius (111.2 degrees Fahrenheit), sending air conditioners into overdrive.

"In all previous years, the electricity has not consumed the amount of megawatts as this year, so the temperatures are increasing," bin Daina said. To do its part to combat climate change Bahrain, a small-scale oil producer, is planning to reduce emissions by 30 percent by 2035 and scale up renewable energy to meet 10 percent of its needs over the same period. It is also looking to double its areas covered by greenery and quadruple the amount of mangroves, which absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, over the next 12 years. Bin Daina said he sees no contradiction in his dual role as minister of both oil and environment - a conflation that is common in the hydrocarbon-rich Gulf states. Kuwait's environment authority falls under the oil ministry, and the United Arab Emirates has chosen Sultan Al Jaber, who heads state oil giant ADNOC, as president of the UN's upcoming COP28 climate talks in Dubai. — AFP



**Mohammed bin Mubarak Bin Daina**

## Black Sea Grain Initiative...

Continued from Page 1

As a consequence of the war, Kuwait has also experienced a sharp increase in food prices in the last year. Thanks to its wealth and its well-developed trade relations, the Government of Kuwait has limited the negative impact on the general population. Many countries do not enjoy such favorable conditions and rely on the Black Sea Grain Initiative to avoid widespread hunger.

We respect Kuwait's consistent support for international law and the principles of the UN Charter. As Kuwait recently marked the 33rd anniversary of

## Government urged to diversify...

Continued from Page 1

Al-Barrak about the long procedures in establishing a health insurance company to provide healthcare to a majority of expatriates. Saadoun is the second lawmaker in a few days to target the long-delayed health company and the reasons for the delay. MP Osama Al-Shaheen two days ago asked the finance minister about why the health company has not started.

In his questions, Saadoun said the legislation to

## US reopens immigration office in Cuba

**WASHINGTON:** The United States announced the reopening of its immigration office in Cuba Thursday, saying it would aid in processing applications for family members of Cubans already in the US. The Havana office of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services will conduct interviews, collect biometric data and process cases of applicants seeking to move to the United States, according to a statement from the department of Homeland Security.

"This administration is taking steps to reduce unlawful

entries, deny resources to ruthless smuggling organizations, and streamline access to lawful, safe, and orderly pathways for those seeking humanitarian relief," said Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas. "Cubans like my own family, who nearly 63 years ago fled the communist takeover, deserve the same opportunity to follow legal pathways to build a new life in the United States," he said.

The Havana office was closed in December 2018 under a US policy shift toward Cuba and also in response to fears of "Havana Syndrome," a mysterious and still unresolved set of symptoms experienced by US diplomats that were believed to result from some sort of microwave or other electronic attack. As thousands of Cubans sought in the past two years to travel through Mexico in hopes of entering across the southern US border, last year DHS created a regularized program for migrants, including those seeking asylum. — AFP



## International

# 'In a sauna': Hong Kong's laborers swelter as temperatures soar

## Workers vulnerable to illnesses without strong regulations: Activists

**HONG KONG:** Dressed in a full-body protective suit, an elderly pest control worker could last no more than 15 minutes spraying pesticide along a Hong Kong pavement before the summer heat became too much. "The longer you work, the more it feels like it's raining inside the (suit) ... it's just like being in a sauna," said Wah, 63, who asked to be identified only by his first name.



**HONG KONG:** In this photo taken on August 1, 2023, elderly worker Wah rests in his personal protective equipment (PPE) after spraying pesticide in Hong Kong. — AFP photos

He emerged from his protective clothing drenched in sweat on a scorching August morning, with temperatures soaring to 32.2 degrees Celsius (90 degrees Fahrenheit) and humidity hitting 87 percent. The month before, Hong Kong saw its third-hottest July on record, with the maximum daily temperature hitting 36.1 degrees Celsius. The top three warmest years in the city's history were all recorded after 2018.

Recently, the government advised employers to let workers take longer breaks on hotter days, but companies say the guidelines fail to consider the needs of different work environments. Activists argue that without strong regulations, thousands of Hong Kong workers remain vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. "Temperatures in 2022 broke multiple records, so we

felt more support was needed," said social worker Fish Tsoi of Caritas Hong Kong.

She is part of a research team measuring the body temperatures of people toiling under extreme heat, especially the elderly like Wah and his six-person crew. Last July, a pest control firm saw 20 of its workers quit because conditions were too tough, while 10 were hospitalized with heatstroke, she said. "This situation did not just appear last year — it was years in the making," Tsoi said. "Nobody took proactive steps to respond."

### 'Slow' progress

Temperatures around the world are rising to unprecedented levels, with more frequent heatwaves, which scientists have partly attributed to human-caused climate change. A city infamous for its intense humidity levels, Hong Kong introduced a heat-stress warning system in May to help employers schedule "appropriate work-rest periods". It has been issued more than 50 times since then.

Greenpeace campaigner Tom Ng said the "biggest problem" was that employers who ignore the guidelines face no legal repercussions. "In terms of how climate change affects Hong Kongers, outdoor workers are at the frontlines," he told AFP. Emily Chan, a public health specialist at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, welcomed the guidelines but agreed more was needed.

She pointed to mainland Chinese cities, including neighboring tech hub Shenzhen, which mandate work stoppages and subsidies once temperature thresholds are reached. "(Hong Kong) has been relatively slow in setting up protections," Chan said. Labor minister Chris Sun said this month that his department had "stepped up inspections" and would issue warnings to employers when needed. Despite the new system having no legal bite, the government can still sue employers "who just turn a blind eye", he said in May. Wah, who clocks six-day weeks for \$8 an hour, said there is little he can do to avoid heat exhaustion besides operating his machinery in short bursts. "If you do this for more than half an hour, the human body cannot withstand the temperature," he said.



This photo taken on August 16, 2023 shows construction workers taking a break from the heat in Hong Kong.

### 'No recourse'

In each of the past four years, the city has logged fewer than two dozen cases of heatstroke-related work injuries and no deaths, according to labor officials, but activists dispute those statistics. "The reality is (heatstroke) is not reported," said Fay Siu, who runs the Association for the Rights of Industrial Accident Victims.

Either the workers do not know they can report it or "the company may not recognize it", she told AFP. She pointed to a 2018 case when a 39-year-old died after fainting at a construction site. An investigation found rhabdomyolysis — a potentially life-threatening type of muscle breakdown — "caused by high temperatures and signs of heatstroke".

"But the insurance company and his employer ... pinned it on his personal medical conditions so it would not be categorized as a work injury," Siu said. Her group has identified at least four cases of outdoor workers dying on days of extreme heat in the past year. Siu said labor officials should do

more to investigate or family members would be left with "no recourse". In response, the Labor Department said there was no information indicating that workers were unable to report heatstroke-related work injuries but agreed that cases with "mild symptoms" may go unreported. "The number of registered cases may be lower than the actual number of symptomatic cases," the department told AFP in a statement.

"Based on the experience of the (department) in processing work injuries suspected to be relating to heat stroke, employers generally do not dispute their liabilities and would make compensation," they added. For some, the government's new heat-stress warning system appears to have had limited impact. Wah and his colleagues say they have seen few changes to their routine — especially since they risk having their pay docked if they are caught taking lengthy breaks. Chuen, 70, said they usually continue working after a five-minute water break. "That's how it goes," he said, sweating in the shade. — AFP

## Canary Isles battle 'complex' wildfire

**MADRID:** The huge wildfire ravaging the Spanish holiday island of Tenerife that has burnt through more than 2,600 hectares of land is the "most complex" blaze to hit the Canary Islands in four decades, the regional government said Thursday. The fire, which broke out late on Tuesday, has been raging through a forested area with steep ravines in the northeastern part of the island which is part of the Spanish archipelago that lies off the coast of northwestern Africa.

So far, the blaze, which has a perimeter of 30 kilometers (19 miles), has destroyed more than 2,600 hectares (6,400 acres), affecting some 7,600 people, many of whom were evacuated, the authorities said in a morning update. Early on Thursday, people were evacuated from 10 small villages and hamlets in the area, they said, while also ordering residents to remain in their homes as a precautionary measure in La Esperanza, some five kilometers from the island's northern airport, Tenerife Norte. There was no immediate reports of flights being affected.

"It's been a very difficult night ... this is probably the most complex fire we've ever had in the Canary Islands in at least the past 40 years," Fernando Clavijo, regional head of the seven-island archipelago, told reporters. "The extreme heat and weather conditions ... is making the work harder," he added. More than 250 firefighters backed by 17 aerial resources, have been drafted to tackle the fire, and troops from the Military Emergency Unit (UME) who regularly help efforts to stamp out some of the most dangerous blazes have also been mobilized.



**ARAFO:** In this picture taken from the village of Arafo on August 16, 2023 smoke columns rise from a wildfire in a forested area of the Guimar valley on the Canary island of Tenerife. — AFP

"A new detachment of UME troops will arrive during the afternoon," he said, with the defense ministry saying it would raise the number of troops sent to Tenerife to more than 200. "We are facing a fire the likes of which we've never seen before in the Canary Islands," meteorologist Vicky Palma, pointing to the vast column of smoke from a fire which by Thursday morning had been spreading for 34 hours.

The local authorities have cut off roads leading to the mountains on the northeastern part of the island. "We ask that the population respect these road closures," said Montserrat Roman, head of the archipelago's civil protection service. The fire broke out after

the islands were hit by a heat wave that has left many areas tinder dry.

As global temperatures rise due to climate change, scientists have warned heat waves will become more frequent and intense, with a much wider impact. In 2022, which was a particularly bad year for wildfires in Europe, Spain was the worst-hit nation with nearly 500 blazes that destroyed more than 300,000 hectares, according to figures from the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS). So far this year, more than 71,000 hectares have been ravaged by fire in Spain, which is one of the European countries most vulnerable to climate change. — AFP

## WHO seeks to regulate traditional medicine in summit

**NEW DELHI:** The World Health Organization opened its first summit on traditional medicine on Thursday, with the group saying it was seeking to collect evidence and data to allow for the safe use of such treatments. Traditional medicines are a "first port of call for millions of people worldwide", the UN health agency said, with the talks in India bringing together policymakers and academics aiming to "mobilize political commitment and evidence-based action" towards them.

"WHO is working to build the evidence and data to inform policies, standards and regulations for the safe, cost-effective and equitable use of traditional medicine", WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said as he opened the summit.

Traditional medicine could bridge healthcare "access gaps", but was of value only if used "appropriately, effectively, and above all, safely based on the latest scientific evidence", Tedros warned earlier. But the global health body has come under fire from online critics who accused it of providing scientific validation to pseudoscience after it asked followers in a post if they had used a range of treatments, including homeopathy and naturopathy. The WHO later said in a post on the social media platform X that it had heard the "concerns" and agreed its "message could have been better articulated". The two-day WHO Traditional Medicine Global Summit takes place alongside a meeting of G20 health ministers in the Indian city of Gandhinagar. "We need



**CHENNAI:** A medical staff examines a patient with the traditional bone-setting practice at a healthcare center in Chennai on August 15, 2023. — AFP

to face a very important real-life fact that traditional medicines are very widely used," Nobel laureate and chair of the WHO Science Council Harold Varmus told the summit via video link.

"It is important to understand what ingredients are actually in traditional medicines, why they work in some cases... and importantly, we need to understand and identify which traditional medicines don't work". The summit, set to become a regular event, follows the opening last year of a WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine, also in India's Gujarat state.

While traditional medicines are widely used in some parts of the world, they also face fierce criticism. The UN health agency defines traditional medicine as the knowledge, skills and practices used over time to maintain health and prevent, diagnose, and treat physical and mental illness. But many traditional treatments have no proven scientific value and conservationists say the industry drives a rampant trade in endangered animals — including tigers, rhinos and pangolins — threatening the existence of entire species. — AFP

## DR Congo officials sanctioned by US for animal trafficking

**KINSHASA:** The former head of DR Congo's wildlife agency and two ex-colleagues have been placed on the US sanctions list for trafficking in gorillas, chimps and other protected species, the United States says. The three have been barred from entering the United States, according to a US State Department communique released on Wednesday. The measure applies to Cosma Wilungula, former director general of the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN); Leonard Muamba Kanda, DR Congo's former head for managing commitments under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and ICCN director; and Augustin Ngumbi Amuri, a CITES coordinator and legal advisor to the ICCN.

"As public officials responsible for wildlife protection, they abused their public positions by trafficking chimpanzees, gorillas, okapi, and other protected wildlife from the DRC, primarily to the People's Republic of China, using falsified permits, in return for bribes," the statement said. "Their corrupt, transnational criminal actions not only undermined rule of law and government transparency in the DRC but also long-standing wildlife conservation efforts." Wilungula spent 16 years at the head of the ICCN — an agency tasked with managing the Democratic Republic of Congo's wildlife parks — before being suspended for "poor management" in August 2021 by Environment Minister Eve Bazaiba. — AFP

## French government to hold crisis meeting as heatwave mounts

**PARIS:** France's government will on Thursday hold a crisis meeting to tackle a heatwave that could reach its high point at the weekend, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne's office told AFP. Senior civil servants from Borne's office as well as the interior, health, agriculture and transport ministries were set to meet at 5:00 pm (15:00 GMT).

Paris has been stepping up hot weather protection measures this summer after 2022 brought intense heat and fierce wildfires, with four of mainland France and Corsica's 96 departments currently at elevated fire risk and drought affecting two-thirds of water tables. Some 500 hectares were scorched in the Pyrenees-Orientales department bordering Spain on Monday night.

And seven departments in southeastern France are on alert for summer storms and intense heat. Meanwhile the SPF public health authority said Thursday that at least 30 more deaths than normal had occurred during a July heatwave in the southeastern Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region, on top of 80 in the first episode in June. More than 4,800 deaths were attributed to heat in France last summer, out of 61,000 across Europe. On Thursday, temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) were expected across much of southern France, with peaks of up to 37. A so-called "heat dome" trapping new hot air arriving from the south is expected to form in the coming days.

"These high temperatures are set to last, with peaks nearing 40C on the Mediterranean coast and the Rhone valley from this weekend," weather authority Météo France said. Heat will spread into central and northern France as well, with temperatures of 35 degrees Celsius forecast for Paris.

Thermometers will not begin to fall until "the middle or even the end of next week," Météo France added. Meteorologists have even suggested that France could see its most intense heatwave ever — outstripping 2012's record — with an average temperature of 27 degrees recorded for multiple days across 30 monitoring stations nationwide. — AFP



**WINTZENHEIM:** Firefighters are at work at the place where a fire erupted at a holiday home for disabled people in Wintzenheim, eastern France, on August 9, 2023. — AFP



## Business

FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, 2023

## Global business travel industry is rebounding at faster rate: Survey

Spending expected to reach \$1.8 trillion by 2027: GBTA

DALLAS, US: The global business travel industry has rebounded at a more accelerated rate than expected just a year ago and is now expected to surpass its pre-pandemic spending level of \$1.4 trillion in 2024 and grow to nearly \$1.8 trillion by 2027. In 2022, global business travel spending rose 47 percent to \$1.03 trillion, with strong gains continuing and 32 percent growth expected in 2023. These robust gains were fueled by pent-up demand after the COVID-19 pandemic, more favorable global economic conditions in 2022 and 2023 and recession risks that have yet to happen.

Unveiled at the 2023 GBTA Convention in Dallas, the GBTA Business Travel Outlook (BTO) is an annual exhaustive forecast of business travel spending and growth covering 72 countries and 44 industries. Now in its 15th edition, this latest report outlines the top-level outlook for forecasted global business travel spending and other trends for 2023 to 2027. The latest 2023 GBTA Business Travel Index Outlook – Annual Global Report and Forecast is published by the Global Business Travel Association in collaboration with Visa.

New in this year's BTO are also data and analysis from GBTA's comprehensive survey of 4,700 business travelers across five global regions, representing insights from employee travelers regarding their business travel preferences, behaviors and spending including what they report as their average price of a business trip now.

"The headwinds that were anticipated to impact the rebound of global business travel over the past year didn't materialize and that is good news. This latest forecast now indicates an accelerated return to pre-pandemic spending levels sooner than anticipated as well as growth ahead in the coming years. Business travel spending is a key indicator, but how travel volumes will continue to rebound is yet to be seen, said Suzanne Neufang, CEO, GBTA.

Global business travel spending is expected to recover to its pre-pandemic total of \$1.4 trillion in 2024 and grow to nearly \$1.8 trillion by 2027, fueled by more favorable economic conditions than ex-

pected in 2022 and 2023. In 2022, global business travel spending rose 47 percent to \$1.03 trillion. These strong gains have continued into 2023, with 32 percent growth in global expenditures expected this year. The estimated breakdown of the \$1.03 trillion in business travel expenditures includes \$183 billion in air spend, \$395 billion in lodging spend, \$191 billion in food and beverage spend, \$138 billion in ground transportation spend and \$121 billion in other travel expenses.

"As travel continues to rebound, we expect digital payments to continue to grow because they make it easier and more secure to do things like purchase plane tickets for business travel or split a check at dinner. Visa sits at the center of money movement facilitating commerce across geographies and streamlining payments made when traveling – whether for business or pleasure – domestically or across borders, said Gloria Colgan, SVP, Global Head of Products, Visa Commercial Solutions.

Over the past 18 months, the most important factor driving the pace of global business travel's recovery is the progress made fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. The two biggest drivers in the industry's stabilization over the last six months have been the return of in-person meetings and events and the recovery of some international business travel capacity and volumes.

Recovery in business travel continues to vary by region. Western Europe was the fastest growing region globally in 2022. North America and Latin America saw spending growth accelerate significantly in 2022. Emerging Europe continues to lag in its recovery, challenged by the war in the Ukraine.

Regionally, Asia-Pacific was the big laggard last year given the delayed reopening of the Chinese economy. Chinese business travel spending fell 4.6 percent last year, dropping China down to the #2 business travel market in the world for the first time since 2014. However, China is expected to recover back to being the #1 business travel market in



The global business travel industry has rebounded at a more accelerated rate than expected just a year ago.

the world by the end of 2023.

Business travel spending recovery also continues to differ based on industry, with construction, education, and professional, scientific and technical activities showing the most resiliency. The resilience of the global economy was a key factor in the current rebound. However, looking forward, numerous challenges remain, including the war in Ukraine, persistent inflation in certain areas, much tighter global financial conditions and deterioration in the manufacturing sector. While a promising rebound is expected, there are several factors that could influence the industry's longer-term forecast. An increased focus on sustainability initiatives, widespread adoption of meeting technologies, growth in the remote workforce and the rise of blended travel are potential game changers in the future of business travel.



## Burger King India cuts tomatoes from menu as prices soar

NEW DELHI: Soaring vegetable prices after a bad harvest have prompted Burger King's Indian outlets to take tomatoes off their menu items, following in the footsteps of other fast food giants. "Even tomatoes need a vacation!" read a notice at an outlet in the capital New Delhi on Thursday. "Due to unpredictable conditions on the quality and supply of tomato, we are unable to add tomatoes in our food... we are doing our best to get back tomatoes in our burgers."

The burger franchise has operated across India since 2014, replacing its usual lineup of beef burgers with an assortment of chicken and vegetarian substitutes to accommodate Hindu objections to cattle slaughter. It is the latest of several chains to stop serving the vegetable. McDonald's said in July it was taking tomatoes off its menus as a temporary measure due to "seasonal issues", local media reported.

American sandwich chain Subway followed suit the



NEW DELHI: People look at the menu at a counter of a Burger King outlet in New Delhi on August 17, 2023. — AFP

same month, saying they were facing "quality issues". Last week, India's central bank warned that higher food prices had impacted household budgets and were expected to get worse.

It added that tomato prices had soared after bad

weather and pest attacks in major production belts. Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government had removed import restrictions to source tomatoes from neighboring Nepal to help ease pressure on food prices. — AFP

## UAE's ADNOC Gas inks five-year deal with Japanese firm

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates' ADNOC Gas has signed a five-year liquefied natural gas supply deal with Japan's JAPEX worth up to \$550 million, it said on Thursday. No volumes were revealed for the agreement, which follows Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit in July and ADNOC Gas' flotation on the Abu Dhabi stock exchange in March.

"Japan is one of the UAE's largest and most important energy partners and we are very pleased to strengthen this relationship through this LNG supply agreement with JAPEX," ADNOC Gas chief executive Ahmed Alebri said in a statement. Asian countries are major customers of gas and oil from the resource-rich Gulf, which also provides the bulk of Japan's oil supplies. ADNOC Gas, a subsidiary of oil giant ADNOC that aims to tap into growing demand for the cleaner-burning fuel, became operational in January before going public in a \$2.5 billion initial public offering three months later. — AFP

## Stocks struggle as rate hikes, China fears hit optimism

LONDON: US stocks attempted a rebound Thursday as shares elsewhere mostly retreated on fresh worries over interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve as well as China's economic woes. Wall Street opened higher following positive earnings results by major retailer Walmart, a day after stocks fell as US Treasury bond yields surged to multi-year peaks.

That followed the publication of minutes from the US central bank's July meeting revealing that "most participants" saw a significant risk that price increases would persist and could require further monetary tightening. The remarks dealt a blow to investors who had hoped rates were now at their peak following a string of data indicating inflation was falling and the jobs market softening.

There also remains debate inside the Fed about the next move, with officials giving sharply differing views, though the bank has said it will make deci-

sions based on incoming data. "The visibly hawkish FOMC (policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee) minutes fuelled the Fed hawks yesterday, and the expectation of a prolonged period of hawkish Fed stance is weighing on sentiment, along with escalating crisis in China," Swissquote Bank analyst Ipek Ozkardeskaya said.

London, Paris and Frankfurt indexes were in the red. "A more downbeat mood is settling in about what lies ahead for the global economy, as China's problems spread into the financial sector, while high inflation still lingers elsewhere," said Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at Hargreaves Lansdown.

"The FTSE 100 is trading lower, with the Lionesses' winning spirit proving highly elusive to capture, given the concerns unsettling investors right now," she said, referring to the England football team's thrilling advance to the Women's World Cup. The dour mood had also filtered through Asia, where most major markets were deep in the red. However, Hong Kong was flat and Shanghai saw small gains thanks to bargain-buying after a run of losses. Bets on further hikes have pushed the dollar to an eight-month high against the yen, raising the prospect of Japanese authorities intervening to support their currency. — AFP

## Aldi to buy 400 supermarkets in US Southeast

NEW YORK: Discount supermarket chain Aldi announced Wednesday a deal to purchase 400 grocery stores across the southeastern United States, expanding its footprint as inflation tests American consumers. Under a deal with Southeastern Grocers, Aldi, the American affiliate of the German company, will acquire Winn-Dixie and Harveys supermarkets across Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi.

"The time was right to build on our growth momentum and help residents in the Southeast save on their grocery bills," said Jason Hart, chief executive of Aldi's US operations. "The transaction supports our long-term growth strategy across the United States, including plans to add 120 new stores nationwide this year to reach a total of more than 2,400 stores by year-end."

Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed. Hart said the company was evaluating which of the locations to convert to the Aldi format, adding that some stores are expected to remain branded with their original name. Neil Saunders, analyst at GlobalData, said the deal should benefit price-sensitive shoppers who gravitate towards Winn-Dixie and Harveys. "Under the stewardship of Aldi, the business will have access to much deeper pockets and a ruthlessly efficient and effective supply chain which will help reduce costs," Saunders said in a note.

One interesting question concerns "how Aldi changes the Winn-Dixie and Harveys stores it is not intending to rebrand," Saunders said. "This will require a bit of a shift in Aldi's traditional operating model and suggests that the firm wants to experiment with some new ways of reaching and appealing to US shoppers." — AFP





Business

# North Africa has big potential for green hydrogen: Report

## Green hydrogen industry could create \$1.4tn-a-year market by 2050

PARIS: By 2050 North Africa could become a leading exporter of green hydrogen with Europe its main market, according to a recent report projecting the future of an industry still in its infancy. So-called green hydrogen is set "to redraw the global energy and resource map as early as 2030, creating a \$1.4 trillion-a-year market by 2050," according to the report from accounting consultancy Deloitte.

Hydrogen fuel—which can be produced from natural gas, biomass or nuclear power—is considered "green" when hydrogen molecules are split from water using electricity derived from renewables such as solar and wind that do not produce carbon emissions.

Less than one percent of the world's hydrogen production presently qualifies as green. But the climate crisis—coupled with both private and public investment—has sparked rapid growth in the sector.

The Hydrogen Council, a lobbying group, lists more than a thousand hydrogen projects in the pipeline worldwide. Projects launched before 2030 would require about \$320 billion in investment, the Council said.

By 2050, according to Deloitte, the main green hydrogen exporters are likely to be North Africa (\$110 billion per year), North America (\$63 billion), Australia (\$39 billion) and the Middle East (\$20 billion).

Management consultancy reports can be assumed to heavily reflect the financial interests of their corporate clients, including some of the world's largest carbon polluters. But the need to meet climate targets and generous subsidies are driving demand for clean energy of all kinds, including green hydrogen. Long-haul aviation and shipping industries—for which the type of electric batteries powering road vehicles is not an option—are also keen on hydrogen as an alternative to fossil fuels.

### Moroccan Sun and wind

The emergence of a clean hydrogen market from solar and wind could also make the industry more inclusive of developing countries, says the report. It would also allow Global South steel industries, for example, to leapfrog past coal. For now, however, 99 percent of the global production remains "grey," meaning that hydrogen is produced by splitting methane molecules, which releases greenhouse gases no matter what kind of energy drives the process.



With the support of European investment, North Africa could become the world's foremost producer of green hydrogen.

Truly green hydrogen releases hydrogen from carbon-free water molecules (H2O) using an electrical current from a renewable source. This is where Northern Africa may have a major role to play, says Sebastien Douquet, director of the Deloitte Energy and Modeling team and co-author of the report, which is based on International Energy Agency (IEA) data.

"We're seeing that a number of North African countries such as Morocco or Egypt are taking up the hydrogen issue, and that 'hydrogen strategies' are being announced there just a few years behind the European Union and the United States," Douquet told AFP. "Morocco has very strong potential for wind energy that is often overlooked, and a great potential for solar power,

and Egypt has the means to become the principal exporter of hydrogen to Europe in 2050 thanks to an existing natural gas pipeline" which could be adapted to transport hydrogen, he said.

Saudi Arabia also benefits from sunbaked and available land with the potential to produce 39 million tonnes of low-cost green hydrogen in 2050 -- four times its domestic demand—that would help diversify its economy away from petroleum, according to the report. The report predicts investment will end by 2040 for carbon capture and storage as a solution to the emissions of methane-based hydrogen, which is the current strategy of the oil-rich Gulf States, as well as the United States, Norway and Canada. Hydrogen produced this way cannot be labeled green, but rather "blue". —AFP

## US Fed members disagreed over interest rate hikes

WASHINGTON: A couple of Federal Reserve officials would have backed pausing US interest rate hikes last month, but ultimately supported another increase to tackle high inflation, according to minutes of the meeting published Wednesday.

The July gathering saw all 11 voting members of the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) support lifting rates by 25 basis points, as inflation remains stubbornly above the central bank's long-term two percent target. At the same meeting, "most participants" continued to see significant risks that price increases would persist, and this could require further tightening of monetary policy, the minutes showed.

The FOMC decision to raise rates lifted the Fed's benchmark lending rate to a range between 5.25-5.5 percent, its highest level since 2001. "A couple of participants indicated that they favored leaving the target range for the federal funds rate unchanged or that they could have supported such a proposal," said the latest report. They judged that maintaining the interest rates level would still "likely result in further progress" towards policymakers' goals while allowing time to evaluate outcomes.

Since the last Fed decision, several FOMC members have voiced sharply different views on the likelihood of further rate hikes, highlighting the divisions that now exist in the most senior ranks of the US central bank. Fed Governor Michelle Bowman said recently that she expected "additional rate increases will likely be needed to get inflation on a path down to the FOMC's two percent target."

But Philadelphia Fed president Patrick Harker took a different view, telling a conference in early August that, barring any "alarming" new data, "we may be at the point where we can be patient and hold rates steady and let the monetary policy actions we have taken do their work." —AFP



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## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 17 AUGUST 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	935	934	940	926	14	15,194,705	4	0.43%	-9.03%	916	940	14.1	1.80	3.6%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	256	261	264	256	8	15,920,196	4	1.56%	-12.72%	261	266	13.1	1.22	3.6%	1.30
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	164	164	166	162	4	8,551,278	0	0.00%	-8.45%	160	164	17.0	0.62	2.2%	1.12
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	201	197	201	195	6	1,505,921	-3	-1.50%	-5.55%	197	202	20.1	0.77	3.8%	1.31
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	768	757	770	753	17	29,847,215	-8	-1.05%	1.18%	744	762	19.7	1.93	2.2%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	627	622	628	622	6	4,977,595	-2	-0.32%	-17.38%	618	642	41.2	2.55	0.9%	1.22
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	138	137	138	135	3	1,272,441	-2	-1.44%	-9.87%	133	141	9.6	0.62	3.7%	1.83
204	National Investments	Financial Services	231	233	237	227	10	4,742,467	-2	-0.85%	-1.69%	232	237	183.6	1.06	11.9%	2.01
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	123	126	127	122	5	15,147,692	3	2.44%	12.50%	122	126	22.1	0.75	0.0%	0.99
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	156	151	158	146	12	46,605,152	-4	-2.58%	33.93%	150	155	14.4	1.09	2.6%	1.21
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	162	164	166	160	6	26,149,116	1	0.61%	23.31%	163	166	11.2	1.21	4.6%	1.70
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	66.1	67.0	68	66.1	2.0	2,691,166	-0.3	-0.45%	-10.55%	65.5	67.3	-	0.42	13.5%	1.30
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	168	163	170	157	13	65,018,165	-6	-3.55%	55.45%	158	166	15.3	1.15	1.8%	1.11
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	838	853	875	837	38	1,286,551	15	1.79%	6.63%	838	856	17.8	1.90	1.6%	1.08
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	105	104	105	102	3	15,117,704	-2	-1.89%	8.31%	102	104	16.9	0.64	2.8%	0.59
501	National Industries	Financial Services	228	225	228	221	7	5,767,855	-4	-1.75%	8.87%	217	226	159.6	1.07	2.1%	1.60
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,212	1,218	1,223	1,191	32	167,256	18	1.50%	0.25%	1,202	1,226	13.5	1.12	5.0%	1.07
506	HEISCO	Industrials	698	670	698	660	38	456,007	-28	-4.01%	9.30%	668	700	23.5	1.70	3.0%	0.97
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	710	712	719	707	12	3,814,007	5	0.71%	-11.00%	708	722	10.7	1.37	8.4%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	631	614	634	614	20	8,451,244	-17	-2.69%	-14.72%	598	618	23.0	0.83	0.0%	1.52
605	Zain	Telecommunications	515	514	520	512	8	6,616,117	-1	-0.19%	-8.70%	512	528	11.0	1.73	6.8%	0.65
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,375	3,252	3,460	3,236	224	1,178,381	-99	-2.95%	-2.99%	3,250	3,315	9.8	4.06	11.4%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	180	178	183	172	11	788,451	2	1.14%	-12.32%	178	184	-	0.76	0.0%	1.16
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,968	1,790	1,968	1,750	218	1,739,954	-123	-6.43%	-5.79%	1,780	1,820	20.7	12.40	4.4%	1.45
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	86.7	83.0	88	81.2	7.0	84,069,569	-3.1	-3.60%	9.21%	82.1	84	9.3	1.00	5.7%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	200	202	205	198	7	20,990,596	2	1.00%	-11.46%	201	207	28.4	1.09	1.4%	1.13
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	486	522	535	480	55	4,437,401	42	8.75%	32.82%	519	541	76.7	1.54	2.3%	0.47
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	395	408	415	385	30	4,835,517	4	0.99%	10.27%	396	410	37.3	1.59	3.8%	0.73
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	193	194	195	189	6	2,197,834	0	0.00%	3.19%	193	198	15.9	1.95	8.8%	0.46
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,912	1,969	1,982	1,902	80	1,061,319	57	2.98%	-4.04%	1,900	1,971	23.1	7.49	4.3%	0.95
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,257	1,190	1,257	1,156	101	1,613,891	-50	-4.03%	47.83%	1,175	1,220	15.0	4.60	5.8%	0.25

\* As of end of week closing



## Business

# Contagion fears grow as China's property sector crisis unravels

## Country Garden risks defaulting on its bond payments next month

BEIJING: Troubled Chinese property giant Country Garden risks defaulting on its bond payments next month, which could have disastrous consequences for the world's second-largest economy. The firm's debt woes come two years after the unraveling of its competitor Evergrande.

Here is why Country Garden's plight is being closely monitored by markets:

### How important is Country Garden?

Country Garden was China's largest private developer in terms of sales last year. It has extensive operations in small cities, which host about 60 percent of its projects. But that is where recent drops in China's property prices have been most pronounced and where customers have limited purchasing power.

At the end of 2022, Country Garden listed more than 3,000 active construction sites, including around 30 abroad, mainly in Australia, Indonesia and the United States. Any prolonged suspension of work at the sites could threaten social unrest, as Chinese homeowners often pay for new properties even before the building is fully constructed. Country Garden has four times as many projects as its competitor Evergrande,

whose stalled development led to protests and payment strikes last year.

### What is its current situation?

At the end of 2022, Country Garden had amassed colossal debt estimated by the group at around 1.152 trillion yuan (\$157 billion). Other estimates of its overall debt are as high as 1.4 trillion yuan, according to Bloomberg. Also at the end of 2022, the developer had cash totaling 147.5 billion yuan (\$20.2 billion today).

Last week, Country Garden was unable to make two bond payments. It now risks a default as other bond maturities are expected in September. Adding to the firm's pressure, 31 billion yuan (\$4.2 billion) in bonds will expire in 2024, said rating agency Moody's. Evergrande, once China's top property developer, had nearly \$340 billion in debt and \$2 billion in cash at the end of 2022.

### What are the consequences?

Property and related industries are major contributors to China's GDP. The setbacks faced by Country Garden and Evergrande have further weakened a sector that was battered by the COVID pandemic and the general economic

slowdown in China. This situation is fuelling mistrust among potential buyers, further aggravating the financial situation of developers. State-backed company Sino-Ocean announced Monday that it had defaulted on an interest payment and expects record half-yearly losses this month. In another sign of the market troubles, real estate prices fell in July at the fastest pace in a year, according to official figures published on Wednesday.

China's debt problems are likely to worsen as "recessionary and deflationary pressures pile up, (and) Chinese enterprises struggle to make profits," warn analysts at SinoInsider, a US-based consultancy that focuses on the Chinese economy.

### Risks to the financial system?

During the sector's boom years, many Chinese property developers enlisted trust firms or asset managers to finance their projects. Beijing-based conglomerate Zhongzhi — and its galaxy of financial companies — is one of the most important players in the market, alone managing more than one trillion yuan in assets. Its clients include businesses and wealthy individuals who have entrusted it



A logo of China's developer Country Garden Holdings is seen on the top of a building in Fuyang in China's eastern Anhui province on August 15, 2023. — AFP

with their savings. But Zhongzhi has recently found itself unable to issue some payments, causing "significant losses" to investors, noted Nomura analyst Ting Lu. Concerned investors gathered Wednesday to demand accountability outside the Beijing location of one of the firm's sub-

sidiaries, Zhongrong International Trust, Bloomberg reported. Any default by the Zhongzhi conglomerate risks exposing some of China's "massive financial and debt 'iceberg'", said SinoInsider.

"More of the 'iceberg' is likely to be uncovered going forward." — AFP

## BAE agrees to buy Ball Aerospace for \$5.55 billion

LONDON: British military equipment maker BAE Systems announced on Thursday that it had agreed to buy US company Ball Aerospace from the Ball Corporation for about \$5.55 billion.

BAE said it hoped to complete the acquisition of the aerospace firm in the first half of 2024, with an anticipated tax credit taking the "underlying economic consideration for the business" to \$4.8 billion.

The proposed deal will be funded by a combination of new external debt and existing cash resources, it added. Colorado-based Ball Aerospace supplies spacecraft, mission payloads, optical systems, and antenna systems, and counts the US Department of Defense and civilian space agencies among its clients. It has more than 5,200 employees, of whom

over 60 percent hold US security clearances.

The business is "well positioned to capture expected increases in demand for missiles and munitions", BAE said in a statement announcing the acquisition. Describing the aerospace firm as a "space and defense technology leader", BAE said it was a "highly complementary fit" with its own "portfolio and culture". "It's rare that a business of this quality, scale and complementary capabilities, with strong growth prospects and a close fit to our strategy, becomes available," BAE Systems chief executive Charles Woodburn said.

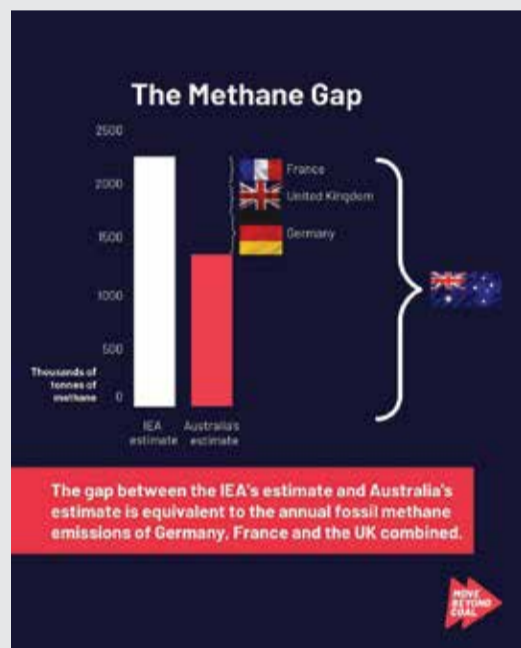
"The strategic and financial rationale is compelling, as we continue to focus on areas of high priority defense and Intelligence spending," he added. Earlier this month, BAE announced a record order book and half-year jump in net profits of 57 percent, as government defense spending increases amid the war in Ukraine. However, its share price on the London Stock Exchange dipped on opening Thursday by more than four percent, to below 960 pence per share.

Aarin Chiekrie, of Hargreaves Lansdown, called the deal's \$5.55-billion price tag "mammoth", noting



it was equivalent to almost 20 percent of BAE's current market capitalization. But he added the acquisition should add around \$2.2 billion in revenue to its top line, "before growing at a compound rate of around 10 percent annually over the next five years".

"And given the similarities between the two businesses, there's clear scope to streamline operations, cut costs and boost profit margins," Chiekrie said. — AFP



## Alarm raised over Australian miner's methane emissions

SYDNEY: Major Australian mining group Whitehaven Coal is set to double its methane emissions by 2030 as it expands operations, an energy think tank warned Thursday, questioning the company's estimates.

If all its plans go ahead, Whitehaven's coal mines are on track to release more than 60,000 tons a year of the potent greenhouse gas by 2030 — about twice current levels, said the study by Ember, a UK-registered group that uses data analysis to promote clean energy. "This flies in the face of Australia's climate commitments and asks serious questions about the amount of risk these expansion plans pose," said Ember's climate adviser Chris Wright.

Australia, one of the world's largest coal exporters, has committed to cutting carbon emissions by 43 percent by 2030 from 2005 levels, on a path to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. Whitehaven runs three open-cut and one large underground coal mine in New South Wales, with plans to expand with another open-cut mine in the state. It is also seeking approval for a new open-cut mine in Queensland. The company, which describes itself as Australia's leading producer of premium quality coal, reported that it had pulled more than 18 million tons of coal out of its mines in the year to June 30, 2023.

Expanded Whitehaven coal operations could emit a cumulative 1.2 million tons of methane between now and 2050, Ember said, with an equivalent short-term climate impact of 56 million cars on the road for a year.

### 'Underestimated'

The climate group also cast doubt on Whitehaven's figures after comparing them to methane emissions reported by other Australian mines. "Emissions reported by Whitehaven fall consistently below what could be reasonably expected. It is likely that they are being significantly underestimated," the report said. "As far as the authors are aware, the methane emission factors used by Whitehaven have not been independently verified." The group's only underground coal mine, Narrabri in New South Wales, is required to directly measure methane emissions because it operates below the surface, said Ember.

Since mining started there in 2018, Narrabri had reported methane emissions nearly five times higher than it had estimated before operations began, the think tank said. Whitehaven said it complies with emissions regulations in New South Wales and Queensland. "We undertake all emissions estimates in accordance with the approved methodologies outlined by the relevant regulators and authorities in each jurisdiction," a Whitehaven spokesperson said.

The coal group was investing in systems to "enhance the accuracy of our emissions forecasting", the spokesperson said. Methane is responsible for roughly 30 percent of the global rise in temperatures to date. While far less abundant in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide, methane is about 28 times more powerful than a greenhouse gas on a century-long timescale. Over a 20-year time frame, it is 80 times more potent. Methane lingers in the atmosphere for only a decade, compared to hundreds or thousands of years for CO2. — AFP

## Ecuador to vote on oil drilling in the Amazon

QUITO: To some, Ecuador's jungle is a home and a valuable tool in fighting climate change, to others, it is a vital solution to a struggling economy.

In an unusual example of climate democracy, it is Ecuadorians who will decide what is more important, drilling for oil or protecting the Amazon, in a closely watched referendum on Sunday.

The drilling is taking place in the Yasuni National Park, one of the most diverse biospheres in the world, and home to three of the world's last uncontacted Indigenous populations. It began in 2016 after years of fraught debate and failed efforts by then president Rafael Correa to persuade the international community to pay cash-strapped Ecuador \$3.6 billion not to drill there.

After years of demands for a referendum, the country's highest court authorized the vote in May to decide the fate of "block 43," which contributes 12 percent of the 466,000 barrels per day produced by Ecuador. The government of outgoing President Guillermo Lasso has estimated a loss of \$16 billion over the next 20 years if drilling is halted.

"The Yasuni has been like a mother to the world... We need to raise our voices and hands so that our mother can recover, that she is not injured, that

she is not beaten," said Alicia Cahuiya, a Waorani leader born in the heart of the jungle. The reserve is home to the Waorani and Kichwa tribes, as well as the Tagaeri, Taromenane and Duga-kaeri, who choose to live isolated from the modern world.

Cahuiya said the reserve was "a lung for the world," capturing carbon dioxide and pumping out oxygen and water vapor. "Water vapor helps maintain a low temperature on the planet, it's like air conditioning" for the atmosphere, said Gonzalo Rivas, director of the Tiputini scientific station at the private San Francisco University in Quito.

### 'Climate democracy'

The Amazon — which stretches across eight nations — is a vital carbon sink. But scientists warn its destruction is pushing the world's biggest rainforest dangerously close to a tipping point, beyond which trees would die off and release carbon rather than absorb it, with catastrophic consequences for the climate.

"This forest has allowed us to survive until today," said Rivas. The Yasuni National Park houses some 2,000 tree, 610 bird, 204 mammal, 150 amphibian and more than 120 reptile species, ac-



BAMENO, Ecuador: Waorani Indigenous men are pictured with their canoes in the Waorani Community of Bامeno, Ecuador. — AFP

ording to the university. The fate of the reserve has drawn the attention of international celebrities such as Hollywood star and environmental activist Leonardo DiCaprio.

"With this first-of-its-kind referendum worldwide, Ecuador could become an example in democratizing climate politics, offering voters the chance to vote not just for the forest but also for Indigenous rights, our climate, and the well-being of our planet," he wrote on Instagram this month.

Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg also hailed the "historic referendum." The NGO Amazon

Frontlines said the vote was "a first-of-its-kind demonstration of climate democracy, where people, not corporations, get to decide on resource extraction and its limits."

Opinion polls published earlier this month showed a slight leaning to a "Yes" vote to halt oil drilling. National oil company Petroecuador argues the block only occupies 80 hectares (200 acres) of more than a million hectares that make up the reserve. Locals in Yasuni are divided, with some supporting the oil companies and the benefits economic growth have brought to their villages. — AFP

## Walmart raises 2024 forecast after 'strong quarter'

NEW YORK: Walmart raised its full-year forecast on Thursday following a jump in quarterly profits, pointing to solid increases at US stores and e-commerce.

The big retailer, which has been seen as well positioned amid inflation because of its reputation for value, enjoyed another quarter of growing sales at its namesake US stores, with robust demand for groceries and pharmaceuticals offsetting weakness in discretionary consumption and the effects of wage increases.

Walmart reported second-quarter profits of \$7.9 billion, up 53 percent from the year-ago period, a period marred by excess inventories due in part to pandemic supply chain issues.

Revenues rose 5.7 percent to \$161.6 billion. "We had another strong quarter," said Walmart Chief Executive Doug McMillon in a press release. "Food is a strength, but we're also encouraged by our results in general merchandise versus our expectations when we started the quarter."

McMillon said the company is in a "good position" on inventory, adding "we like our position for the back half of the year." Walmart's US division — which accounted for more than two-thirds of revenues during the quarter — jumped 6.4 percent in comparable sales, a closely watched industry data point.

The business won market share gains in groceries, higher prescription counts and benefited from price hikes on some goods. On the downside, Walmart also cited "softness" in discretionary areas including apparel, home and sporting goods.

Walmart lifted full-year projections and now sees full-year earnings of between \$6.36 and \$6.46 a share, up 26 cents from the prior range. Shares rose 1.2 percent to \$161.15 in pre-market trading. — AFP



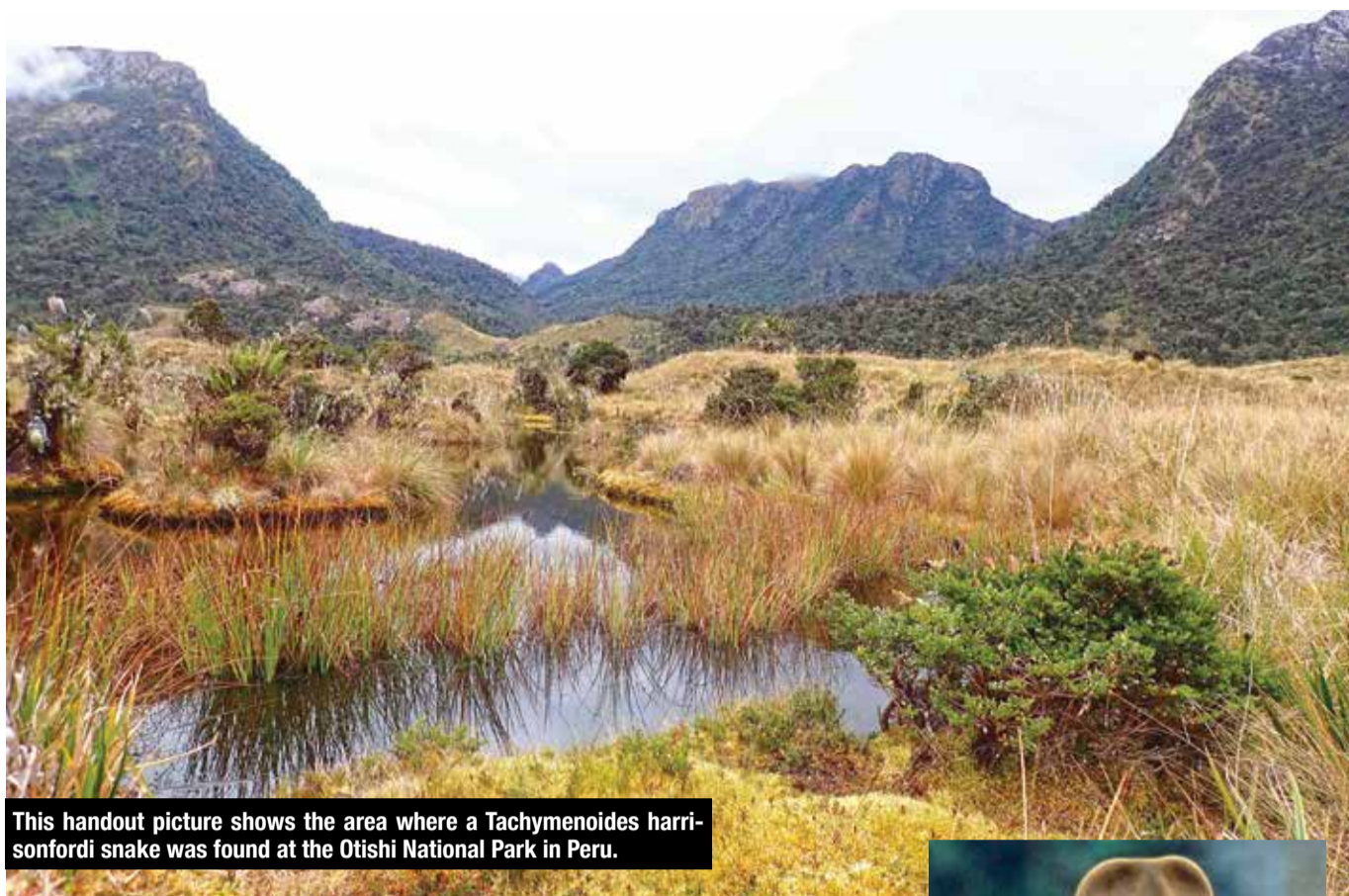
WILMINGTON: A shopper pushes a cart through the parking lot of a Walmart on the morning of Black Friday in Wilmington, Delaware. — AFP



Lifestyle



This handout picture released by Edgar Lehr Press shows a Tachymenoides harrisonfordi snake at the Otishi National Park in Peru. - AFP photos



This handout picture shows the area where a Tachymenoides harrisonfordi snake was found at the Otishi National Park in Peru.



Harrison Ford

## New species of snake found in Peru named after Harrison Ford

Scientists working in Peru have named a new species of snake after Harrison Ford in honor of the "Indiana Jones" actor's support for conservation work. The 40 cm (16 inch) reptile was first discovered in May 2022 in the jungle mountains of Otishi National Park, San Marcos National University said Wednesday. But it was not until now that researchers

concluded it was indeed a previously unknown species. This creature is a yellowish-brown color, with black spots, a black belly and copper eyes. It has been given the scientific name Tachymenoides harrisonfordi. The snake was first found by a team led by Edgar Lehr, a US-German biologist.

It is now named after Ford because he is active in environmental issues,

Lehr told AFP from the state of Illinois. "I found out that Harrison Ford agreed to have his name used via a consultation that Conservation International made", he added, referring to an NGO.

He said the snake was discovered in an area that is only accessible by helicopter. "It took us seven days to find it," said Lehr. The snake is harmless to adult humans but it is good at hunting

toads and lizards, he added. Lehr led a team of researchers from San Marcos National University, Florida International University and Illinois Wesleyan University. Salamandra, the German Journal of Herpetology, published on Tuesday a study on the discovery of the snake. — AFP

## Ireland's fishermen fear species migration as sea temperatures soar

When he finished school Daragh McGuinness knew he wanted to join a fishing crew but now, at 23, he fears climate change may kill off the industry that has sustained his family for generations. "It's a massive problem," he told AFP in the pilot house of the Atlantic Challenge trawler, where he works as a deckhand, docked in the port of Killybegs in northwest Ireland. "It could really finish the fishing, in Ireland anyway at least."

Soaring temperatures in the North Atlantic Ocean over the summer months have raised fears that fish could be pushed to colder waters, heaping pressure on the already struggling industry. At the end of July, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that average surface temperatures in the North Atlantic had reached a new record high of 24.9 degrees Celsius (76.8 degrees Fahrenheit).

The Atlantic Challenge, like many vessels sailing out of Killybegs, catches blue whiting and mackerel, which are highly prized on international markets, returning to port one or two days after a catch so produce is fresh. "It would just concern you that you would be pushed further, too far north and then it wouldn't be viable to come back to Killybegs," McGuinness explained. Sean O'Donoghue, chief executive of the Killybegs Fishermen's Organization, said climate change was having a "dramatic effect" on white fish stocks such as cod which prefer colder waters.

**'Extreme'**  
He feared it was "only a matter of time" before so-called pelagic fish such



Cod, salmon, trout, mackerel and other fish and crustacean products are pictured for sale in a fishmonger's shop in Killybegs, western Ireland. — AFP photos

as mackerel, blue whiting and herring move north permanently. "If we continue with the warming of the waters, it is inevitable, the pelagic species will move totally out of the waters. And we could end up that we have very little fish," he said. Among trends emerging, he added, were more mackerel being caught by the Icelandic fleet, while his members were catching more species like anchovies and sardines, which are typically found in warmer southern waters, prompting "overall concern".

The temperature record set in July was particularly worrying as it came weeks before the North Atlantic typically reaches peak temperatures in September. In June, the NOAA recorded what

it characterized as a Category 4 or "extreme" marine heatwave off the coasts of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Glenn Nolan, who heads oceanographic and climate services at Ireland's Marine Institute, said the month saw "significant" temperatures, 4-5 degrees in excess of what would be normal off the country's coast in the summer months. "When you're seeing a temperature at 24.5 or 21, as we saw in some of the coastal bays around the county of Galway... it's way above what you would ordinarily expect," he said. Nolan said he expected a specific study attributing the spike in temperatures in June and July to climate change in due course.

### Double whammy

The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which assesses the science related to climate change, has attributed the intensity of marine heatwaves to global warming for decades, he noted. "The IPCC have already looked at marine heatwaves in general and they have high confidence that they can attribute them to manmade climate change," the Galway-based expert said. Nolan said the extreme temperatures could create the conditions for changes to fish migration, and pointed to algal blooms in warm waters causing "problems typically for shellfish and finfish". For Irish fishing, the situation is a double whammy, as the industry has been hit by lost EU fishing quotas after Brexit, the UK's departure from the bloc at the end of 2020.

EU member Ireland saw a 15-percent cut to fishing quotas by 2025 as part of the last-minute trade deal between London and Brussels.

"Unfortunately the deal that was done disproportionately hit Ireland," said O'Donoghue. "The net effect of it is that Ireland is paying 40 percent of the transfer of fish to the UK (from the EU)." He now wants to see changes to EU fisheries policy to reflect the impact of the Brexit cuts on Ireland's fleet and to mitigate the effects of climate change on his members' catch. "We're not happy with the way things are on the Common Fisheries Policy at the moment. They need to be changed and Brexit and climate change have to be taken on board," O'Donoghue said. — AFP



## Paris-chute: Man arrested after parachuting from Eiffel Tower

A man was arrested in Paris on Thursday after jumping off the Eiffel Tower with a parachute, police and the monument's operator said. The man, an experienced climber, entered the tower's perimeter shortly after 5.00 am (0300 GMT), well before its official opening. He was quickly detected by guards, according to the site's operator Sete, but still managed to get to the top before anybody could stop him, carrying the parachute in a backpack.

Once he got near the top of the 330-metre-high structure, he jumped. The man landed in a nearby stadium where he was arrested for endangering the lives of others, police said.

"This kind of irresponsible action puts people working at or below the tower in danger," Sete said in a statement. The Eiffel Tower is the French capital's top tourist spot, attracting 5.9 million visitors in 2022. The tower's opening, usually at 9:00 am, was slightly delayed due to the incident, Sete said, adding that it had filed criminal charges against the man. Last week, the Eiffel Tower was evacuated twice on the same day following hoax bomb alerts. And on Monday, two inebriated American tourists were found sleeping off a heavy night in the heights of the tower, having dodged security the night before. — AFP



Boats and fishing vessels are pictured at the harbor in Killybegs, western Ireland on August 4, 2023. Soaring temperatures in the North Atlantic Ocean over the summer months have raised fears that fish could be pushed to colder waters, heaping pressure on the already struggling industry. — AFP



Fishmonger Michael O'Donnell poses for a photograph with some of his fish stock in Killybegs, western Ireland.



A mackerel fillet is displayed for a photograph in a fishmonger's shop in Killybegs, western Ireland.



## Lifestyle

## Iceman Oetzi was balding, darker-skinned than thought: Study

Oetzi, the "iceman" mummy of the Alps, had darker skin than previously thought and was likely bald or almost bald when he died, the study by Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology said. He also likely stemmed from a relatively isolated group with little contact with other Europeans, and had ancestors who arrived directly from Anatolia. Oetzi's remains were found in September 1991 in South Tyrol, the northern Italian region where he was also believed to have roamed.

Mummified in ice, he was discovered by two German hikers in the Oetztal Alps, 3,210 meters (10,500 feet) above sea level, more than 5,000 years after his death. Since then, scientists have used hi-tech, non-invasive diagnostics and genomic sequencing to penetrate his mysterious past.

Initial analysis of his genome had earlier suggested that he had genetic traces of steppe herders from eastern Europe. But Max Planck's scientists said the latest results no longer support this finding.

Rather, they believed the original sample to have been contaminated with



modern DNA that led to the erroneous finding. Advances in technology have also allowed for a more specific look into Oetzi's past. "Among the hundreds of early European people who lived at the same time as Oetzi and whose genomes are now available, Oetzi's genome has more ancestry in common with early Anatolian farmers than any of his European counterparts," said the institute's team.

## 'Almost no hair'

Johannes Krause, head of the Department of Archaeogenetics at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology who co-authored the study, said his team was "very surprised to find no traces of eastern European steppe herders in the most recent analysis of the Iceman genome". "The proportion of hunter-gatherer genes in Oetzi's genome is also very

low. Genetically, his ancestors seem to have arrived directly from Anatolia without mixing with hunter gatherer groups," he said.

The scientists believe therefore that he likely stemmed from a relatively isolated population that had very little contact with other European groups. The team said previous ideas about the iceman's appearance may also have been inaccurate.

Scientists had previously thought the iceman's skin had darkened in the ice, but it may actually have been his original skin color, said the team.

Oetzi's genes also show a "predisposition to baldness" and, rather than having long, thick hair on his head, he is now believed to already have lost most of his hair as an adult. "This is a relatively clear result and could also explain why almost no hair was found on the mummy," said anthropologist Albert Zink, co-author of the study. In previous studies over the years, scientists have determined that Oetzi died around the age of 45, was about 1.60 meters (five foot, three inches) tall and weighed 50 kilos (110 pounds). He suffered a violent death,



with an arrow severing a major blood vessel between the rib cage and the left shoulder blade. — AFP

## Britney Spears, husband head for divorce

Britney Spears and her model husband Sam Asghari are heading for a divorce after 14 months of marriage, US media reported — the latest personal crisis for the troubled pop star. Asghari, 29, filed divorce papers citing "irreconcilable differences" as the reason for ending the marriage, People and TMZ reported, citing unnamed sources.

The couple was married in 2022, about a year after a California judge dissolved a controversial 14-year conservatorship that had barred her from handling her own life and finances, a legal arrangement many fans considered exploitative. Under the conservatorship — which was largely managed by her father Jamie Spears — the now-41-year-old singer has said she was prevented from having a contraceptive IUD removed despite her desire for more children, claimed she was forced to work and said her phone was tapped.

"I just want my life back," Spears told the court in 2021. The singer — whose hits include "Oops!... I Did It Again," and "Toxic" — reportedly has a pre-nuptial agreement in place that will protect her assets. TMZ, People and Entertainment Tonight first reported on Wednesday that the two had decided to separate. According to TMZ, Asghari's divorce filing says the two have been separated since last month. Spears rocketed to fame in her teens on hits like "...Baby One More Time," becoming one of the world's reigning pop stars at the turn of the millennium.

But she suffered a highly publicized 2007 breakdown, which includ-

ed attacking a paparazzo's car at a gas station, and the conservatorship began just a year later. Asghari and Spears met in 2016 when he appeared in a music video for her single "Slumber Party."



US singer Britney Spears (left) and boyfriend Sam Asghari arrive for the premiere of Sony Pictures' "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood" at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California on July 22, 2019. — AFP

The couple announced a surprise pregnancy in 2022 but said it had ended in miscarriage only weeks later. Spears has two teen sons, Sean and Jayden, with her ex-husband Kevin Federline. She was also briefly married — for less than three days — to childhood friend Jason Alexander.

After reports of her split with Asghari began to surface, Spears posted on Instagram Wednesday night that she was planning to buy a horse, but made no mention of her marital status. She is set to publish a memoir called "The Woman In Me" in October. — AFP



## Enormous Lebanon bologna sandwich unveiled at Pennsylvania community fair

An enormous Lebanon bologna sandwich billed as one of the world's largest has been unveiled at a central Pennsylvania fair. The 150-foot-long (45.7-meters-long) sandwich was created Tuesday night at the Lebanon Area Fair by a large crew of volunteers known as the "Bologna Security." Lebanon bologna is known for its distinct smoked and tangy flavor. Every footlong "bite" was sponsored at \$100 per foot.

The money was donated to Lebanon County Christian Ministries and

their efforts to help people dealing with food insecurity in the Lebanon Valley. Pennlive reports that Bologna Security used 600 slices of provolone cheese and 1,200 slices of half-sweet and original Seltzer's Lebanon Bologna to create 900 sandwiches, or six sandwiches per foot. Fairgoers had a chance to enjoy the sandwich for free Tuesday night. Lebanon is 72 miles (about 116 kilometers) northwest of Philadelphia.

## Britain's 'chat show king' Michael Parkinson dies aged 88

Michael Parkinson, the veteran British chat show host whose decades-spanning career featured interviews with some of the world's highest profile figures, has died at the age of 88, his family said Thursday. His BBC show "Parkinson" which first aired in June 1971 made him a household name. He died late on Wednesday following a brief illness. Muhammad Ali, Fred Astaire, Elton John, Paul McCartney and Peter Sellers were just a few of the famous names to grace his interview couch.

Others included Lauren Bacall, David Bowie, Tom Cruise, Helen Mirren and Gwyneth Paltrow. "Sir Michael Parkinson passed away peacefully at home last night in the company of his family," his family said in a statement, requesting "privacy and time to grieve". The star interviewer's BBC chat show enjoyed a successful run until 1982 before being revived in 1998.

He switched from the BBC to commercial rival ITV in 2004, where he continued until 2007. Parkinson's final two-hour show in late 2007 featured a typically star-studded line-up of footballer David Beckham, actors Michael Caine and Judy Dench, environmental



British TV presenter Michael Parkinson arrives at a memorial service for the South African born, former England cricket captain Tony Greig, at Saint Martin-in-the-fields church in central London.

broadcaster David Attenborough and comedian Billy Connolly. Parkinson was knighted by the late Queen at Buckingham Palace in 2008.

"I never expected to be knighted — I thought there was more chance of me turning into a Martian really," said the broadcaster who grew up the son of a miner in a working class community in northern England. Prior to taking to the airwaves, he worked as a newspaper

journalist, work that he credited with honing his interview skills.

In 2013, he revealed he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer following a routine health check. He had three sons with wife Mary, who he married in 1959. Tributes quickly flooded in for the British TV legend, with the director-general of the BBC lauding him as "the king of the chat show" and an "incredible broadcaster and journalist".

It will re-air a celebration program about Parkinson on Thursday evening. Comedian Stephen Fry praised his authenticity. "The genius of Parky was that unlike most people (and most of his guests, me included) he was always 100 percent himself. On camera and off," he said on Instagram.

A long-time newspaper sports columnist and cricket enthusiast, Parkinson was also lauded by celebrated former umpire Dickie Bird, who had spoken to his "true friend" by phone just hours before he died. "I'm completely stunned and shocked," Bird told Times Radio. "There'll never be another one like him... He will go down as a legend... he was the best." — AFP

## Music Review



## On 'My Love of Country,' Teddy Thompson shows affection for Nashville classics

Teddy Thompson began a recent concert by singing George Jones' 1972 hit "A Picture of Me (Without You)," and smiled as the crowd applauded. "That's a new song I just wrote," he joked.

Well, no. But Thompson puts his stamp on that tune and nine other classics on his latest project, an album of covers: "My Love of Country." Country music is in Thompson's DNA, even though he was born in London. His parents, Richard and Linda Thompson, are revered British folk rockers who found room for such Nashville standards as "Together Again" and "Honky Tonk Blues" in their 1970s stage shows.

His son has long been partial to classic country, and his zeal for the peal of a pedal steel — and mandolin, and fiddle — is evident on "My Love of Country." Thompson's disciplined, almost reverent interpretations shun showboating in the vocals or arrangements; his vibrant tenor is more than

enough to make the songs shimmer. Most are weepers. They range from Patsy Cline tunes and the Charlie Louvin hit "I Don't Love You Anymore" to more unpredictable selections, including "I'll Regret It All in the Morning," a drinking song written by Teddy's dad. Among those contributing backing vocals are Vince Gill, Rodney Crowell and Aoife O'Donovan. Producer David Mansfield provides subtle support on multiple instruments while keeping the focus on the lead singer.

Thompson finds a Scottish lilt in Buck Owens' "Crying Time," makes octave leaps seem effortless on "I Fall to Pieces," and elsewhere evokes Roy Orbison. He saves his best for last: a lovely version of "You Don't Know Me." On the final verse, Thompson climbs the scale but resists any temptation to let loose, his artful restraint somehow making the moment more moving.



## Suburban Detroit woman says she found a live frog in a spinach container

A woman in suburban Detroit said she got a scare when she discovered a live frog in a container of spinach purchased from a grocery store. Amber Worrick of Southfield said she bought the sealed Earthbound Farm spinach package earlier this week from a Meijer store, WJBK-TV reported. When she got home, her daughter found a live frog in the container and screamed, Worrick said. "It was alive and moving," Worrick said. "Just thank God I didn't eat the frog." Worrick said she immediately returned the package and the frog to the store. Workers there released the frog and gave her a refund, she said. The TV station's video showed the frog in a sealed container. Jennifer Holton, a spokesperson with the Michigan Department of Agricultural and Rural Development, told the Detroit Free Press that the store shouldn't have released the frog because authorities now don't know whether it's native to the state. She said the department referred the incident to the US Food and Drug Administration. Meijer officials said the frog was relocated to a new home outdoors. Officials at California-based Taylor Farms, which owns Earthbound Farm, apologized in a statement and promised to continue to provide "the freshest, finest quality veggies for consumers."



Lifestyle



Saudi female lifeguard Amani Al-Fefel rides a jet ski during a work tour at the Sunset Beach resort in the Saudi Gulf city of Al-Khobar.



Saudi female lifeguard Amani Al-Fefel works at the Sunset Beach resort in the Saudi Gulf city of Al-Khobar.

## Where summer heat hits hard: Mideast and North Africa

Climate change has impacted the Middle East and North Africa where summer is already very hot. Many in Iraq, Syria, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia still labor in the heat.

### A tool of the trade in Syria

Heat is a tool of the trade for blacksmith Murad Haddad in the city of Idlib in northwest Syria. "We make everything by hand here. We get up early to try to avoid the extra heat we're exposed to as well as the flames," the 30-year-old told AFP.

He and his five brothers take it in turn to use skills handed down by their grandfather as they toil in torching temperatures. As he strikes the glowing iron with his hammer, a tattoo on his forearm states categorically that "My life is painful".

From time to time he removes his shirt and wipes away the sweat dripping from his beard and drinks tea, standing under an ancient fan suspended from the ceiling. "We work up close to the fire for five or six hours, until two or three in the afternoon. It consumes us," he said. "The heat is killing us. I have six kids, and I can hardly look after them. But if I don't work, I can't make ends meet."

### Hot food at 50°C in Baghdad

Maoula Al-Tai is 30 and delivers takeaway food in Baghdad where he roams the city on a backfiring moped. When the mercury rises above 50 de-



Women work on a melon plantation in a field in Nefza, in Tunisia's northwestern Beja governorate.

grees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit), as it did at the beginning of the week, he is one of the few to venture out onto deserted streets.

"Sometimes it hits 52, 53 or 54. That's not normal. Nobody can handle that!" he said. To try to protect himself

from the heat, Tai wears a balaclava that covers his nose and mouth. The United Nations says Iraq is one of the five countries most impacted by some effects of climate change. It is now enduring its fourth consecutive year of drought.

### A woman farmer in Tunisia

Munija Deghbouj is 40, and she lives in the village of El Hababsa, in prosperous countryside in the Siliana region of northern Tunisia. When she spoke to AFP at the end of July, the North African country was going

around seven kilometers (four and a half miles) to her field where she grows peppers and watermelons. "I get up at four in the morning and get my basket ready as well as breakfast for my children," she said. "I leave home at around five and work until two, and then I come home again on foot. "We start work really early, planning to be home again once the temperature gets too hot."

### Backbreaking labour in Iraq

It was 51 degrees Celsius in Nasiriyah in southern Iraq at the start of the week. Atheer Jassim, in his 40s, makes a living delivering gas cylinders. When he gets home after working in the heat all day, he often finds the house has no electricity. In Iraq, power cuts caused by load shedding can last up to 12 hours a day. When fatigue gets too much for the father of eight, he "rests for five or six minutes. I splash water on my head, I rest, and then start again."

Jassim delivers gas bottles to private houses by carrying them from his van to his customers. Despite the work being exhausting, he must keep on going because he wants his children to "finish their studies".

### Long hot workday in Saudi

In eastern Saudi Arabia, beachfront resorts offer one way to beat the heat. But it means long days for the lifeguards tasked with keeping swimmers safe. "We pay a lot of attention to our fitness level when we're working amid high summer temperatures," said Amani Al-Fefel.

"We cooperate, so if one of us gets tired someone else will replace her." Fefel has worked for more than a decade at a resort in the city of Khobar, where temperatures can top 50 de-

grees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit), as it did at the beginning of the week, he is one of the few to venture out onto deserted streets.

"Sometimes it hits 52, 53 or 54. That's not normal. Nobody can handle that!" he said. To try to protect himself

through an intense and unusual heatwave, with temperatures hitting 50 degrees Celsius in the shade in the capital, Tunis.

She had to change her working hours in order to cope, and rose at dawn each day. Then she walked for

praising Scotto as "cultured, refined, generous, simple".

She died at her home in New York, the ANSA news agency said. Born on February 24, 1934, in northwest Italy, Scotto studied singing in Milan and began her career in 1952 in Savona in Giuseppe Verdi's opera La Traviata.

She would go on to grace the

world's greatest opera houses, from Milan to London and New York. "I am heartbroken by the death of Renata Scotto, one of the greatest opera singers of all time and a dedicated teacher of young singers," tenor Placido Domingo said on social media.—AFP

## Bernstein family defends Bradley Cooper from 'Jewface' storm

The family of Leonard Bernstein has defended Bradley Cooper's controversial decision to wear a large prosthetic nose while playing the Jewish composer in a new film. Oscar nominee Cooper—who wrote, directed and stars in "Maestro"—has received criticism since a trailer for the upcoming Netflix film was released online this week. Critics said the decision to wear a fake nose plays up to Jewish stereotypes, and have dubbed it "Jewface," in reference to the historic "Blackface" practice of non-Black performers darkening their faces for roles. Others have questioned whether non-Jewish actors, like Cooper, should even play Jewish roles.

But the late Bernstein's three children said they were "perfectly fine with" with Cooper's decision "to use makeup to amplify his resemblance" to their father. "It happens to be true that Leonard Bernstein had a nice, big nose," wrote Jamie, Alexander and Nina Bernstein in a statement on social media. "We're also certain that our dad would have been fine with it as well," they added.

Bernstein, the son of Jewish-Ukrainian immigrants, died in 1990 but remains one of the best-known composers and conductors of all time. He served as music director of the New York Philharmonic, and wrote the Broadway musical "West Side Story." Cooper, a nine-time Oscar nominee, is best known for "A Star Is Born" and "The Hangover" films.



US actor Bradley Cooper arrives for the 2022 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. --AFP

"Maestro" is a biographical romance about Bernstein and his wife Felicia Montealegre, who is played by Carey Mulligan. Questions about whether actors, particularly white performers, should play real-life figures from ethnic minorities have long roiled Hollywood.

In recent years, the casting of non-Jewish actors to play Jewish roles has come to the fore. For instance, Helen Mirren drew controversy for portraying former Zionist Prime Minister Golda Meir in this year's "Golda." But the Bernstein family praised Cooper for "the depth of his commitment" to the project.

"It breaks our hearts to see any misrepresentations or misunderstandings of his efforts," they wrote. "Any strident complaints around this issue strike us above all as disingenuous attempts to bring a successful person down a notch—a practice we observed all too often perpetrated on our own father." "Maestro" is due to premiere at next month's Venice Film Festival. Cooper has already said he will not attend the premiere because of the ongoing Hollywood strike, which prevents actors from promoting their movies.—AFP



Saudi female lifeguard Amani Al-Fefel rides a jet ski during a work tour.



Men cool off with a mist dispenser set up in a street in central Baghdad amid soaring temperatures.

## Cannes Festival denounces Iran director's jailing

Organizers of the Cannes Film Festival on Wednesday denounced "a serious violation of free speech" after Iranian director Saeed Roustaei was sentenced to prison for showing a film at the competition. An Iranian court sentenced Roustaei, 34, to six months' prison for the screening of his film "Leila's Brothers" at the Cannes festival in 2022, local media reported on Tuesday. The film, which recounts the economic struggles of a family in Tehran, has been banned in Iran since its release last year. Roustaei's sentencing, which includes a ban on working for five years, "constitutes once again a serious violation of free speech for Iranian artists, film-makers, producers and technicians," Cannes organizers said in a statement to AFP. "The Cannes Festival expresses its support to all those who suffer violence and reprisals for creating and distributing their works. The Festival is their home," it said. "Leila's Brothers" was in competition for the Palme d'Or at last year's Cannes festival. It missed the top prize but won the International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI) award. It was banned after it "broke the rules by being entered

at international film festivals without authorization," and the director refused to "correct" it as requested by the culture ministry, official media said at the time.



Iranian film director Saeed Roustaei attends a photocall for the film "Leila's Brothers" during the 75th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.—AFP

On Tuesday, the reformist daily Etemad said that Roustaei, along with the movie's producer Javad Noruzbegi, "were sentenced to six months in prison for screening the movie at Cannes Film Festival". Roustaei and Noruzbegi were found guilty of "contributing to propaganda of the opposition against the Islamic system."—AFP

## Italian opera soprano Renata Scotto dies aged 89



Italian soprano Renata Scotto has died aged 89, the mayor of her hometown said Wednesday, as fellow musicians paid tribute to "one of the greatest opera singers of all time". "A unique singer, a great musician, a great artist, a great woman has died," the mayor of Savona, Marco Russo, wrote on Facebook,

praising Scotto as "cultured, refined, generous, simple".

She died at her home in New York, the ANSA news agency said. Born on February 24, 1934, in northwest Italy, Scotto studied singing in Milan and began her career in 1952 in Savona in Giuseppe Verdi's opera La Traviata.

She would go on to grace the

world's greatest opera houses, from Milan to London and New York. "I am heartbroken by the death of Renata Scotto, one of the greatest opera singers of all time and a dedicated teacher of young singers," tenor Placido Domingo said on social media.—AFP



# Sebastian Coe re-elected as president of World Athletics

## Coe says return of Russian athletes 'unlikely' before Paris Olympics

**BUDAPEST:** Sebastian Coe, president of World Athletics since 2015, was on Thursday re-elected as head of track and field's governing body on a third and final four-year mandate. The 66-year-old, a two-time Olympic 1500m champion for Britain in 1980 and 1984, stood unopposed in the vote of the World Athletics Congress in Budapest, two days ahead of the start of the world championships in the Hungarian capital.

According to World Athletics rules, Coe will be unable to stand for a fourth mandate. Coe, a former Conservative politician who headed the local organizing committee of the 2012 London Olympics, took over the presidency of the then-International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) reeling from a corruption scandal involving ex-president Lamine Diack.

Coe's first two mandates saw the creation in 2017 of the Athletics Integrity Unit, an independent body overseeing anti-doping, and the rein-

forcement of World Athletics' stance on Russia, first suspended over institutional doping and then again in 2022 over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

"The first four years of my mandate was making sure the ship didn't sink. We were in a very serious position," Coe said. The next four years, he added, were about dealing with issues such as Russia, protecting the female category and boosting one-day events.

"The next four years will focus on what is the product that will future-proof the sport for the next 30 years," he said, adding that decisions on competition would be data-based and not taken by presidential whim.

Meanwhile, Coe said Thursday it was "unlikely" that track and field athletes from Russia and Belarus would be welcomed back to competition before next year's Paris Olympics. All Russian and Belarusian athletes have been banned from co.

"I don't have a crystal ball, I follow world events in the same way that

you all do," Coe told journalists after his re-election as head of track and field's world governing body. "Our position is very clear. The Council has made that position clear. The new Council — and I'm not going to speak for them in advance — but I would be very surprised if there is any shift in that position.

"We have certainty and we've done it for reasons of integrity of competition," Coe added. "We will of course monitor that situation. "We have risk committees, we have working groups that will always be wanting to be across that and what might the circumstances look like if there's any shift in the situation but I have to say that looks unlikely at the moment with where we are with events in Ukraine."

International sports bodies are taking wildly varying stances on allowing Russian and Belarusian athletes to compete while the war in Ukraine continues. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) says it is yet to make a decision on whether



Sebastian Coe

Russians can compete at the Paris Olympics next year but it has recommended they return to competition. That stance has received a mixed

welcome from federations, with Coe's World Athletics among the most stringent of opponents to their return should the conflict continue. — AFP

## World Rugby appeals against overturned Farrell red card

**LONDON:** England captain Owen Farrell's involvement in the upcoming World Cup was thrown into fresh doubt Thursday when World Rugby announced it would be appealing against the decision to overturn his red card in a warm-up match against Wales.

Farrell was sent off during England's 19-17 win at Twickenham last weekend after the 'bunker' review system upgraded an initial yellow card to red after he made contact with a shoulder-led tackle to the head of Taine Basham.

The fly-half who has been suspended for previous incidents of dangerous tackling, was facing a six-week ban that could have ruled him out of the start of next month's World Cup in France. But an all-Australian disciplinary panel caused uproar on Tuesday by concluding the foul play review officer "was wrong, on the balance of probabilities, to upgrade the yellow card issued to the player to a red card."

As a result, it ruled Farrell was free to play again immediately. But World Rugby said in a statement Thursday: "Having considered the full written decision, World Rugby considers an appeal to be warranted." World Rugby has yet to release the specific grounds for the appeal.

### 'Player welfare number one priority'

Its statement said: "World Rugby fully supports the important role that an independent disciplinary process plays in upholding the integrity and values of the sport, particularly regarding foul play involving head contact.

"Player welfare is the sport's number one priority, and the Head Contact Process is central to that mission at the elite level of the sport." It added: "An independent appeal committee will be appointed to determine the matter at the earliest possible opportunity." What this means for Farrell's availability to face top-ranked Ireland, — a team coached by his father, Andy — in a Dublin warm-up on Saturday is currently unclear. England coach Steve Borthwick is due to announce his side to play the Six Nations Grand Slam champions later on Thursday.

Owen Farrell received a three-match ban for the same offence in January, on top of five matches in 2020 and two in 2016. Farrell admitted to the panel his shoulder-led tackle to the head of Basham, who as a result failed an HIA, was illegal but worthy of only 10 minutes in the sin-bin.

The video hearing decided a "late change in dynamics" due to Jamie George's involvement in the contact area "brought about a sudden and significant change in direction from the ball carrier". The new 'bunker' review system was called into action as on-field referee Nika Amashukeli could not decide if Farrell's tackle on Basham warranted a straight red card. The panel added no criticism of the foul play review officer was being made given the time in which he had to make a decision.

England's Steve Thompson, the 2003 World Cup-winning hooker diagnosed with dementia and now among several former players taking legal action against governing bodies for negligence, told the Daily Mail: "For (the rugby authorities) to have the spotlight on them so much, about all the concussion and brain injuries, and for them to do this now, just goes to show that they don't care."

But former England coach Eddie Jones, now in charge of Australia, defended the "aggressive" Farrell by saying: "What can look like a bad tackle can just be a slight error of judgment. "I'm glad they (the panel) used common sense. We want the game to be safer, but we've got to use our common sense."

Farrell, 31, has endured repeated criticism for his tackling style, with his most recent suspension coming after an illegal challenge on Gloucester's Jack Clement in January. That ban was reduced from four to three games after Farrell completed World Rugby's tackle school, enabling him to face Scotland in the Six Nations opener.

England, losing finalists in 2019, launch their World Cup campaign against Argentina in Marseille on September 9. They also face Japan, Chile and Samoa in Pool D. — AFP

## Stokes set to play as batsman only at WCup after ODI U-turn

**LONDON:** England are prepared to play Ben Stokes as a batsman only when they defend their 50-over men's World Cup title in India after the Test captain reversed his decision to retire from one-day internationals.

The all-rounder, troubled by a longstanding left knee injury that restricted his bowling during the recent drawn Ashes Test series at home to Australia, said playing in all three international formats was "unsustainable" when calling time on his ODI career 13 months ago.

The 32-year-old had planned to use a six-month gap until England next play Test cricket, away to India, in order to attend to his chronic problem. But he is now set for a role as a specialist batsman as one of nine survivors named in a 15-man squad to face New Zealand in three home ODIs next month that is also set to double as England's party for a World Cup in India that runs from October 5-November 19.

"It wasn't really a case of changing his (Stokes's) mind," said England national selector Luke Wright after the squad was unveiled on Wednesday. "Once his body was in a good place and he'd had a rest, he was really keen to play. He still has time to do his rest and rehab, which he's doing, and he says his knee does feel like it's improving.

"The one thing we won't be doing is pushing him to bowl unless he's absolutely fit and raring to go. That was a big part of the decision for him, being able to just play as a batter and that was an easy decision for us.

"Ultimately the decision came down to it's a World Cup we want to win and we feel like we are better, and have more chance, with Stokesy than we haven't. If ever there's someone for the big moments it's Ben Stokes."

## Tennessee couple deny 'Blind Side' NFL player's claims

**MIAMI:** Lawyers for the Tennessee couple who took in former NFL star Michael Oher as a teenager on Wednesday denied accusations they had cheated him out of earnings from the Oscar-winning movie about his life. Oher, 37, whose inspirational life story was the subject of the 2009 film, "The Blind Side", accused Leigh Anne Tuohy and her husband Sean Tuohy in a court filing on Monday of tricking him into signing away control of his financial affairs.

The Super Bowl-winning former Baltimore Ravens player also alleges the Tuohys misled him into believing he had been legally adopted by the couple when in fact they had established a conservatorship. The Tuohys, who Oher moved in with as a teenager after spending years in foster care, deny any wrongdoing.

On Wednesday, the couple's attorneys, Steven Farese Sr. and Randall Fishman pushed back forcefully at Oher's claims. Farese said the Tuohys had never taken any of Oher's career earnings, from the movie or otherwise.

"We're talking about a family trying to help someone in need," Farese said. "The Tuohys did not control any of Mr Oher's finances. "Mr Oher picked his own agent when he turned pro, Mr Oher signed his own contract and negotiated it through his agent... (the Tuohys) did not share in his monies, they did not control any shoe contracts, anything of that nature.

"The Tuohys treated him like a son. They loved him," Farese noted that Sean Tuohy was independently wealthy in his own right, and had sold a chain of fast-food restaurants for \$220 million. "They don't need his money. They've never needed his money," Farese said.

"He didn't need Mr Oher's money. This is a sad day. It's devastating to the family and we hope that it doesn't have a chilling effect on others who want to



Ben Stokes

### 'Superstar' Brook sidelined

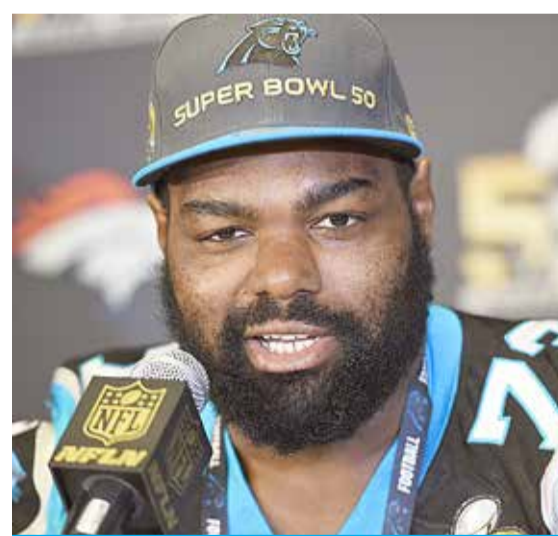
The return of Stokes, the player of the match in the 2019 World Cup final against New Zealand at Lord's and the man whose unbeaten fifty led his side to victory in the Twenty20 equivalent last year, comes at the expense of Harry Brook.

The Yorkshire batsman has been the rising star of the England set-up during the past year, with the 24-year-old having compiled four hundreds in 12 Tests, while boasting strike rates of 98.85 and 137.77 in ODIs and T20s respectively. "It's as hard a decision as you're ever going to get," said Wright, who labelled Brook a "superstar" before adding: "But unfortunately in a 15-man squad, someone's going to have to miss out. On this occasion it's been him."

Uncapped Surrey fast bowler Gus Atkinson, who

has been clocked at 95 mph (153 kph), is also in the squad, seemingly as cover for Jofra Archer. The injured Archer, the Super Over star of the 2019 World Cup final, is currently recovering from his latest elbow injury.

Archer last played for England in March and Wright, once a team-mate of the 28-year-old at county side Sussex, said: "There has got to be a duty of care with Jof, we know how desperate we all are to have him, there's no doubt about that, but we've also got to get it right for him. "As much as the temptation is to try and rush him in and get him in for the start of this World Cup, unfortunately we're just going to run out of time. "The best case scenario for Jof at the moment would probably be available for the back end of the tournament. But obviously, a lot of things have still got to go right with his rehab before then." — AFP



Michael Oher

help needy individuals." Oher's legal filing on Monday alleged that the Tuohys used the conservatorship to pocket millions of dollars from the success of "The Blind Side", which earned more than \$300 million at the box office.

Another attorney for the Tuohys, Marty Singer, said in a statement that claims the couple had withheld money from Oher were "hurtful and absurd." "The evidence — documented in profit participation checks and studio accounting statements — is clear: over the years, the Tuohys have given Mr. Oher an equal cut of every penny received from 'The Blind Side,'" Singer said.

Michael Lewis, who wrote the book on which "The Blind Side" was based, said he and the Tuohy family received around \$350,000 each from the profits of the movie, which was shared evenly. "What I feel really sad about is I watched the whole thing up close," Lewis told the Washington Post on Wednesday.

"They showered him with resources and love. That he's suspicious of them is breathtaking. The state of mind one has to be in to do that — I feel sad for him." — AFP

## US Ryder Cup squad starts taking shape at BMW Championship

**OLYMPIA FIELDS:** Qualifying for the US Ryder Cup team concludes after Sunday's final round of the PGA's BMW Championship with four points-based spots still available in the penultimate FedEx Cup playoff event.

That has added to the tension at Olympia Fields in suburban Chicago, where Ryder Cup points and captain's picks hopefuls need to shine and the top 30 in season points advance to next week's Tour Championship in Atlanta.

"We have so much at stake these next two weeks, whether it's money, Ryder Cup," US standout Keegan Bradley said. "There's so much to play for, and that's really exciting." World number one Scottie Scheffler, last year's Masters champion, and reigning US Open champion Wyndham Clark are the only players who have clinched Ryder Cup spots on points for next month's showdown against Europe in Italy.

Currently in the other four Ryder Cup spots are fourth-ranked Patrick Cantlay, the two-time defending BMW champion; British Open champion Brian Harman, LIV Golf's Brooks Koepka, who won his fifth major at May's PGA Championship, and Max Homa.

Among those chasing at this week's 50-player event with a chance to bump into the Ryder Cup lineup are reigning Olympic champion Xander Schauffele, three-time major winner Jordan Spieth, two-time major winners Collin Morikawa and Justin Thomas, 2022 British Open runner-up Cameron Young, 2011 PGA Championship winner Bradley and 2009 US Open champion Lucas Glover, who won the past two PGA Tour events.

"I've never made it and I want to," Glover said of the Ryder Cup. "That was a goal from the day I turned pro back in 2001." US captain Zach Johnson will name his six picks after the Tour Championship. Asked if he would pick himself with his hot form, 43-year-old Glover said, "Playing pretty good golf and I think I'd be pretty good in the team room and be a good partner, so yeah absolutely I would." — AFP



Sports

# Sportsmanship melts hearts at WCup

## 'I got sad because I saw she was sad': Andersson

SYDNEY: Unless there is an uncharacteristic out-break of hostility and flurry of red cards in Sunday's final, opposing players consoling each other after games will be among the enduring images of the Women's World Cup.

England, who face Spain in the final in Sydney, have been notably quick to approach their emotional opponents after the final whistle to offer a heartwarming hug and words of sympathy. The European champions dealt out some rough treatment to Australia's skipper Sam Kerr in defeating the co-hosts 3-1 in their semi-final on Wednesday in front of 75,000 in Sydney.

But after the final whistle the Lionesses players and staff consoled an emotional Kerr, who plays in England for Chelsea and is one of the most respected forwards around. Images of England players rushing over to commiserate with Nigerian goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie after defeating the African side on penalties in the last 16 were shared widely online.

England midfielder Keira Walsh said it was not something the players had made a conscious decision to do. It was the result of an ethos established by coach Sarina Wiegman about remaining humble and respectful in victory.

"We all know the feeling of being knocked out of a World Cup and it's one of the worst feelings in the world," Barcelona's Walsh said. "When you can see fellow players who are really upset, I think the natural human thing is just to go over and see if they are OK. 'I'd like to think that most people would do the same in that situation.'"

Pictures of Sweden defender Jonna Andersson hugging a distraught Maika Hamano of Japan after their quarter-final were also widely shared online. "I got sad because I saw she was sad," Andersson told reporters in Auckland after Sweden's victory.

"I hope it was important for her to feel that support, I know she has that support from the national team and the club team. 'I wanted to show her that I care about her, she's a fantastic person.'"

The two players know each other well from club football, where both played this season for Hammarby in Stockholm. There were similar scenes on Tuesday, when the tables were turned and the Swedes left in tears after Spain won 2-1 in their semi-final.

Spain's players comforted a tearful Fridolina Rolfö, the Swedish forward who plays for Barcelona and was up against several club colleagues. Julie Dolan, the first captain of Australia's Matildas, in 1979, noted that similar happens in the men's game, but not to the same extent. "It's how to win graciously, I guess," she told AFP. "It's a wonderful thing to see." Pundits say it has been one of the endearing features of a World Cup that will already go down as the best-attended and be remembered for a series of shock results.

"That has been one of the most heartwarming things about this tournament," former Australia international turned broadcaster Grace Gill said. "Because as much joy and elation as there is for the winners of the game, they're so quick to turn their attention to make sure their friends, ultimately, are OK. 'To offer them a little bit of support in that moment is really touching to see.'" — AFP



AUCKLAND: Sweden's forward #18 Fridolina Rolfö (R) is consoled by Spain's forward #08 Mariona Caldentey at the end of the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup semi-final football match between Spain and Sweden at Eden Park in Auckland. — AFP

## 'No time to dwell' as heartbroken Australia target WCup bronze

SYDNEY: Australia coach Tony Gustavsson has told his deflated team they have "no time to dwell" on their crushing Women's World Cup semi-final loss to England, with a third-placed playoff still to come. The Matildas slumped 3-1 to a ruthless England on Wednesday to shatter not only their dreams of lifting the trophy for the first time, but the hopes of an expectant nation captivated by their exploits.

Despite the gut-wrenching disappointment, they must lift themselves one last time to take bronze against Sweden in Brisbane on Saturday, with a new legion of fans wanting more. "I actually said in the circle after the game, it's an extremely short turnaround to that game," said Gustavsson, who will be facing his home country. "I know we're emotional, but we have no time to dwell on this one. We have a bronze medal game to play. We need to be ready."

"We're tough, we're fit, we dig deep. We have the support from the fans," he added. Australia's run to the semi-finals was their best showing in a World Cup and sparked a groundswell of interest in football, winning hordes of new fans to a sport that usually plays second fiddle to Australian Rules, rugby and cricket.

Their showdown with England was watched by a record 11 million Australians, broadcast data showed - nearly half the country's population. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the Matildas' achievements would leave a lasting legacy, and praised them for the way they carried themselves on and off the field. "The



SYDNEY: Australia's players react at the end of the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup semi-final football match between Australia and England at Stadium Australia in Sydney. — AFP

Matildas have inspired this and future generations to come," he said on Thursday.

"To see the young girls, but also young boys with their faces painted, with their jerseys on, attending the Matildas games, watching right around the country is an inspiration and it will have a lasting impact."

Star striker and skipper Sam Kerr, who scored a sensational equalizer against England, admitted the team was heartbroken, but said they were determined to repay the fans and go out on a high against Sweden.

"The amount of people who've come out to support us, who've been there at our hotel, I'll say it again - it's been amazing. We never could have dreamed

you're so bloody negative about everything.

"We're going off the World Cup and you think we can't win, you think the selection process is bad because some players can't play. So I apologize for that. 'We'll go out there and do our best, boys. If you haven't got anything positive to say, don't ask.'"

Cooper, who was widely expected to be on the plane as first-choice fly-half, has reportedly refused to return Jones' calls. Pressed on whether he had personally spoken to the 79-Test veteran, Jones got even more flustered.

"I'm disappointed the player is upset, but all I can do is ring them. If they don't take the phone call, you can't talk to them," he said. "What do you want me to do? Tell me. Then why keep asking about it? 'I don't know why you're back to that,'" he added.

"That's probably reflective of Australian rugby, we've got to move on and we're moving on to the World Cup." Australia will open their World Cup campaign against Georgia in Paris on September 9 before facing Fiji, Wales and Portugal in Pool C.

Only eight players in the 33-man squad have played at a World Cup before, with three debutants including scrum-half Issak Fines-Leleiwasa, 18-year-old back Max Jorgensen, and prop Blake

about this kind of support," she said.

"So yeah, we have to pick ourselves up and go again. And we're going to do everything to win third place. We'll be back up, ready to go to Brisbane, and hopefully to make everyone proud." They face a dangerous third-ranked Sweden who won all their group games then knocked out defending champions the United States before crashing 2-1 to Spain in the semi-finals. Peter Gerhardsson's side, who came third in 2019, have extra motivation in wanting to send out their inspirational skipper Caroline Seger with a victory in her final international game. Gustavsson knows the team well and predicted "a very interesting match-up". — AFP



SYDNEY: Australia's rugby team head coach Eddie Jones speaks to media at the Sydney International Airport on August 17, 2023, as the team prepares to depart for the 2023 Rugby World Cup in France. — AFP

Schoupp. But Jones insisted it was the "right balance of energy and enthusiasm".

"We've got youth on our side, we're ready to go," he said. "None of you guys think we can do any good, and that's all right. The challenge for us as a group is to show you that we can, and show ourselves that we can." — AFP

## US lawmaker insists Saudi official testifies over PGA-LIV deal

WASHINGTON: The head of a US congressional committee probing LIV Golf's proposed merger with the PGA Tour on Wednesday reiterated a demand for the governor of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund to testify before lawmakers.

Richard Blumenthal, the US Senate Subcommittee on Investigations chairman, said in a letter to Yasir al-Rumayyan, the head of Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF), that LIV should expect to be subjected to American oversight as an investor in the United States.

Al-Rumayyan has so far rebuffed requests to testify before the Senate panel, with attorneys for the Saudi official informing Blumenthal he was an "inappropriate witness" who should be exempt from testifying, citing his status as a Saudi government minister.

Blumenthal said in his letter released Wednesday that al-Rumayyan must agree to appear at a September 13 hearing or propose other possible dates to appear by Friday. "If you continue to refuse to comply voluntarily the Subcommittee will be forced to consider other legal methods to compel PIF's compliance," Blumenthal warned.

LIV Golf and the PGA Tour rocked the sporting world in June after announcing plans for a de facto merger in a bid to end the acrimonious standoff between the two circuits. However few details of how the new LIV-PGA entity will work have been revealed, other than that al-Rumayyan will get a seat among decision makers and PIF would invest in a for-profit company with the PGA Tour.

"PIF's recent dealings with the PGA Tour demonstrate that it intends to be much more than a passive investor," Blumenthal said. Blumenthal also rejected al-Rumayyan's reasoning for refusing to testify. "The suggestion that your role as a Saudi Foreign Minister shields you from testifying about PIF's commercial activities is both deeply troubling and unsupported as a legal matter," Blumenthal said.

He also cited a US District Court ruling in California earlier this year that said PIF was not protected by "sovereign immunity" rules in its legal battle with the PGA Tour. "PIF cannot have it both ways," Blumenthal wrote. "If it wants to engage with the United States commercially, it must be subject to United States law and oversight. That oversight includes this subcommittee's inquiry."

Blumenthal also made it clear that another PIF representative appearing would not be enough to keep the subcommittee from wanting al-Rumayyan to appear at some stage. "While the subcommittee will not accept a briefing from a PIF representative in lieu of your testimony and documents from PIF, it will accept a briefing from an appropriate PIF representative to learn more about PIF's intentions while awaiting your testimony and document production," he wrote. — AFP

## Under-fire Wallabies coach rants at 'negativity'

SYDNEY: Under-pressure Wallabies coach Eddie Jones on Thursday lashed out at "all the negativity" as the team departed for the World Cup after what he called the "worst press conference I've ever had in world rugby".

The flailing Australian team is heading to France on the back of four straight defeats since the former England boss took over. In a bid to get their campaign back on track, Jones named an inexperienced squad last week, shocking pundits by dumping veterans Michael Hooper and Quade Cooper and handing the captaincy to Will Skelton.

Jones is adamant there needs to be a generational change and didn't hold back at Sydney airport when he was peppered with questions about their chances. "I can't believe all the negativity here boys," he said. "I know what's wrong with Australian rugby and part of you blokes are the problem because

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

#### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733

Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401

### Change of Name

I, **Shabbar** s/o Fakhruddin Inayat Husain Jiawawala holder of Indian Passport No. Z3017154 having permanent address Mohammedipura Temba, Sagwara, Pincode No. 314025, Rajasthan, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: **Shabbar Fakhruddin** (Given Name) and **Jiawawala** (Surname). **18/8/2023**

I, **Ibrahim**, Passport No. Z3343992, do hereby change my name to Ibrahim Sajjad Hussain (new name) Musaji wala (as Surname) for all purposes. I will be known in the name **Ibrahim**

**Sajjad Hussain Musaji wala** in future for all purposes. **(#3848) 18/8/2023**

I, **Yusuf** son of Shakir Husain holder of Passport No. M3185221, issued at Kuwait on 08/11/2014, permanent resident of Musalman Mohalla Dahi Dist. Dhar, M.P. 454331 - India and presently residing at Qibla, Block 9, Shohada Street Building 12, 1st Floor, Flat No. 4, Kuwait, do hereby change my name from **Yusuf to Yusuf Bohra** with immediate effect. **(#3847) 17/8/2023**

I, **Zainab Saifuddin** holder of Indian Passport No T3173369 having permanent address Mohalla

Saifeepura Nai Abadi Banswara, Banswara, Pin: 327001, Rajasthan, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: **Zainab Murtaza** (given name) and **Tatiwala** (surname). **(#3846) 16/8/2023**

I, **Khuzema** (current name in Passport) holder of Indian Passport No Z2809131 having permanent address - Boharawadi, AT and PO Salumber, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, 313027 residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: **Khuzema Ali Husain**. **16/8/2023**



## Guardiola eyes full house of Man City trophies after Super Cup success

Guardiola's men prevailed 5-4 in the shootout



PIRAEUS: Manchester City's English defender #02 Kyle Walker holds the trophy on the podium after winning the 2023 UEFA Super Cup football match between Manchester City and Sevilla at the Georgios Karaiskakis Stadium in Piraeus. — AFP

PIRAEUS: Pep Guardiola is targeting a "full circle" of trophies as Manchester City boss after winning the club's first UEFA Super Cup with a victory on penalties over Sevilla after a 1-1 draw in Athens.

The European Champions had to come from behind after Youssef En-Nesyri's towering first-half header gave the Spaniards the lead. City were far from their slick best, but hit back to force the game to penalties through Cole Palmer's equaliser.

Guardiola's men were then perfect from the spot and prevailed 5-4 in the shootout after Sevilla defender Nemanja Gudelj smashed against the bar. Should City win the Club World Cup in December, it would complete Guardiola's honours list since arriving in England, which already includes five Premier League titles, four League Cups, two FA Cups and the club's first Champions League.

"We are really pleased for the club to win this," Guardiola said. "We miss just one to finish the full

circle and have all the titles we can have." Guardiola has bemoaned his side's lack of preparation for the new season, which showed under the baking heat in the Greek capital.

City badly missed the creative presence of Kevin De Bruyne and Bernardo Silva through a combination of injury and illness. A four-month absence for De Bruyne due to a serious hamstring injury has exacerbated the loss of firepower offered by Ilkay Gundogan and Riyad Mahrez since last season.

West Ham's Brazilian international Lucas Paqueta has been linked with a move to the Etihad, and this performance may serve as further proof City need to strengthen before the end of the transfer market.

"We are not in the best moment, I would say," Guardiola acknowledged. "Football in these games, in this period, is a (loss of a) coin." Sevilla began their La Liga season with a disappointing 2-1 home defeat to Valencia. But just as they did last season

in lifting a seventh Europa League despite a 12th-placed league finish, they rose to the big occasion.

### Sevilla's missed chance

Josko Gvardiol was making his first start for City since a 90 million euro (\$99 million) move from RB Leipzig. But the Croatian international was beaten to Marcos Acuna's cross by En-Nesyri, who bulleted a header in off the post. City's sluggishness was in evidence again at the start of the second-half, when Lucas Ocampos skipped past Kyle Walker's desperate lunge to set up En-Nesyri with a golden chance to double Sevilla's lead. The Moroccan striker was one-on-one with Ederson but fired straight into the Brazilian goalkeeper's legs. "When we had the chances to score the second goal, we didn't take them," said Sevilla boss Jose Luis Mendilibar. Sevilla were left to rue that miss as City hit back against the run of play on 63 minutes. Mahrez's departure has opened the door to City

academy graduate Palmer to the first-team, and the England under-21 international, who also scored against Arsenal in the Community Shield, is taking his chance. Rodri was City's hero with the only goal in the Champions League final against Inter Milan, and the Spaniard this time provided the assist with a perfectly measured cross for Palmer to cushion a header past Yassine Bounou.

En-Nesyri was guilty of another wasted one-on-one moments later as Ederson flew off his line to make a block. Erling Haaland had scored twice in all of his previous three appearances against Sevilla, but the Norwegian barely got a sight of goal before the spot-kicks. Bounou was playing what is expected to be his final game for Sevilla before a move to Saudi side Al Hilal. However, there was no perfect ending for the Moroccan international as Haaland, Julian Alvarez, Mateo Kovacic, Jack Grealish and Walker all held their nerve to score in the shootout. — AFP

## Djokovic makes winning US return in Cincinnati

CINCINNATI: Novak Djokovic made a winning return in his first appearance on US soil for two years on Wednesday, reaching the third round of the ATP/WTA Cincinnati Open when Alejandro Davidovich Fokina retired hurt.

The world number two Serb advanced after winning the first set 6-4, when his Spanish opponent could not go on with a lower back injury. "He told me it started yesterday," the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion said. "Hopefully he will be ready for New York (US Open)."

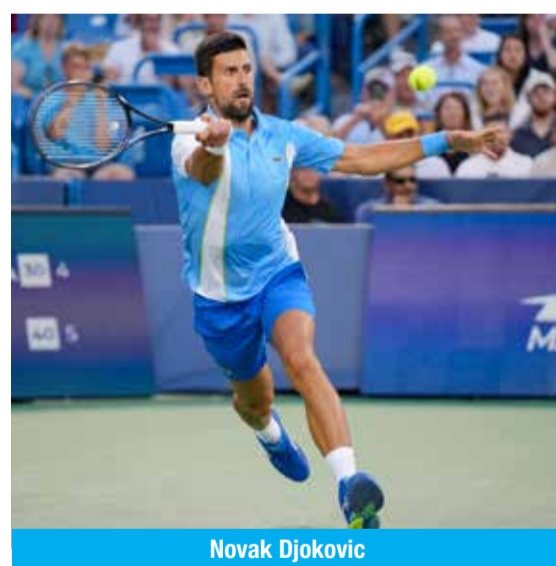
"This is never the way you want to win, the crowd was expecting a match, a battle," the 36-year-old added. "I have mixed emotions with how the match ended. I'm hoping to build form and progress through the tournament by raising my level." Djokovic is playing in the United States for the first time since 2021.

He was barred from entering the country during the latter stages of the COVID-19 pandemic after refusing to get vaccinated. Djokovic's next opponent on Thursday will be Gael Monfils, who continued his run of comeback form by defeating Australian Alex de Minaur 7-5, 6-4 to reach a third round for the second consecutive week.

Elsewhere Wednesday, Italian eighth seed Jannik Sinner fell back to earth with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) opening loss to qualifier Dusan Lajovic, just three days after winning his first ATP Masters 1000 title in Toronto.

On his 22nd birthday, Sinner lost for the first time this season in an opening round after 13 winning starts. The 33-year-old Lajovic, ranked 66th in the world was outstanding as he took full advantage of Sinner's fatigue after his efforts in Canada, winning all his 16 points at the net and all five break points he faced. It was also a disappointing day for fifth seed Casper Ruud, with the Norwegian going down 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 to Australian qualifier Max Purcell, ranked 70th in the world. Daniil Medvedev started his Cincinnati campaign with a comprehensive win.

The number three backed up last week's victory over Lorenzo Musetti with a repeat performance, dispatching the Italian 6-3, 6-2 after also having beaten him six days ago in Toronto. Last year's runner-up



Novak Djokovic

Stefanos Tsitsipas tamed the upset hopes of American Ben Shelton, defeating the 20-year-old 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/2). Alexander Zverev, the 2021 champion, moved into a third-round showdown with Medvedev, putting out Japan's Yoshihito Nishioka 7-5, 6-4. Toronto semi-finalist Tommy Paul was slotted in as the next opponent for top seed Carlos Alcaraz with a 6-1, 7-6 (7/4) defeat of Frenchman Ugo Humbert. In the WTA draw, world number one Iga Swiatek raced to a 6-1, 6-0 sweep of American Danielle Collins to reach the third round on the first dry day of the week.

The Pole, who lost a Montreal semi-final to Jessica Pegula, defeated Collins last week and took just 61 minutes to do it again. Top American Pegula relied on an angry racquet smash to reset her game after losing the opening set to Martina Trevisan of Italy. The third seed, who won the Montreal title at the weekend, reversed her fortunes for a 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 6-3 win to reach the third round. "Sorry to my racquet," she said. "I was not so positive today, but the crowd really helped me out."

"It was a super-quick turnaround for me from Canada. Conditions here are very different and that's always going to be trouble. The ball really flies." Tenth-seeded Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova advanced past Anastasia Potapova 6-4, 6-2. She will next play American Sloane Stephens. Venus Williams lost to China's Zheng Qinwen 1-6, 6-2, 6-1. — AFP

## England eye 'incredible' chance to end 57-year World Cup drought

SYDNEY: Skipper Millie Bright said her team were embracing an "incredible opportunity" to do something an English side has not managed since 1966 — win a World Cup. The Lionesses powered into Sunday's final in Sydney against Spain after a ruthless 3-1 dismantling of co-hosts Australia, with their relentless energy grinding down a Matildas side that had few answers.

It set up England's biggest game since Bobby Moore lifted the men's trophy at Wembley 57 years ago. "I'm really happy for the fans back home, for our nation," said Chelsea stalwart Bright, with men's skipper Harry Kane and even King Charles III sending congratulations.

"It's something that we've all been driving towards and it's something that's been missing. Now the opportunity we have is incredible." The European champions have grown through the tournament, with their ruthless attacking football and defensive resilience proving a tall order for the opposition.

But it has been their adaptability that has driven them to the brink of history, built on the back of the tactical genius of coach Serena Wiegman who led them to the European title last year. "You can win in many different ways and, for us, we've faced so many challenges at this tournament," Bright said on Fifa.com.

"It's hard for people to see on the outside, but as players, we know that there's more to football than just pretty passes and connecting. "In each game, we've proved something different about how we play, what we're capable of. We're very adaptable to what teams throw at us."

"But things are really starting to click now and we're getting the ball in the back of the net." This is ominous for Spain, who have also shown resilience after their tournament preparations were thrown into disarray.

Last September, 15 players sent an email to their football federation saying they did not want to be



SYDNEY: England's forward #23 Alessia Russo celebrates with teammates after scoring a goal during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup semi-final football match between Australia and England at Stadium Australia in Sydney. — AFP

considered for selection. The protest was aimed chiefly at coach Jorge Vilda, including complaints that he was too strict.

Vilda held on to his job and has steadied the ship, but England will nevertheless be favourites on Sunday with Wiegman at the helm. The Dutch coach has reached four major tournament finals in a row, leading the Netherlands to the European title in 2017 then the World Cup final in 2019, where they lost to the United States.

With England, she took them to European glory on home soil last year and now has another chance to win the biggest trophy of them all. "We made the first final in 2017 and thought this is really special, it might not ever happen again," she said.

"Then you make the second, the third and the fourth and still think this might never happen again because there is so much competition," she added. "I can hardly describe how proud I am of the team." — AFP