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# Expats must pay electricity, water bills before traveling

## Lawmakers warn info minister over bill curbing freedom of speech

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### KUFPEC discovers oil in Suez

CAIRO: Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) said Tuesday that its subsidiary, KUFPEC-Egypt, has made a new oil discovery in the Geisum and Tawila West Concession in the Gulf of Suez in Egypt. KUFPEC CEO Mohammad Salem Al-Haimer said in a statement the "discovery was made through the GNN-11 exploration well". The well was drilled into a fault block to the east of the GNN oil field development, he said, adding it encountered 165 feet of good quality vertical net pay in the Nubia formation. — KUNA (See Page 2)

#### Dubai airport traffic jumps 50%

DUBAI: Passenger traffic at Dubai international airport leapt 50 percent in the first half of the year, surpassing pre-pandemic levels, its operator said on Tuesday. Dubai, the world's busiest airport for international passengers before COVID-19, had 41.6 million visits in the six months to June, just over the number recorded in the first half of 2019, Dubai Airports said in a statement. Passenger forecasts for the year have been raised to 85 million, up from 83.6 million. — AFP

#### India's oldest elephant dies

GUWAHATI: One of the world's oldest elephants has died on an Indian tea farm at an estimated age of 89, caretakers said Tuesday. While not possible to confirm the elephant's exact age, it is known that he was brought to work on a tea estate by a British farmer during colonial rule in the 1940s. Dubbed "Bijuli Prasad", the elephant was taken from the wild as a young bull and worked on tea farms in India's eastern state of Assam's Sonitpur district until 2018. — AFP

#### Ethiopia, Saudi announce probe

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia will launch a joint investigation with Riyadh into a Human Rights Watch report accusing Saudi border guards of killing hundreds of Ethiopian migrants trying to enter the Gulf kingdom, the foreign ministry said Tuesday. "The Government of Ethiopia will promptly investigate the incident in tandem with the Saudi Authorities," the ministry said on X. The allegations have been described as "unfounded" by a Saudi government source. — AFP

#### Boy, 10, killed in France

NIMES, France: A 10-year-old boy has been shot dead in suspected drugs-related violence in the southern French town of Nimes, authorities said Tuesday. The boy was travelling in a car with his uncle through the deprived Pissevin area of the city when they were targeted on Monday evening. Police are working on the assumption of mistaken identity. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Expatriates in Kuwait will no longer be able to travel before paying their electricity and water bills after the ministries of electricity and water and interior agreed to link their systems. The measure will be implemented from Sept 1. The bills can be paid through the Sahel app, the MEW-PAY app or at the electricity and water ministry's office at Kuwait International Airport's T4, the ministry noted.

The decision comes less than a week after the interior ministry said expats will have to settle their traffic fines before they can leave the country from any exit point. The decision went into effect on Aug 19. A local newspaper reported on Tuesday that Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah has asked the interior ministry to coordinate with other ministries and government departments to apply similar measures so

that foreigners will not be able to leave Kuwait without paying their debts to the government.

The interior ministry said on its website that top officials from the ministry held a meeting with officials from the electricity and water ministry on Monday to discuss coordination between the two ministries. Local media reported the two ministries have agreed to link their systems to force expats to pay electricity and water bills before leaving the country. The measure aims to collect tens of millions of dinars of unpaid bills from expatriates, who form just under 70 percent of the country's population. Government collection systems in Kuwait are mostly outdated, which allows both citizens and expats to delay payments for months and sometimes years.

Meanwhile, MPs Jenan Bushehri and Saud Al-Asfour on Tuesday warned Information Minister Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi about a new information law

reported in local media to impose additional restrictions and hefty penalties on the freedom of speech. Bushehri cautioned the minister the draft law places tough restrictions on the freedom of speech, while Asfour said attempts to impose controls on freedom of speech will be rejected.

Later Tuesday, the ministry of information reiterated in a statement its commitment to following legal and constitutional regulations regarding the draft law it is preparing, saying the law is drafted in a way that maintains freedoms and improves Kuwaiti media. Responding to reports suggesting that the new law may contain articles that suppress media freedoms, the ministry explained it discussed the draft law with all relevant state departments to finalize it before sending it to the National Assembly's educational committee by the beginning of October, as previously agreed upon.

## Children rescued from cable car over Pak valley

THAKOT, Pakistan: Military helicopters and zipline experts rescued four children Tuesday from a group of eight people trapped for hours in a stricken cable car high above a remote Pakistan valley, but officials said nightfall was hindering efforts to save the rest. The daring rescue began with a helicopter plucking two children to safety as daylight faded, but the chopper was forced back to base in the dark.

Then rescuers used the cable keeping the gondola from plunging into the valley as a zipline to rescue two more children. "Zipline experts and other civil and military experts and local cable op-

erators are on the spot and helping us in the rescue operation," said deputy commissioner Tanveer Ur Rehman. "Four students have been rescued."

"The rescue operation is continuing but helicopters can't fly due to the dark," said Bilal Faizi, from the Pakistan emergency service Rescue 1122. Six children and two adults spent almost 12 hours trapped inside the chairlift at a height of up to 350 m in a mountainous part of northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

A video of the first rescue showed a teenager in a harness hanging at the bottom of a swinging rope under a helicopter as crowds cheered with relief. "Pakistan army and civil administration have set up a temporary camp on a mountaintop where first aid is being provided," he added. The six children had been on their way to school when the chairlift broke down at

Continued on Page 6



PASHTO, Pakistan: People watch as an army soldier slings down from a helicopter during a rescue mission to recover students stuck in a chairlift in mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Aug 22, 2023. — AFP

## Iran unveils its latest attack drone

TEHRAN: Iran unveiled on Tuesday its latest domestically built drone that can fly at a higher altitude and for a longer duration with enhanced weapons capabilities, state media reported. The "Mohajer-10" drone was introduced at a ceremony in Tehran attended by President Ebrahim Raisi, celebrating the achievements of Iran's defense industry.

The new drone is an upgraded version of the "Mohajer-6", which US officials have accused Iran of selling to Russia for use in the Ukraine war — an accusation Tehran denies. Western governments have in recent months expanded biting sanctions on Iran over the alleged arms sales.

The new drone "can fly up to a maximum duration of 24 hours at an altitude of 7,000 meters and with an operational range of 2,000 kilometers," the official IRNA news agency reported. It can travel at speeds of up to 210 km per hour and is equipped with updated electronic and intelligence systems. The unmanned aerial vehicle has a payload of up to 300 kg of cargo, double that of the previous model, allowing it to carry "all kinds of bombs and munitions", IRNA said.

This is double the weight and flight duration capacity of the "Mohajer-6" which can hold 150 kg of weapons and fly for 12 hours. The previous model also had a lower flight altitude of 5,400 m and speed of 200 km per hour. The United States and the Zionist entity, archenemies of Iran, have previously accused Tehran of using drones and missiles to attack US forces and Zionist-linked ships in the Gulf. — AFP



TEHRAN: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Defense Minister Mohammad Reza Ashtiani attend the unveiling ceremony of the new "Mohajer 10" drone on Aug 22, 2023. — AFP

## Japan to release water from stricken Fukushima plant

TOKYO: Japan will release water from the stricken Fukushima power plant into the Pacific Ocean from Thursday, 12 years after one of the world's worst nuclear disasters. China, which has already partially halted Japanese food shipments, sharply criticized the announcement, while Hong Kong and Macau said they would ban the import of "aquatic prod-

ucts" from 10 Japanese regions, with the latter also banning vegetable and dairy imports.

Japan insists that the gradual discharge of the more than 500 Olympic swimming pools' worth of water from the site in northeast Japan, announced by Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Tuesday, is safe. The Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power station was knocked out by a massive earthquake and tsunami that killed around 18,000 people in March 2011, sending three of its reactors into meltdown.

Operator TEPCO has since collected 1.34 million tons of water used to cool what remains of the still highly radioactive reactors, mixed with groundwater and rain that has seeped in.

Continued on Page 6



SEOUL: Activists hold placards that read "SOS!! Pacific Ocean!" outside the City Hall in protest against the planned release of wastewater from Japan's stricken Fukushima nuclear plant into the Pacific on Aug 22, 2023. — AFP



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# World boils amid heatwave

## Number of deaths globally due to heat increases 75%

**KUWAIT:** This summer, the world is talking only about the severe heatwaves that swept many of its spots, not only in the interior but also extended to coastal spots that were characterized by moderate weather. In the Middle East, although the summer heat was punctuated by some breaks, this year it witnessed continuous rises to unprecedented levels of 50 degrees Celsius in many parts of the world.

This caused huge losses in lives and property, the destruction of natural spaces, and the outbreak of wildfires, as this escalating pattern of extreme weather is attributed by scientists to the confluence of two climatic phenomena: the Heat Dome and El Nino. The thermal dome arises from a high concentration in the upper layers of the atmosphere in the form of a cover that stores hot air close to the earth's surface, which pushes for a significant rise in temperatures.

This dome-like cover prevents the rise of hot air and the descent of cold air and, at the same time, allows the penetration of sunlight, which heats up that area of the atmosphere. In a video interview with the Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA), professor of climate science at the University of Bern in Switzerland, Jonathan Buizen, explained that "thermal domes are not a new phenomenon and used to last only days, but what is new this summer is that they hanged for weeks and became more severe."

In recent years, we have begun to monitor the frequency of thermal domes," Buizen added. "They are more numerous than in the last decade and are becoming more deadly," he said. A study conducted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States and reviewed by the agency (KUNA) stated that the increase in the number of thermal domes can be linked to the strong change in temperatures in the Pacific Ocean, referring to severe climate variability known as the El Nino phenomenon.

On July 4, the World Meteorological Organization officially announced the beginning of this phenomenon, which is likely to continue throughout the year. The El Nino phenomenon is the strongest fluctuation in the climate system and occurs every two to seven years in the tropical Pacific Ocean. El Nino sees the emergence of water. It warms on the surface off the coast of South America and spreads across the ocean, pushing huge amounts of heat into the atmosphere.

About this phenomenon, professor Buizen told KUNA that "the size of the Pacific Ocean makes the impact of this phenomenon reach the whole world other than thermal domes that hang over specific geographical spots". But he stressed that "it is climate change that exacerbates the impact of these phenomena, whether Heat Dome or El Nino, and prolongs them, similar to what happened in Italy, Greece, and the Middle East, where the change became more severe".

As for the Middle East, Buizen expects that the next five years will witness more thermal domes, especially in the areas adjacent to the Mediterranean Sea, leading to more severe heatwaves with stronger tropical cyclones in the south of the Arabian Peninsula if the world cannot curb the increase within the planned limit of global warming of 5.1 degrees Celsius.

The World Meteorological Organization predicted the continuation of the El Nino phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean throughout this year, with a warm end, "which means that 2023 will be the hottest in 120,000 years". In August, the oceans recorded their highest temperature ever due to the absorption of heat caused by global warming.

While the European Climate Observatory (Copernicus) showed that the average temperature of the oceans reached about 21 degrees Celsius, which is much higher than the average temperature for this time of year. The North Atlantic region is experiencing heat waves for the first time, which reinforces fears of a new rise in temperature, but climate scientists never predicted that they would occur in that spot.

In its latest bulletin, the World Meteorological Organization predicted that this year's hurricane season will be "above normal" by 60 percent in the Atlantic Ocean due to the record high surface temperatures caused by the El Nino phenomenon. These climate extremes raise deep fears for the future because of their catastrophic effects that will affect life on earth.

As a result of increased evaporation of water and high air temperatures, crops are damaged, agriculture collapses, and workers become stressed. The thermal and economic cycles are severely affected by the disruption of the vital ecological balance of the planet. Forest fires, droughts, desertification, erosion of green spaces, receding water bodies, and melting ice are in-



A screen displays the time and temperature in Kuwait City on July 23, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

creasing in frequency at the poles, where the UN considers heat to be the most deadly climate change.

In Europe, the heat of last summer claimed the lives of 60,000 people, according to recent data, and the number is expected to increase annually to 90,000 starting this year. Over the past two decades, the number of deaths globally due to heat has increased by about 75 percent, according to a report released by the journal "Lancet Climate Countdown", which is one of the few publications in Britain that documented the relationship between climate change and health.

The head of the Lancet Report Team, Dr. Marina Romanello from the University of Cambridge, said in a video interview with KUNA that "from a health point of view, when people are regularly exposed to high heat day and night, the incidence of diseases

such as heart, respiratory system, blood vessels, heat stroke, and poor mental health increases.

"We will face more waves. We have to adapt to the high heat, whether by staying indoors or not being exposed to the sun, while increasing green spaces in cities, which is very effective in reducing heat, as well as using low-emission cooling solutions. Over time, people adapt to the high heat," Romanello added.

"The body has physiological abilities that develop, and a brief exposure to heat trains it to cope with them. If the temperature continues to rise to record levels, there are doubts about the body's ability to cope with it because the pace of global heat increase is faster than the physiological capabilities of the body to develop; there are limits to the heat that our bodies can cope with," she added. — KUNA

## KUFPEC makes oil discovery in Suez Gulf

**CAIRO:** Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company (KUFPEC) said Tuesday, that its subsidiary, KUFPEC-Egypt, has made a new oil discovery in the Geisum and Tawila West Concession in the Gulf of Suez, Egypt. KUFPEC CEO Mohammad Salem Al-Haimer, in a statement said "the discovery was made through the GNN-11 exploration well." The well was drilled into a fault block to the east of the GNN oil field development, he said, adding it encountered 165 feet of good quality vertical net pay in the Nubia formation, and this is the first time the Nubia has been found to be oil bearing in the GNN area of the Concession.

The well was drilled by the recently installed GNN Early Production Facilities and has been successfully placed on production at a rate of over 2,500 BOPD, the statement pointed out. As a result of the new well, and the successful drilling



Mohammad Salem Al-Haimer



GNN-11 exploration well

campaign conducted to date in the field, the gross oil production from the concession has reached 23,000 BOPD, compared to 4,000 BOPD before the GNN field was developed, it said.

GNN-11 is the fourth well to be completed by the Early Production Facilities which have been installed in the central area of the field, including a conductor support platform, a mobile offshore production unit and a 10-inch oil export pipeline, tied back to the existing Geisum Star production complex. Further, there are remaining well slots on the platform, which will be used to complete the current phase of the ex-

ploration and development drilling program.

The discovery came after the implementation of an extensive, multi-year exploration and development campaign by the JV parties and demonstrated the significant remaining exploration potential of the region, despite the Gulf of Suez being a relatively mature hydrocarbon province. KUFPEC is an international upstream company engaged in exploration, development and production of crude oil and natural gas outside the State of Kuwait and is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. — KUNA

## Some Kuwaitis want premarital test expanded

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** A premarital test is a necessary medical examination aimed at detecting genetic diseases in soon-to-be-married couples. Its purpose is to prevent the risk of transmitting such diseases to each other and to their potential children. However, there has been a growing call from citizens to expand the scope of these tests to include assessments related to drug use, reproductive health and psychological well-being. Kuwait Times interviewed several citizens to gather their opinions on this matter.

Fatima Al-Enzi emphasized the importance of adhering to pre-marriage examinations for various reasons. She stressed that these tests allow both partners to make informed decisions about their relationship and to anticipate any potential challenges they may face. Furthermore, these tests can help prevent future divorces.

Enzi also highlighted that some individuals may be carriers of genetic diseases without displaying symptoms, which can result in the birth of unhealthy children. She pointed out that conditions like heart and kidney diseases can impact the safety of pregnancy, making it essential to identify and manage such issues in advance.

Fares Al-Khanini advocated for psychological tests as a crucial component of pre-marriage examinations. He argued that understanding each partner's psychological profile is vital to ensure a successful marriage. Khanini mentioned many of his friends encountered difficulties related to their partners' mental health after marriage, and he believes



that addressing such issues before marriage is essential. Psychological tests can provide valuable insights into the compatibility of a couple, including their personality traits, communication styles and potential areas of conflict.

Shaimaa Ahmed echoed Fares' sentiments regarding the importance of psychological tests. She emphasized that these tests can help couples identify and discuss their expectations for marriage, fostering a shared understanding of each other's goals, values and priorities. Ahmed noted that psychological assessments are crucial for evaluating long-term compatibility, allowing couples to assess whether their personalities and emotional needs align over time.

She recommended using these tests as a starting point for discussions and self-awareness. Ad-

ditionally, she suggested the inclusion of drug tests in pre-marriage examinations, citing the increasing prevalence of drug-related crimes. Such tests can provide reassurance and prevent potential conflicts stemming from undisclosed substance abuse within a marriage.

However, Nour Al-Ansari mentioned that some citizens do not take these tests seriously and view them as routine paperwork without any real significance. She argued that marriages should only proceed after both partners provide medical certificates, emphasizing the need for legislation mandating these tests before marriage. Ansari cited instances in Kuwaiti society where the absence of these examinations led to disastrous consequences for families.

## Indian minister to visit Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** India's Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan will pay an official visit to the State of Kuwait from 23-24 August, 2023. This will be his second official visit as Minister of State for External Affairs to Kuwait, a press release issued by MEA said. During the visit, the minister will hold high level discussions with Kuwaiti Ministers and dignitaries. He will also interact with various Indian community organizations and a wide cross section of members of community including from the fields of business, health, education and other professionals.

India and Kuwait share historically warm and close bilateral ties. There are around one million Indians in Kuwait. India is amongst the largest trading partners of Kuwait and Kuwait is a major supplier of oil for India. The bilateral trade reached an all time high of \$13.8 billion in the last financial year. The visit is expected to further deepen the strong partnership between the two countries, the release added.



V Muraleedharan

## Kuwait supports humanitarian projects in Gaza

**GAZA:** Palestine Tomorrow's Society for Community Development announced Tuesday that it will execute humanitarian projects in Gaza with the support of the Kuwaiti Al-Bunyan Association for Community Development charity organization. Chairperson of Tomorrow's Society Manal Syam said in a press release that the projects funded by the Kuwaiti Association are vital for the poor and sick people in the Gaza Strip.

Five private hospitals will be provided with medical care supplies to enhance the quality of medical services, Syam added. Other projects aim to provide stable income for poor families where women are breadwinners by distributing sewing machines to work on and enhancing their economic status. Syam also noted that the Kuwaiti Association is in charge of securing fresh water projects for Palestinian families' homes in addition to rehabilitation and restoration of housing units.

The chairperson hailed the Amir of Kuwait and its people for their brave embrace of the Palestinian cause. She affirmed that Kuwaiti institutes are one of the major contributors to the Palestinian people, expressing gratitude to the Al-Bunyan Association for Community Development for their new projects in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Arab Parliament said on Tuesday that the Zionist occupation's plans to "develop" the city of Jerusalem are illegal and unethical; therefore, the world should react against such schemes. This statement came marking the 54th anniversary of burning Al-Aqsa Mosque, which occurred on August 21, 1969. The Arab Parliament expressed solidarity with the Palestinian legitimate rights against the aggressors.

The plans are against all international decisions regarding occupied Palestinian lands, namely occupied Jerusalem, which would remain forever the capital of the future independent Palestinian state, the statement added. The Arab Parliament continued that the increasing rate of violations against Al-Aqsa mosque continued to unite Muslim support for the Palestinian people, saying that history stood with Islamic and Christian structures in the occupied city. — KUNA

Local

# Expert warns of negative effect of visa restrictions on real estate

## Almost 15% drop in occupancy of apartments rented by expat families

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Kuwait has implemented stringent visa regulations for expatriates as a precautionary measure to curb the spread of the disease. These regulations include restrictions on expatriates sponsoring family visas for their first-degree relatives and impediments for small businesses in recruiting foreign workers from specific countries due to visa restrictions.

These laws have adversely affected various business sectors in the country, particularly the real estate investment sector. Real estate expert Sulaiman Al-Dilajjan, in an interview with Kuwait Times, explained that there has been a recent 12 to 15 percent decrease in demand for rented apartments in the investment real estate sector by expatriate families. Additionally, the value of rented apartments has declined by 10 to 15 percent.

The most impacted segment within this sector is single housing apartments, primarily housing laborers without families who have come to Kuwait to work for companies that do not provide housing (apart from governmental projects). These laborers' presence has affected demand in specific areas due to the strict visa regulations, leading to the deportation of many existing single laborers and discouraging others from working in the country due to the stringent laws.

Dilajjan warned that if current visa laws persist, they will significantly impact the real estate investment sector. The impact could increase to 10



Sulaiman Al-Dilajjan

percent if these laws remain unchanged for the next year and could reach 25 percent based on the current trend. Regarding the risks associated with the rented apartment sector in Kuwait, the expert emphasized that the first casualties of this decline will be Kuwaiti investors, who will see a substantial reduction in their profits. This situation may lead to complications with lenders, such as banks.

He further explained that most Kuwaiti investors in the investment real estate sector rely on loans from banks or financial institutions. These lenders may demand repayment, sell the real estate, or increase interest rates, which would force investors to sell their investments at a lower price or provide bank guarantees. On another note, Dilajjan mentioned that the real estate market in specific districts in Kuwait, specifically government projects needing rental buildings for their workers, has been impacted by the lack of new government projects.

In conclusion, Al-Dilajjan highlighted that Kuwait's current expatriate population stands at 3.8 million, including 700,000 domestic laborers who do not require housing. The remaining 2.8 million expatriates are the most significant contribu-



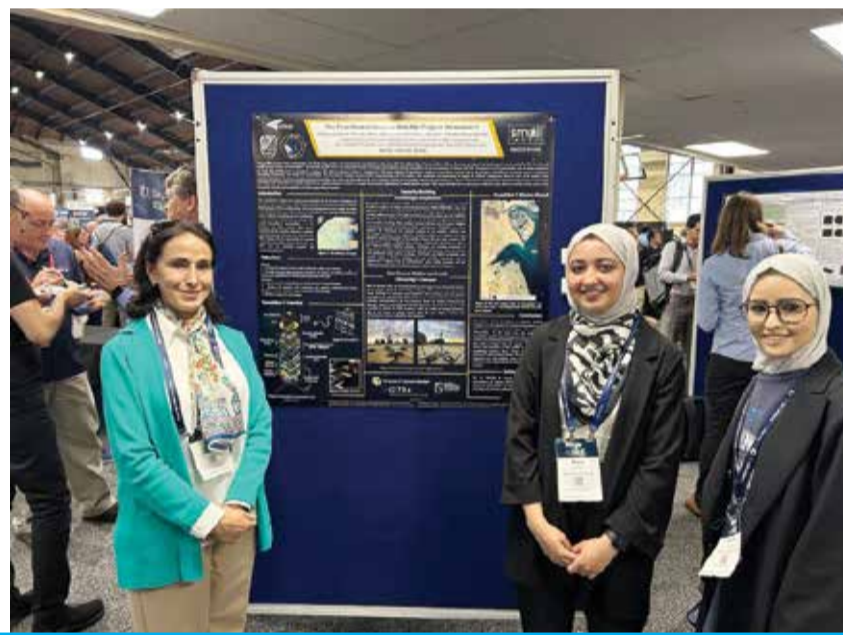
This picture taken on October 27, 2022 shows an aerial view of the landmark Kuwait Towers and the Ras Al-Ard cape of Kuwait City overlooking the Gulf waters. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

tors to the real estate investment sector, particularly rented apartments. Recent data from the Real Estate Union indicates an occupancy rate of approximately 85 to 89 percent of the total

supply, representing a 10 to 15 percent decrease, which he noted is a typical international rate decrease given the prevailing high interest rates and business stagnation.



UTAH: Members of the first Kuwaiti satellite team (KuwaitSat-1) participate in the Small Satellites Conference in Utah.



## KFAS participates in K-SAT 1 conference

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and members of the first Kuwaiti satellite team (KuwaitSat-1) participated in the Small Satellites Conference which was hosted by the University of Utah recently, where they reviewed the stages that the first Kuwaiti satellite went through from the idea until the launch.

The Foundation said that "its support and funding for the participation of the Kuwaiti team are aimed at informing the parties participating in the conference about Kuwait's efforts in the satellite

project. It is a project affiliated with Kuwait University in cooperation with a number of government agencies, such as the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, and the Environment Public Authority."

"The first Kuwaiti satellite team presented at the conference, which is considered the largest global gathering specializing in small satellites, a scientific paper in which it reviewed the project of that satellite from the beginning of the design until the launch, then the capture and analysis of signals and data, including the first Kuwaiti image of Kuwait from space," it added.

It explained that the conference touched on many important topics related to small satellite

technology, its future, and its applications, such as "the study of the earth and other planets, the space climate, and the distant depths of the universe, as well as presenting the experiences of university students in the field of designing and manufacturing educational satellites."

The conference witnessed wide participation with the attendance of nearly 4,000 participants from different countries of the world and included other activities, including posters and publications for the projects of university students and researchers specializing in the field of space, especially small satellites. The first Kuwaiti satellite was launched into space on January 3 from Cape Canaveral Air Force Base in Florida, USA, under the slogan "Kuwait to Space".

## Kuwait pushes for preserving natural environment

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's participation in Expo 2023 Doha for horticulture will enhance environmental awareness and sustainability in the country, said the Environment Public Authority (EPA). In a press statement on Tuesday, EPA Acting Director General and Kuwait's general commissioner to Expo 2023 Doha Engineer Sameera Al-Kanderi said that Kuwait seeks to achieve balance between economic development and preserving natural environment.



Sameera Al-Kanderi

During the event, Kuwait will present a number of initiatives on protecting the environment, fighting desertification and creating a sustainable environment in the country, she noted. The content will be presented using innovative methods with different events to bring environmental awareness to visitors and encourage them to take serious measures to protect the environment, said Al-Kanderi.

She added that Kuwait is committed to achieve the UN's sustainable development goals and is cooperating on an international level in the field of horticulture and environmental development. The Expo 2023 Doha for horticulture is the first event of its kind to be held in a GCC country. The expo will kick off on October 2 until March 28, 2024 under the theme "Green Desert, Better Environment." — KUNA

## History of architecture in Kuwait

By Ali Hamza

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's architecture has been significantly shaped by various cultures and civilizations due to its strategic location as a trade hub in the Arabian Gulf. Notably, Ottoman and British influences have left a mark on its architectural evolution, resulting in a blend of traditional and modern characteristics that reflect its rich history. These influences have contributed to Kuwait's distinct architectural character, which harmoniously combines local traditions with global design trends.

### Kuwait's architecture before the 20th century

Prior to the discovery of oil in Kuwait, Kuwait City was enclosed by a defensive wall featuring five gates. The construction of the Red Fort commenced in the late 1880s. Traditional building materials included stones collected from the sea, coral stone, mud bricks and rubble stone, as wood was scarce and sometimes imported from India. During this period, Kuwaiti architecture priori-



The Red Fort of Kuwait



First Master Plan of Kuwait, 1951, by British planners Minoprio, Spencely & Macfarlane, showing new road system and original housing fabric.

tized privacy, with houses featuring simple exteriors. Most artistic elements were concentrated on the main doors and windows.

### Ottoman influence on architecture

During the Ottoman rule of Kuwait, which began in the late 16th century, various Ottoman architectural elements were introduced and integrated into the local architectural landscape. Ottoman design styles were incorporated into administrative buildings, such as government offices and tax collection centers. In the 18th century, many Kuwaiti merchant houses adopted Ottoman-style features, including projecting wooden balconies enclosed with wooden screens or mashrabiya. To combat extreme heat,

houses often had wind catchers and ventilation became essential. Solid stone houses with over 20,000 inhabitants attracted Arab and Persian merchants.

### British influence on architecture

In the 1950s, a masterplan developed by British firms called for the demolition of the city walls and old houses to make way for new buildings and roads. Residents were encouraged to relocate to new neighborhoods south of the old city in the desert. Following the demolition, modern infrastructure, including roads, bridges, government buildings, and schools, was developed with British assistance. Transportation networks were improved, connecting Kuwait to neighboring regions.



The mudbrick wall during the 18th century.

### Modern architecture in Kuwait

The Kuwait Towers, officially inaugurated in March 1979, stand as symbols of modern Kuwait. They were the first modern skyscrapers in the Middle East and the tallest at that time. With increasing global temperatures, modern buildings are designed with careful consideration of Kuwait's extreme heat. Many modern structures have thick walls for insulation, locally sourced materials that withstand heat, flat roofs painted with reflective coatings to reduce heat absorption, and windows featuring double-glazed or low-emissivity glass to minimize heat penetration and UV radiation. High-efficiency HVAC systems are installed for maintaining comfortable indoor temperatures.

Kuwait has established building codes and regulations that require the implementation of energy-efficient building practices and materials to reduce heat transfer. Roads in Kuwait feature thermal insulation layers beneath the surface to minimize heat transfer from the hot desert ground. Asphalt mixtures are specifically designed to resist softening or denting. Walk paths are made from light-colored materials to absorb less heat and reflect more sunlight, although this can lead to cracks and potholes due to expansion and contraction. Overall, Kuwait's architecture is a testament to its historical influences and its commitment to adapting to the challenges posed by its climate.

# Kuwait-India defense cooperation part of a shared vision, says envoy

## Kuwait, India naval forces hold joint exercise



Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika addresses the gathering.



KUWAIT: Defense Undersecretary Dr Abdullah Meshal Mubarak Al-Sabah (second left), Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika (second right), Western Fleet Commander Rear Admiral Vineet McCarty (left) and Captain Ashok Rao (right) during the reception on board INS Visakhapatnam on Monday.



Dr Abdullah Meshal Mubarak Al-Sabah poses for photo with Kuwaiti naval officers.



INS Visakhapatnam.



## Detectives thwart smuggling attempt

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry said on Tuesday that the officers of the General Directorate of Drug Control struck a preemptive blow to drug dealers by thwarting the smuggling of two kilograms of pure heroin into the country. The ministry explained in a statement to the General Directorate of Security Relations and Media that this comes within the efforts of the criminal security department and the intensification of search and investigation operations on everyone who tries to smuggle narcotic substances into the country to protect everyone from this dangerous scourge.

The official added that the anti-drug men thwarted the smuggling operation. One Asian tried to smuggle two kilograms of pure heroin into the country through one of the air cargo companies inside a package and hid them inside steel pipes in an innovative way. The accused has been referred to the competent authority for necessary legal action. Security operatives are directing preemptive strikes at drug dealers and smugglers. Officials called on everyone to cooperate with the security men and report any negative phenomena using the emergency phone (112) and the hotline of the General Department of Drug Control (1884141). — KUNA

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: Defense cooperation between India and Kuwait constitutes a significant element of their shared strategic vision for the region and bilateral defense engagements between the countries have seen a noticeable upswing in the recent past with an increased frequency of Indian naval ships' visits facilitated with the active support of Kuwait, said Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika on Monday.

Addressing a reception on board Indian naval ship Visakhapatnam, the ambassador said, the presence of the Western Fleet Commander onboard the ship demonstrates the importance we attach to the growing defense ties between India and Kuwait. Tracing the maritime history, he explained how dhows and ships have been the main driver of the strong and intense people-to-people ties between the two countries.

Defense Undersecretary Dr Abdullah Meshal Mubarak Al-Sabah attended the event as the chief guest. Western Fleet Commander of Indian Navy Rear Admiral Vineet McCarty, Captain Ashok Rao, top Kuwaiti naval officials, officers and crew members of INS Vishakhapatnam, resident ambassadors, diplomats and Indian diaspora members were also present at the reception.

"India and Kuwait are natural allies and true partners. And this could be seen in our multi-faceted bilateral relations over the years, be it energy, trade, infrastructure development, medical cooperation, or defense cooperation and security. The

large and vibrant Indian community in Kuwait is a manifestation of our close people-to-people linkages," the ambassador said in his address. "Not only did our Kuwaiti friends in the 19th and early 20th century go to India on dhows and boats with Arabian horses, pearls and dates and brought back textiles, timber, spices etc, they laid the foundation of our strong bilateral ties," he recalled.

On the occasion, the ambassador expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude to the leadership, the government and the people of Kuwait for their steadfast commitment to the close relations between India and Kuwait. Rear Admiral Vineet McCarty said in his address that the flagship INS Visakhapatnam is the most modern ship and is the symbol of the self-reliance and forward-looking confident India. "The flagship of the Western Fleet, the 'sword arm' of Indian Navy, is here to celebrate the centuries-old friendship and maritime connect with the state of Kuwait and also to reaffirm Indian Navy's commitment to the maritime security of the region," he said.

"We are conscious of our responsibility towards contributing to the maritime security of the region as well as strengthening our friendship with Kuwait. And this visit is particularly dedicated to that," he pointed out. "We have very good understanding of what the visions we need to pursue and what our actions are going to be from here onwards," he said. He also thanked the Kuwaiti authorities for supplying India with liquid oxygen when the country was battling the second wave of COVID pandemic. "The



Dr Abdullah Meshal Mubarak Al-Sabah writes on the guest book.

largest amount of liquid oxygen was provided by Kuwait and it was transported to India on Indian naval ships," he added.

Speaking with Kuwait Times on the sidelines of the event, McCarty said the Indian naval officers had professional interactions and discussions of mutual interest with Kuwait naval forces during the last three-day of port of call in Kuwait. "These are ongoing discussions, and we will take them forward to the logical conclusion. We have discussed many things; there are generic as well as some particular issues, all pertaining to the relationship between and Indian navy and Kuwait navy. We would like to strengthen this relationship further," he said. Indian Navy and Kuwait Navy jointly held a passing exercise on Tuesday before INS Visakhapatnam left the Kuwait harbor.



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KUWAIT: Minister of information and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi visits Kuwait News Agency (KUNA). — KUNA

## Info Minister underlines the importance of media

KUWAIT: The Minister of information and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi paid a visit to the building of the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), where he met with the director general of the agency, Dr Fatima Al-Salem, and the agency's media executives. During the visit, the minister discussed ways to develop media services and was briefed on the latest developments in media services provided by KUNA inside and outside Kuwait.

He stressed the importance of the role played by KUNA through the way it deals with various media sources and materials and the importance of promoting the use of modern technology in the agency's work in light of the renaissance witnessed by various media



outlets. He said that the agency has an important role in covering local and international news with all credibility, transparency, and professionalism through specialized and qualified national and media cadres. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Director General of the editorial department, Essam Al-Ghanem, and the Deputy Director General of the administrative, financial, and communications sectors, Mohammed Al-Mannai. — KUNA

## Statistics department launches automated monitoring system

KUWAIT: The Central Administration of Statistics on Tuesday launched the automated system for monitoring the indicators of the goals and targets of Sustainable Development 2030 as an important tool to enhance cooperation and coordination to achieve the goals through automatic linking with the providers of the required indicator data. The director general of the Central Statistics Department, Munia Al-Qabandi, told KUNA that the launch of the system comes as a continuation of the statistics efforts and its continuous support to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Plan.

Al-Qabandi added that the launch of the system aims to enhance data collection, build statistical capacities, and find new sources of data to meet the growing demand. She explained that the system also aims to provide statistics and official data that form the necessary basis so as to achieve the direction of Kuwait in implementing the Sustainable Development Plan 2030 and the issuance of voluntary national reports that include monitoring and analysis of indicators, goals, and objectives of sustainable development.

She pointed out that the department launched the official website for monitoring the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals at the end of June, pointing out that this system helps the concerned authorities develop the necessary capabilities to collect and analyze data effectively by providing a comprehensive and up-to-date database. This makes it easier for the concerned authorities to monitor the progress made. — KUNA



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## Zionists kill Palestinian teen in West Bank

Two suspects in Monday's Hebron shooting arrested



BAYTA AT TAHTA: Zionist soldiers approach a Palestinian man during a search operation in Baita village in the occupied West Bank, on August 21, 2023. — AFP

**ZABABDEH:** Zionist troops killed a Palestinian teenager near the West Bank city of Jenin on Tuesday, the Palestinian health ministry said, as violence surged in the occupied territory. Meanwhile, in the southern West Bank, troops made two arrests in the deadly Monday shooting of a settler near the city of Hebron. "Othman Mohammed Abu Khurog, 17, died after he was shot in the head by the occupation (Zionist forces)," the Palestinian health ministry said. Abu Khurog was killed when clashes erupted in the small town of Zababdeh, southeast of Jenin, which Zionist forces had entered to make an arrest, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

The Zionist army said troops had opened fire after "explosive devices" were thrown at them. "A hit was identified," it said in a statement. Zionist troops routinely carry out incursions into areas

such as Jenin which are nominally under the civil and security control of President Mahmud Abbas' Palestinian Authority.

In July, the army carried out its biggest raid in years on the Jenin refugee camp, in which 12 Palestinians, including militants and children, were killed. A Zionist soldier also died during the raid, and on Tuesday the army said he was killed by fire from his own comrades. David Yehuda Yizhak was shot dead by fellow troops "following an incident of mistaken identification", the army said.

Meanwhile, violence has been rising in the West Bank. On Monday, Zionist settler Batsheva Nigri was shot dead from a passing vehicle while travelling in a car near Hebron with her daughter and a man. Her daughter was not hurt but the man was seriously wounded, the army and medics said.

**Escalating violence**

Two Palestinian residents of Hebron suspected of taking part in the shooting were arrested on Tuesday as troops pressed a manhunt for the woman's killers, the army said. "During their initial questioning, the two linked themselves to carrying out the attack," the army alleged, adding that they had turned in a weapon believed to have been used in the attack. Nigri was a teacher and resident of Beit Hagai, a Zionist settlement south of Hebron.

The Palestinian militant group Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip, called her killing a "heroic act" and a "normal response" to the persistent expansion of Zionist settlements in the occupied West Bank. The settlements are considered illegal under international law but, not counting annexed east Jerusalem, around 490,000 Zionists live in such communities alongside

nearly three million Palestinians. Nigri's murder came two days after a father and son were shot dead at a car wash in the town of Huwara in the northern West Bank. The occupation has yet to make any arrests in those killings despite a search operation that has seen troops raid villages and carry out house-to-house searches.

The West Bank has been rocked by violence since early last year, with a string of attacks by Palestinians on Zionist targets, repeated deadly raids by the army and violence by settlers against Palestinian communities. With the latest death, at least 219 Palestinians have been killed in violence linked to the Zionist occupation so far this year. The violence has also claimed the lives of 31 Zionists, including the soldier killed by friendly fire in Jenin, a Ukrainian and an Italian, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources on both sides. — AFP

## Little support for Fukushima water release

**SHINCHIMACHI:** Most Fukushima fishermen are tight-lipped but Haruo Ono can't keep his thoughts to himself on Japan's plans to release treated cooling water from the stricken nearby nuclear power plant into the Pacific from Thursday. "Nothing about the water release is beneficial to us. There is no advantage for us. None. It's all detrimental," Ono, who lost his brother in the 2011 tsunami that crippled the plant, told AFP.

"Fishermen are 100 percent against," the 71-year-old said at his modest home in Shinchimiachi, around 60 kilometers (40 miles) north of the nuclear plant in northeast Japan. "The sea is where we work. We make a living off of the sea, we're at the mercy of the sea. So if we don't protect the sea, who would?"

Around 1.34 million tons of water, equivalent to more than 500 Olympic swimming pools, have accumulated at the Fukushima plant since the earthquake and tsunami that killed 18,000 people in 2011. It has been contaminated by being used to cool the highly radioactive reactor cores that went into meltdown, combined with groundwater and rain. But plant operator TEPCO says the water has been diluted and filtered to remove all radionuclides except tritium, which is far below dangerous levels.

The plan gradually to begin releasing the water at a maximum rate of 500,000 liters (132,000 US



NIHONMATSU: This file photo taken on May 4, 2011 shows president of troubled Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) Masataka Shimizu (center in blue) being joined by company employees as they bow to evacuees (right) from the town of Namie, near TEPCO's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, to apologize for the nuclear crisis. — AFP

gallons) a day via a pipe one kilometer (half a mile) out to sea has won approval from the UN nuclear watchdog. But many in the Japanese fishing industry are worried about the reputation of the country's seafood, just as it was starting to recover 12 years after the Fukushima disaster.

"Fukushima was seen as something people should avoid (after 2011). Even car number plates from Fukushima was taken off when people had to evacuate to other prefectures," local artist Tomo-

mi Kodama, 40, told AFP. "Now if the water is released from the plant, I am worried about how the world would possibly accept it," she said. As well as being a major source of national pride, seafood is a major Japanese industry, with almost 600,000 tons — worth around \$2 billion — exported in 2022. China is its biggest customer, accounting for around a quarter of this, but Beijing has accused Tokyo of treating the ocean like a "sewer" with the water release. — AFP

## Biden reassures Hawaii wildfire survivors

**KAHULUI:** President Joe Biden on Monday told survivors of a horrific blaze in Hawaii the government would not abandon them as he toured the scene of the worst wildfire the United States has seen in over a century. The 80-year-old donned the mantle of comforter-in-chief as he saw for himself the devastation wreaked on Lahaina by a fire that killed at least 114 people as it levelled the historic town.

"I know the feeling that many people in this town, this community (have); that hollow feeling you have in your chest like you're being sucked into a black hole," he said as he stood by the blackened skeleton of a historic banyan tree. "We're with you for as long as it takes, I promise you, by making sure your voices are heard."

"We're gonna rebuild the way that the people of Maui want to build. The fire cannot reach the roots. That's Maui. That's America." Biden is fighting criticism his government was too slow to respond to the disaster that devastated a town of more than 12,000 people, with locals angry at what some see as a plodding official response.

Former president Donald Trump said it was "disgraceful" that his successor had not visited Hawaii sooner, though the White House has said Biden delayed his trip so as not to distract officials and rescuers working on the ground. Residents have also lashed out at Maui officials who they say should have sounded an alarm system as the fire erupted.

As a result, "a warm welcome may not be assured for Biden in some circles on Maui," the Honolulu Star-Advertiser newspaper said ahead of the visit. Biden and First Lady Jill Biden walked through the ravaged remains of Lahaina with Hawaii's Governor Josh Green and his wife, nearly two weeks after ferocious, wind-whipped blazes sent residents jumping into the ocean to escape the flames. The couple also took to the air in Marine One, the presidential helicopter, to see the crushing extent of the devastation that left the former royal capital in ashes.

Many houses were completely destroyed by the wall of fire that tore through the town; the shells of other buildings still stand, shorn of the vibrancy that made Lahaina a major tourist draw. The burned-out hulks of cars litter roads where they were abandoned by drivers who realized — some too late — that the way out was snarled with traffic.

The death toll is expected to rise, with around an eighth of the disaster area still to search. Officials have warned that some bodies are so badly burned that identification could be tricky, or even impossible. The pace of victim recovery and the small number of people who have been positively identified is another source of anguish for those still hunting for loved ones. Possibly hundreds of people remain unaccounted for. — AFP

## Russian strikes kill 13 fighters in Syria: Monitor

**BEIRUT:** The death toll from Russian air strikes on the last major rebel stronghold in northwest Syria has risen to 13 anti-regime fighters, a monitoring group said Monday. "At least thirteen Syrian and non-Syrian fighters" from the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham jihadist group were killed, said Rami Abdel Rahman, director of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (OSDH).

Several other fighters were wounded in the strikes, with some in critical condition, said the Britain-based monitor, which relies on a network of sources inside Syria. The monitoring group had earlier given a toll of eight dead. Moscow's intervention since 2015 has helped Damascus claw back much of the territory it lost to rebel forces early in the 12-year civil war, and Russian forces have repeatedly struck the Idlib area.

Early Monday, "Russian warplanes carried out air strikes on the western outskirts of Idlib city, targeting a military base belonging to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)," Rahman said. Jihadist group HTS, led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, controls swathes of

Idlib province as well as parts of the adjacent Latakia, Hama and Aleppo provinces.

An AFP correspondent said the jihadist group cordoned off the area after the strikes, which came shortly after midnight (21:00 GMT on Sunday). HTS regularly carries out deadly attacks on soldiers and pro-government forces.

### Downed drones

On Monday, the Syrian defense ministry said its forces had downed "three drones laden with explosives" operated by "terrorist organizations". The Observatory said the army shot down three reconnaissance drones in Idlib and Hama provinces.

Syria's war broke out in 2011 after the repression of peaceful demonstrations by the government of President Bashar al-Assad escalated into a deadly conflict that pulled in foreign powers and jihadists insurgents. Russian and Iranian support have helped to turn the tide in the regime's favor. The war has killed more than half a million people and forced around half of Syria's pre-war population from their homes. On August 5, three family members, all civilians, were killed when Russian warplanes struck the outskirts of Idlib city, the Observatory said at the time.

On June 25, Russian air strikes killed at least 13 people including nine civilians in Idlib province, in what the Observatory said was the deadliest such



DAMASCUS: Youths lift a Russian flag at the Umayyads Square in Damascus in celebration of Russia's Flag Day, on August 22, 2023. — AFP

attack on the country this year. A member of the Turkistan Islamic Party, a Uyghur-dominated jihadist group, was among the four fighters killed in those strikes, which also wounded at least 30 civilians, the monitor had said.

The rebel-held Idlib region is home to about three million people, around half of them displaced from other parts of the country. Since 2020, a ceasefire deal brokered by Damascus's ally Russia and rebel-backer Turkey has largely held in Syria's northwest, despite periodic clashes. — AFP

## International

# Turkey steps up war of words with UN over Cyprus unrest

## Security Council statement 'divorced' from reality: Ankara

ISTANBUL: Turkey on Tuesday angrily denounced a United Nations Security Council statement blaming the latest unrest on the divided island of Cyprus on the breakaway government backed by Ankara. The war of words followed an altercation involving UN peacekeepers last Friday that underscored the many hurdles Turkey faces as it revives its drive to join the European Union.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has made mending ties with Western allies one of his main objectives since winning a difficult re-election in May. But the long list of Turkey's disputes with Europe includes its support for a breakaway government in the north of EU member Cyprus whose rule is recognized only by Ankara. Those tensions spilled over when UN peacekeepers last Friday tried to physically block the Turkish Cypriot administration from constructing a road in the buffer zone splitting the east Mediterranean island.

Both sides agree that four members of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) were injured in the incident. The European Union and Washington both blamed the altercation on the Turkish-backed administration. The UN Security Council issued a statement after a closed-door meeting on the emerging crisis warning that "attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute crimes under international law".

The 15-member council also "called for the removal of all unauthorized constructions and the prevention of unauthorized military or civilian activities within and along the ceasefire lines". Tur-

key called the UN statement unfair.

"The press statement issued by the United Nations Security Council ... is completely divorced from the realities on the ground," the Turkish foreign ministry said. "The notification regarding the road work was made well in advance. This being the case, the physical intervention by soldiers of the UNFICYP in the road construction work was the cause of the tension," the Turkish statement said.

### Turkey presses EU

The incident has become one of the most serious of its kind on the island in years. Turkish Cypriot officials have since opened talks with local UN envoys and halted work in the disputed zone. But both they and Ankara insist that the road was both legal and essential for linking Turkish Cypriot communities in the ethnically mixed village of Pyla with those living in the north. Turkish officials also argue that the UN had turned a blind eye on roads linking Greek Cypriot communities in the buffer zone with the south.

Cyprus has been divided since Turkish forces occupied the island's northern third in response to a military coup sponsored by the junta in power in Greece in 1974. Efforts to reunify the island have been at a standstill since the last round of UN-backed talks collapsed in 2017. EU officials have made the revival of their own long-stalled negotiations on closer ties with Turkey contingent on finally settling the Cyprus dispute. "Solving the Cyprus issue in line with the relevant United Nations resolu-



PYLA: This picture shows a view of Pyla village, which lies in the buffer zone that slices between the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish-occupied north, on August 20, 2023. — AFP

tions will be key in this re-engagement with Turkey," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said last month.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said on Tuesday that Ankara expected Brussels "to revise their stringent opinion about membership." "They need to re-evaluate that," Fidan told reporters. "We believe that Turkey's accession to the EU is a strategic act that can further reinforce the EU's position in the world." — AFP

## Last of Hong Kong's boat fugitives returns

HONG KONG: The last member of a group of wanted Hong Kong democracy activists jailed in mainland China after failing to flee the city by speedboat was handed back to local authorities on Tuesday after serving out his sentence. Dubbed "The Hong Kong 12", the group made a break for Taiwan in August 2020 to escape serious charges — including attempted arson and making explosives — related to the huge and sometimes violent pro-democracy protests that convulsed the city the year before.

However, they were soon picked up by the Chinese coast guard and disappeared into the mainland's opaque judicial system, with 10 of them eventually being convicted behind closed doors for crossing China's maritime border illegally. Tang Kai-yin, whose three-year jail sentence was the heaviest owing to his role as an "organizer", was the last one to return to Hong Kong on Tuesday.

An officer at a police station in the Hong Kong border district of Tin Shui Wai confirmed to an AFP reporter there that Tang had arrived in a seven-seat vehicle. Tang is expected to appear in a Hong Kong court on Wednesday for continued prosecution in his original arson case and to receive an additional charge for absconding.



HONG KONG: Police are seen at Tin Shui Wai division police station where Tang Kai-yin, the last one of the "The Hong Kong 12" to be released from prison, arrived in Hong Kong from Mainland China on August 22, 2023. — AFP

Of the 11 others in the group who have since been returned to Hong Kong, seven have been jailed for various protest-related charges, as well as the additional charge of perverting the course of public justice. Another one of the speedboat fugitives, Andy Li Yu-hin, was charged with collusion under the sweeping national security law that Beijing imposed

on Hong Kong to quell dissent after the protests.

Li's case is allegedly linked to jailed pro-democracy tycoon Jimmy Lai, who is set to stand trial in December. The remaining three — Cheung Chun-fu, Cheung Ming-yu, and Yim Man-him — are defendants in Hong Kong's first case under its anti-terrorism law. — AFP

## Children rescued from cable car...

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around 7:00 am (0200 GMT) midway through its journey, hanging above the lush green Allai valley.

Residents used mosque loudspeakers to alert neighborhood officials of the emergency and hundreds of people gathered on both sides of the ravine — hours away from any sizeable town — to watch the drama unfold. Several military helicopters had earlier in the day flown sorties and an airman was lowered by a harness to deliver food, water and medicine, Rehman, the official, told AFP. "This is a delicate operation that demands meticulous accuracy. The helicopter cannot approach the chairlift closely, as its downwash (air pressure) might snap the sole chain supporting it," he said.

Headmaster Ali Asghar Khan told AFP by phone that the children were teenage boys and students at his government high school Battangi Pashto. "The school is located in a mountainous area and

there are no safe crossings, so it's common to use the chairlift," Khan said. "The parents are gathered at the site of the chairlift. What can they do? They are waiting for the rescue officials to get their children out. We are all worried."

Abid Ur Rehman, a teacher from another school in the area, said around 500 people had gathered to watch the rescue mission. "Parents and women are crying for the safety of their children," he told AFP. Syed Hamid Haider, a senior Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial official, said the gondola was hanging about 1,000 to 1,200 feet above the ground. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar issued a directive for all chairlifts in mountainous areas to be inspected and for those that are not "safety compliant" to be immediately closed.

Cable cars that carry passengers — and sometimes even cars — are common across the northern areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and Gilgit-Baltistan, and are vital in connecting villages and towns in areas where roads cannot be built. In 2017, 10 people were killed when a chairlift cable broke, sending passengers plunging into a ravine in a mountain hamlet near the capital Islamabad. — AFP

imum rate of 500,000 liters per day. The UN atomic watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), said in July the release would have a "negligible radiological impact on people and the environment". On Tuesday, the IAEA said its staff would be on site for the start of the discharge and beyond and would publish "real-time and near real-time monitoring data".

Japan's fisheries agency will take samples of bottom-dwelling flatfish at two designated sampling spots near the outlet of the water pipe. But environmental pressure group Greenpeace has said the filtration process is flawed. Japan "has opted for a false solution — decades of deliberate radioactive pollution of the marine environment — during a time when the world's oceans are already facing immense stress and pressures", Greenpeace said Tuesday.

Many South Koreans are alarmed at the prospect of the release, staging demonstrations and even stocking up on sea salt because of fears of contamination. Dozens of protesters gathered in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul on Tuesday, with more rallies planned. One protester held up a sign reading: "We denounce the Japanese government for killing the ocean!" But President Yoon Suk Yeol's government, taking political risks at home, has sought to improve long-frosty relations with Japan and has not objected to the plan. — AFP

## 'Barbie' hits nerve in Gulf

DUBAI: After being banned in some Arab countries, the film "Barbie" is dividing audiences in the conservative Gulf. In the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, fans have queued up in pink versions of the abaya, the traditional all-covering robe, to see the hit movie. But not everyone is comfortable with the celebration of female emancipation in a region where attitudes towards women's empowerment are only slowly changing.

Bahrain is one of the Gulf monarchies to show "Barbie", which is banned in Kuwait and has not been released in Qatar or Oman. In the wider Middle East, it is also barred in Algeria and Lebanon. "We never imagined that such a movie would be shown in Gulf countries," Wadima Al-Amiri, an 18-year-old Emirati, told AFP at a packed Dubai cinema offering pink popcorn to movie-goers dressed in matching colors.

In Dubai, which styles itself as the Gulf's cosmopolitan center, cinemas are adorned with memorabilia and photo booths shaped as doll boxes. Mounira, a 30-year-old Saudi, joined her three pink-clad daughters in a Dubai theatre. "If the movie includes principles or concepts opposed to those we believe in, it should not be shown in Saudi Arabia or in other Gulf countries," she told AFP. "But we came to give the film a chance."

Social media has been swept by the craze. A video of a giant, digitally created Barbie next to the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, was shared by thousands. Female empowerment is tackled in the film's early stages. The various Barbies include a president, diplomat and Supreme Court justices, jobs traditionally handed to men. As the plot unfolds, the patriarchy threatens to infect 'Barbieland' — a matriarchal utopia where men lounge on the beach while women occupy prestigious roles.

The movie has made a splash in Saudi Arabia. Restaurants in the capital Riyadh have introduced Barbie-inspired dishes and drinks to their menus. But not everyone is impressed. Hanan Al-Amoudi, a Saudi mother-of-four waiting to watch a different film in Dubai, said she has no interest in seeing "Barbie". "I support freedom and openness, but with regard to 'Barbie', I heard that it challenges masculinity," she said, wearing a black abaya and niqab. "For a man to resemble a woman by wearing make-up, and dress-

## S Korea detains jet ski traveler from China

SEOUL: South Korea's coastguard said Tuesday it had arrested a Chinese national who tried to enter the country after travelling by jet ski from China — a journey of more than 300 kilometers (186 miles). Wearing a life vest and helmet, the man crossed the Yellow Sea on a 1800-cc jet ski from Shandong province, using binoculars and a compass to navigate and towing five barrels of fuel.

"He refilled the petrol on the ride and dumped the empty barrels into the sea," the coastguard said in a press release. When his jet ski got stuck in tidal flats near the western port city of Incheon's cruise terminal, he called for rescue. The coastguard said the man, who they did not identify, was arrested after he "attempted to smuggle himself into" Incheon.

Authorities said they found no sign that the man was a spy. The jet-ski escapee is Chinese rights activist Kwon Pyong, according to South Korea-based campaigner Lee Dae-seon of NGO Dialogue China. Kwon, 35, had posted pictures on social media mocking Chinese President Xi Jinping, and spent time in jail in China for subversion, Lee told AFP Tuesday. "While his means of entry into South Korea in violation of the law was wrong, surveillance of the Chinese authorities and political persecution of Kwon since 2016 are behind his life-risking crossing into South Korea," Lee said. "He is now weighing whether to apply for refugee status in South Korea or choose a third country," he said. South Korea only grants a handful of refugees asylum each year. The Chinese embassy in Seoul declined to comment when contacted by AFP. — AFP



DUBAI: Picture shows a promotion for the movie "Barbie" along a street on Aug 21, 2023. — AFP

ing (effeminately)... this is something I do not like," she said, referring to Ryan Gosling's flamboyant Ken.

In Bahrain, "Barbie" has drawn the ire of Islamic preacher Hassan Al-Husseini who is followed by millions on social media and has called for a ban. In an Instagram post, he criticized the movie for "revolting against the idea of marriage and motherhood" and showing men "without manhood" or depicting them as "monsters".

Similar objections were raised in Kuwait, which blocked the film to "protect public ethics and social traditions". Kuwait was the only Gulf Arab country this month to ban Australian horror movie "Talk to Me" which features a trans actor. Kuwaitis, however, have still managed to watch "Barbie" through piracy websites or even by driving across the border to Saudi Arabia.

Kuwaiti journalist Sheikha Al-Bahawed streamed it online but was left disappointed because she felt it was not feminist or inclusive enough. "It showed white, colonial and superficial feminism," she said. "Feminism is never based on replacing a patriarchal system with a matriarchal one, but rather... it is based on equality, justice and equal opportunities." For Reefan Al-Amoudi, an 18-year-old Saudi, "Barbie" pushes the feminist agenda too far. "It is nice for a woman to work and be self-reliant," she said at a Dubai cinema. "But her body is not like a man's body. She is able to do everything like a man, but within limits." — AFP

## Japan to release water from...

Continued from Page 1

TEPCO says the water will be diluted and filtered before release to remove all radioactive substances except tritium, levels of which are far below dangerous levels.

It has failed to reassure China, which said it would take "necessary measures to safeguard the marine environment, food safety and public health". Its foreign ministry said Tuesday that it had summoned Japan's ambassador to lodge "solemn representations" against the release. "The ocean is the common property of all humankind, not a place for Japan to arbitrarily dump nuclear-contaminated water," spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at an earlier press conference.

A nuclear expert, however, said the level of tritium was well below World Health Organization drinking water limits. "Tritium has been released (by nuclear power plants) for decades with no evidential detrimental environmental or health effects," Tony Hooker, a nuclear expert from the University of Adelaide, told AFP.

This water will be released, if weather conditions allow, into the ocean off Japan's northeast coast at a max-

## International

# Russia says Ukrainian boat destroyed in Black Sea clash

## Moscow targeted by Ukrainian drones for fifth consecutive night

**MOSCOW:** Moscow said Tuesday it destroyed a Ukrainian military reconnaissance vessel near Russian gas infrastructure in the Black Sea, in the latest clash in the waterway since Moscow's withdrawal from a major grain export deal. Attacks by both sides have escalated in the Black Sea since Russia in July pulled out of the United Nations-brokered deal that allowed the safe export of Ukrainian grain through the shipping hub.

Russia has bombed Ukrainian port infrastructure in sea and on the Danube, while Ukraine has attacked Russian ships in its waters and the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Moscow in 2014. Russia's defense ministry said one of its Sukhoi Su-30sm jets had destroyed the Ukrainian "reconnaissance boat" near Russian gas production facilities in the Black Sea.

It did not give details on what kind of boat had been destroyed, or where exactly the incident took place. The incident came after the first civilian cargo ship sailing through the Black Sea from Ukraine recently arrived in Istanbul in defiance of the Russian blockade. Moscow said last month that it would consider any ships nearing Ukraine in the Black Sea as potential military cargo carriers, following the grain deal collapse. The defense ministry also said its forces had downed two Ukrainian drones, 40 kilometers (25 miles) northwest of the Crimean Peninsula on the Black Sea.

### Moscow targeted

The Moscow region was also targeted by Ukrainian drones for a fifth consecutive night, Russian authorities said early Tuesday. Aerial defense systems

downed one attack drone each in the Krasnogorsk and Chastysy areas of the region, mayor Sergei Sobyanin wrote on social media.

AFP journalists on the scene in Krasnogorsk saw a high-rise residential building with several windows blown out, debris and a damaged car. Russia's defense ministry said there had been no casualties in the attack but Moscow's Vnukovo, Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo airports briefly halted flights, Russian news agencies reported. Two other Ukrainian drones were downed over the Bryansk region near the Ukrainian border early Tuesday, Moscow's defense ministry said, adding there were no casualties.

The strikes are the latest in a recent wave of air attacks deep inside Russian territory, including two drones which were shot down near the Kremlin in May. The aerial threat is also being addressed in the classroom. Russian teenagers will learn how to operate and counter military drones in the upcoming school year, according to a curriculum published Monday by the education ministry. Moscow announced last November it was re-introducing Soviet-style military training for children from 2023, as it presses ahead with its nearly 18-month offensive in Ukraine.

### F-16s

The wave of drone attacks in Russia came as Ukrainian forces said they have pushed into the village of Robotyne on the southern front and evacuated civilians in armored vehicles. "The Russians are continuously shelling Robotyne with artillery," Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Ganna Malysar said on social media. Ukraine has posted limited gains in its push to



**KRASNOGORSK:** Local residents stand next to debris following a drone attack in Krasnogorsk, in the Moscow region on August 22, 2023. — AFP

dislodge Russian forces from territory and appealed to Western allies for greater military support.

President Volodymyr Zelensky this week secured the delivery of more than 40 F-16 fighter jets during a trip to the Netherlands and Denmark, while Greece said it would help train Ukrainian pilots. Zelensky had sought the advanced jets for months to strengthen Ukraine's Soviet-era air force as it pursues the grind-

ing counteroffensive against Russian forces in the east and south. But training by an 11-nation coalition is to begin this month, and officials hope pilots will be ready by early 2024. The long-sought F-16 deal drew a warning from Russia, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warning Moscow would consider the jets a "nuclear" threat because of their capacity to carry atomic weapons. — AFP



**PHNOM PENH:** Cambodia's Prime Minister-designate Hun Manet (center) arrives to attend a parliamentary meeting at the National Assembly building in Phnom Penh on August 22, 2023. — AFP

## Biden's growing web of US alliances flimsy

**WASHINGTON:** With a historic three-way summit with Japan and South Korea, President Joe Biden has further deepened the web of US partnerships in a determined signal to adversaries despite question marks on the political climate at home. Since Biden took office in 2021, NATO has expanded and mostly closed ranks over Russia's invasion of Ukraine — and, in clear if unstated responses to an assertive China, the United States forged a new three-way defense pact with Australia and Britain and ramped up work through the four-way Quad involving Australia, India and Japan.

The United States already has security alliances with Japan and South Korea, together the bases for some 84,500 troops, but will now also plan three-way, multi-year military exercises across all domains along with real-time information-sharing and a crisis hotline. Jon Alterman, a senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said that alliances were "baked" into the mindset of Biden, who was a senator at the end of the Cold War.

Partnerships can increase other countries' faith in the direction of the United States, Alterman added. "This administration believes deeply in the centrality — not the importance, the centrality — of partnerships," he said. "The challenge is, all of our partners remember the previous administration, they look at the polling numbers, and they have absolutely no confidence in where the US is going to be in two years' time, five years' time or 10 years' time," he said.

Previous president Donald Trump loudly questioned the value of alliances, insisting that countries such as Germany and South Korea were not paying enough for the US troop presence and scoffing at NATO's commitments of mutual defense to all allies. Trump is again seeking the White House and recent opinion polls have also shown softening support for US military assistance to Ukraine, which has totaled \$43 billion since Russia's attack.

Asked about Trump at a news conference with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the Camp David presidential retreat, Biden said that his predecessor's "America

First policy, walking away from the rest of the world, has made us weaker, not stronger." "America is strong with our allies and our alliances, and that's why we will endure," Biden said.

### Tougher task in Asia

Whereas in Europe the United States has led a common defense for decades under NATO, in Asia — seen by Biden as the critical region — Washington has navigated individual alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia and Thailand. One reason for the hodgepodge has been historical animosity between Japan and South Korea, with the Camp David summit until recently unthinkable.

Yoon has turned the page by resolving a dispute over Japan's wartime forced labor of Koreans. Yoon, Kishida and Biden said they shared the same vision of a "rules-based international order" — a nod to China's muscle-flexing in Asia but also to Ukraine, of which Japan and South Korea have been prominent non-Western supporters. China denounced the Camp David initiative, with state media saying the United States was raising tensions by creating a "mini-NATO," although there was no three-way mutual defense promise.

Shihoko Goto, acting director of the Asia program at the Wilson Center, doubted that the three countries were even aspiring to collective self-defense but said their new cooperation was part of an "interweaving" with existing alliance arrangements. "As a single thread it may be weak, but because it is going to be part of that fabric and making it into a multi-layered approach, it would actually be really strong," she said.

### Risks await

Biden has also moved bilaterally with countries concerned about Russia and China. He has said he plans to travel shortly to boost ties with Vietnam, whose tensions with Beijing run deep. But one of his big bets, India, has stood firm on its historic refusal to join alliances and is also taking part this week in a summit with Russia and China of the BRICS bloc of emerging economies.

Trump is not the only wild card for the future. In South Korea, Yoon is only allowed a single term, which ends in 2027. "If an ultra-leftist South Korean president and an ultra-right wing Japanese leader are elected in their next cycles, or even if Trump or someone like him wins in the US, then any one of them could derail all the meaningful, hard work the three countries are putting in right now," said Duyeon Kim, an adjunct senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security. — AFP



**CAMP DAVID:** US President Joe Biden (center), Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (right), and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol (left) speak during a press conference at the Camp David Trilateral Summit at Camp David in Maryland on August 18, 2023. — AFP

## African Union suspends Niger over coup

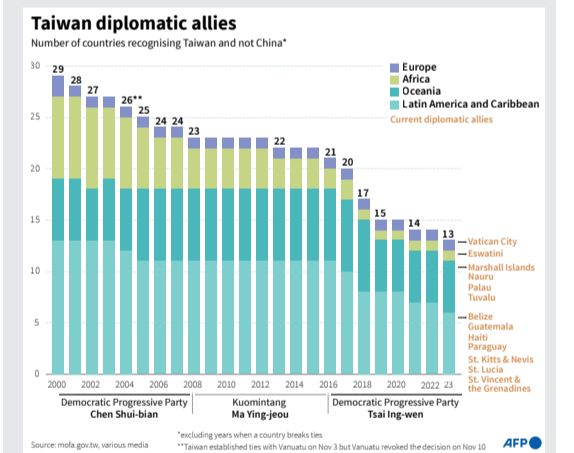
**ADDIS ABABA:** The African Union (AU) on Tuesday said it was suspending coup-hit Niger but called for a report into the implications of a threatened military operation to restore its ousted president, as Nigerien TV said 12 troops died in a new attack by suspected jihadists. National guards carrying out an anti-jihadist operation in the southwestern region of Tillaberi were ambushed on Sunday night, Tele Sahel said, adding that the troops inflicted "heavy losses" on the enemy. Niger's armed forces, struggling with an eight-year jihadist campaign, have lost at least 29

men since officers toppled elected president Mohamed Bazoum on July 26. The coup — justified by its leaders because of Bazoum's perceived failure to stem the insurgents — triggered a bust-up with France, Niger's staunchest ally, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

ECOWAS has slapped trade sanctions on Niger and approved deployment of a "standby force to restore constitutional order" in Niamey. The bloc is hazy about the plan but insists it would intervene if attempts at a diplomatic solution ultimately fail. As the crisis neared the end of its fourth week, the AU on Tuesday said it was suspending Niger from its ranks but indicated caution on the ECOWAS threat following strong differences among its members. The AU said its Peace and Security Council had asked the body's Commission to carry out "an assessment of the economic, social and security implications" of deploying the force, and report back.

## Taiwan replaced by China in central American body

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan slammed Nicaragua as a "pawn" of China on Tuesday, after the Central American Parliament voted to give Taipei's observer spot on the body to Beijing. China considers Taiwan a part of its territory and opposes the self-ruled island's participation in international organizations and exchanges with other countries.



On Monday, the Central American Parliament (Parlacen) — a regional body with six member states — passed a proposal by Nicaragua to remove Taiwan as a permanent observer and replace it with China. "The dictatorship of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua is willing to become a pawn of China ... to manipulate the fallacy of the so-called 'one-China principle' and seize our rights in the Parlacen," Taiwan's foreign ministry said in a statement Tuesday. The Parlacen decision marks Taiwan's latest diplomatic setback after Honduras severed official relations to recognize China in March. Taipei's removal "is proof of the expansion of authoritarianism in Latin America," Taiwan foreign ministry spokesman Jeff Liu told reporters. "China and Nicaragua are notorious authoritarian countries. ... It is an attack not only in Taiwan but also on the global democratic countries' camp."

The ministry said it would "withdraw" from Parlacen to protect Taiwan's "sovereignty and dignity." Liu said the Parlacen removal will not affect Taiwan's participation in two other regional organizations: the Central American Bank for Economic Integration and the Central American Integration System. In Beijing, foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin welcomed Parlacen's resolution to accept China as a permanent observer. "This once again demonstrates that adhering to the one-China principle is an inevitable tide, the aspiration of the people and an unstoppable trend," he said. — AFP

### Supplies concern

The UN's World Food Programme (WFP) warned last week that sanctions and border closures were crimping vital food and medical supplies into Niger. ECOWAS has imposed sanctions on Niger while Benin and Nigeria have closed their borders. However, the juntas in neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali have said that any military intervention in Niger would be considered a "declaration of war" against their countries. Around 300 trucks arrived in Niger's capital of Niamey on Monday from Burkina Faso, most of them carrying food, the Nigerien authorities said. The Sahel state ranks among the most turbulent and poorest countries in the world, often lying at the bottom of the UN's Human Development Index, a benchmark of prosperity. Bazoum's election in 2021 was a landmark, opening the way to the country's first peaceful transition of power. He survived two attempted coups before finally being toppled. — AFP

## Cambodia's new leader walking on father's path

**PHNOM PENH:** Cambodia's new prime minister Hun Manet was groomed for years for the job by his iron-fisted father Hun Sen, and his takeover sees the completion of a dynastic transition long in the making. Tuesday's unanimous parliamentary vote to install him as PM sees Hun Manet move from the premier's bodyguard unit to the seat of power.

Hun Sen last month announced his resignation, three days after claiming a landslide victory in a one-sided election that the ruling party was guaranteed to win after having silenced all viable opposition. Hun Manet, already a member of the ruling Cambodian People's Party's (CPP) powerful permanent committee, has served as commander of the Royal Cambodian Army since 2018.

Born on October 20, 1977, the princeling graduated from US Military Academy West Point in 1999 and has more recently met world leaders including President Xi Jinping of China — Cambodia's main ally and benefactor. But the 45-year-old four-star general only contested a parliamentary seat for the first time in July's election, a poll criticized internationally as neither free nor fair.

### Raised in luxury

Hun Sen has trailed the handover to his son for a year and a half, but he has also made it clear that he intends to wield influence after he steps down, scotching the notion the country could change direction when Hun Manet assumes power. While Hun Sen's politics are shaped by his experiences of revolution and war as a young man during the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s, his son was raised in luxury and educated abroad.

Married with two daughters and a son, Hun Manet holds a PhD in economics from the University of Bristol in Britain and was the first Cambodian to graduate from West Point. He has also served in leadership roles in the ruling CPP's youth movement, his father's bodyguard unit and the counter-terrorism special forces.

Higher education abroad is no guarantee of a more liberal approach, exiled politician Sam Rainsy, a longstanding foe of Hun Sen, told AFP last month — pointing to Syria's brutal Assad dynasty. "Syria's Bashar al-Assad is more educated than Hafez al-Assad, but the son is politically worse than the father," he said. Sebastian Strangio, author of a book about Hun Sen's rule, told AFP that Hun Manet had shown little sign of having "either the ability or the desire to push Cambodia in the direction of significant reform". Without his father's backing, it is not clear Hun Manet would be able to make changes even if he wanted to.

Chak Sopheap, executive director of the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights, said she had little hope of major change. "Hun Manet is the product of a ruling elite that has turned Cambodia into a de facto one-party state where dissenting voice are not tolerated," she told AFP. — AFP

## Business

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2023

## Ex-OPEC president facing corruption charges in UK

Alison-Madueke to appear in court in London on October 2

LONDON: Former OPEC president Diezani Alison-Madueke has been charged with bribery offences relating to her time as Nigeria's oil minister, the UK National Crime Agency said on Tuesday.

Alison-Madueke has been on bail since first being arrested in London in October 2015. She will appear in court in the British capital on October 2, the NCA said. Soon after her arrest, her family's lawyer told AFP she would strongly contest corruption allegations that have dogged her during and after her time in former president Goodluck Jonathan's government. She has been linked to a string of money laundering, bribery and asset recovery cases in Nigeria, as well as in Italy and the United States.

In an interview with a Nigerian newspaper in November 2015, she was quoted as saying: "I challenge anyone to come forward with facts showing that I stole government or public money."

"I've never stolen Nigeria's money," Alison-Madueke, who was in office from 2010 to 2015, was the first woman to be oil minister in Nigeria and the first female president of the global oil cartel OPEC.

The head of the NCA's international corruption unit, Andy Kelly, said: "We suspect Diezani Alison-Madueke abused

her power in Nigeria and accepted financial rewards for awarding multi-million-pound contracts." The NCA said Alison-Madueke allegedly benefitted from at least £100,000 (\$127,000) in cash, chauffeur-driven cars, flights on private jets, luxury holidays for her family and the use of multiple London properties.

The charges also detail financial rewards including furniture, renovation work and staff for the properties, payment of private school fees and gifts from top designer shops such as Cartier jewellery and Louis Vuitton goods. "Bribery is a pervasive form of corruption, which enables serious criminality and can have devastating consequences for developing countries," Kelly said. "These charges are a milestone in what has been a thorough and complex international investigation," he added.

## Prominent

Alison-Madueke has been living in the upmarket St John's Wood area of north London since she was first arrested and has undergone chemotherapy for breast cancer, according to her family. At the time of her arrest, the NCA said only that it had detained five people in London on suspicion of international corruption, without naming those held. The Nigeri-

an government of Jonathan's successor, Muhammadu Buhari, later confirmed Alison-Madueke's arrest and said its law enforcement agencies were cooperating with their British counterparts.

Soon after taking office, former army general Buhari began a drive to root out endemic corruption and end impunity in Africa's most populous nation. That included reforming the notoriously opaque Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), which Alison-Madueke oversaw. But Buhari—who said "mind-boggling" sums had been "looted" from the country over decades—was accused of largely targeting his political opponents and those from the previous administration.

The NCA said that assets worth millions of pounds in relation to the case have been frozen as part of the long-running investigation. Earlier this year, the agency, which targets international and serious and organized crime, said it provided evidence to US prosecutors allowing them to recover assets totaling \$53.1 million linked to Alison-Madueke's alleged corruption. They included luxury real estate in California and New York, as well as a 65-metre superyacht, the Galactica Star, the US Department of Justice announced on March 27. Ali-



VIENNA: Diezani Alison-Madueke, then Nigeria's Minister of Petroleum Resources and Alternate President of the OPEC Conference, speaks to journalists at OPEC headquarters in Vienna. — AFP

son-Madueke, born to a well-off family in the oil city of Port Harcourt in 1960, studied architecture in Britain and the United States before joining oil major Shell's Nigerian subsidiary. In politics she held three major positions in government—first as transport minister in 2007 under

president Umaru Yar'Adua, then minister of mines and steel development. When Jonathan—who was also from southern Bayelsa state—took over after the death of Yar'Adua, he appointed her minister of petroleum resources in April 2010, making her a powerful figure. — AFP

## Oil prices fall amid easing of supply

LONDON: Oil prices fell on Tuesday amid the potential easing of the limited crude supply and continued concerns over China's economic growth. Brent, the benchmark for two thirds of the world's oil, was trading 0.54 per cent lower at \$84.00 a barrel at 4pm Kuwait time. West Texas Intermediate, the gauge that tracks US crude, was down 0.50 per cent at \$80.32 a barrel.

"Risks to the crude demand outlook are growing, especially after China disappointed with last night's easing, but for now a tight market should keep oil supported," said Edward Moya, senior market analyst at Oanda. "Right now, there are so many oil drivers, and most support higher prices. Heating oil prices are elevated, and that might continue."

Iraq's Oil Minister Hayan Abdel Ghani is visiting Turkey to discuss several issues, including the resumption of oil exports through the Ceyhan oil terminal, Reuters reported on Monday, citing a source. About 450,000 barrels of oil was trapped in Iraqi Kurdistan in late March after the International Chamber of Commerce ruled on a long-standing complaint from Baghdad against unilateral exports by the region.

On April 4, a deal was struck between Baghdad and Erbil to allow the federal government to market the oil produced from Iraqi Kurdistan in exchange for monthly budget transfers to the region amounting to 12.67 per cent of Iraq's oil revenue. Baghdad and Ankara had been working to iron out technical hurdles. The one-year loan prime rate was reduced by 10 basis points to 3.45 per cent, while the five-year LPR was left at 4.20 per cent.

China's economic recovery has lost momentum mainly due to a deepening property slump and weak consumer spending. Last week, China's central bank cut key policy rates for the sec-



ond time in three months as industrial output and retail sales recorded slower growth in July.

Meanwhile, the country has officially fallen into deflation, with both consumer and producer prices declining last month compared with a year prior. Global oil demand is set to expand by 2.2 million barrels per day this year,

with China accounting for more than 70 per cent of that growth, according to the International Energy Agency. However, growth in crude consumption is expected to slow to 1 million bpd next year as the post-pandemic economic rebound runs out of steam, the IEA said in its monthly oil market report. — Agencies

## Cheap goods flood 'Daglo' markets after Sudan looting

EL MASSIED, Sudan: A market in war-torn Sudan nicknamed for paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo offers everything for a fraction of the usual price—on one condition: never ask where the products came from.

During more than four months of deadly conflict between Daglo's Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the regular army, the paramilitaries have been widely accused of looting homes, shops, hospitals, aid convoys and warehouses. But don't mention any of that at "Daglo" market in El Massied, about 60 kilometres (35 miles) south of the capital Khartoum, where shoppers can find everything from food, medicine and home appliances to construction materials and car parts.

While not directly linked to the RSF in any way, the open-air bazaar has come to be known by that name in a wink at the looting associated with fighters loyal to the paramilitary chief. A TV goes "for 50,000 pounds (\$80)", said one vendor, far below the 230,000-pound price tag on the high street. And the dimensions? "Look for yourself, it's right in front of you," she told a customer.

A man selling refrigerators boasted an affordable cost—"150,000 pounds each instead of 450,000 in stores"—but still nearly twice the average monthly salary in the impoverished country. The market lies on the main road linking Khartoum and the city of Wad Madani, where many residents of the capital displaced by the fighting have found shelter. Once one of Sudan's busiest highways, it is now eerily quiet and dotted with checkpoints manned by armed guards.

Asked where the goods came from, one saleswoman at "Daglo" abruptly replied: "Did you come here to shop or to talk?"



GEDAREF, Sudan: Men queue to fill tanks with water from an underground well in Gadaref city. — AFP

## 'Everything' gone

The stock seems to roughly match what residents, merchants and humanitarian workers have reported was looted since clashes erupted on April 15 in Khartoum. The conflict has since killed about 5,000 people, according to a conservative estimate by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, and driven some three million out of the capital. Many houses left empty have been looted or occupied by RSF fighters, who according to multiple accounts have also ransacked food storehouses and attacked convoys carrying medical supplies.

In the chaos of the fighting, some civilians have also taken a share of the spoils in a country where more than half of the population is now in dire need of aid. Experts say this has contributed to Sudan's "de-industrialization", threatening its already meager prospects for economic revival.

A Toyota car dealership in Khartoum said in early August it had been robbed of "1,192 new cars and boxes of spare parts". While much of the looting

has been blamed on the RSF, El Massied's "Daglo" market is in army-controlled territory, with the nearest paramilitary checkpoint around a dozen kilometers away.

Residents of nearby villages say they can hear the fighting as it gradually extends southwards by the day. Khartoum residents who have remained in the capital have their own open-air "Daglo" market, several of them told AFP.

There, too, they can find just about anything cheaply—a tempting opportunity for those who had to start over because of the conflict, often with little cash as most banks closed shortly after fighting began. Mohammed Hassan Khalifa was left with nothing after fighters went into his north Khartoum home. "They looted everything we had," he told AFP.

And Mohammed Abdelal had his electrical appliances shop emptied by unidentified thieves. If they are ever to find their lost belongings, a "Daglo" market could be the most likely place. — AFP

## Turkish firm Getir cuts over tenth of global workforce

ANKARA: Turkish rapid grocery delivery firm Getir said Tuesday it was slashing over a tenth of its global workforce in a bid to stem losses and keep its foothold in parts of Europe and the United States. The announcement follows Getir's retreat from France and decision to wind down operations in Italy, Spain and Portugal.

Getir said it was laying off 2,500 additional "couriers, warehouse and office workers", representing 11 percent of its remaining staff.

The layoffs will come in five countries where Getir intends to maintain operations—Turkey, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States. "We have decided to restructure our global organization in order to significantly increase our operational efficiency," the company said in a statement released to AFP. "We will implement this difficult decision... in full compliance with the laws of the countries in which we operate."

Founded in Istanbul in 2015, Getir won substantial financial backing from investors such as the California-based investment funds Sequoia Capital and Silver Lake as well as the Emirati sovereign wealth fund Mubadala. Getir reached its zenith during the coronavirus pandemic, when restaurant and grocery deliveries boomed. — AFP

## US home sales cool as mortgage rates remain high

WASHINGTON: Sales of homes in the United States ticked down in July, according to industry data released Tuesday, as elevated mortgage rates and limited housing supply held buyers back. The housing market in the world's biggest economy has been reeling as interest rates climbed, making home owners reluctant to put their properties up for sale—having earlier locked in lower rates on their mortgages. Existing home sales edged down 2.2 percent last month to an annual rate of 4.1 million, seasonally adjusted, said the National Association of Realtors (NAR). The figure, which was below expectations, remains the lowest rate since January.

Sales have fallen 16.6 percent from a year ago, said the association. "Two factors are driving current sales activity—inventory availability and mortgage rates," said NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun in a statement. "Both have been unfavorable to buyers," he added.

Sales of existing homes "likely have further to fall over the rest of the year as higher mortgage rates and a mild recession squeeze demand and keep supply conditions tight," said economist Michael Pearce of Oxford Economics. While inventory rose "marginally" in July, it stands at a historically tight figure, he said. With housing inventory still 14.6 percent lower than the same period a year ago, the median sales price for existing homes remained high at \$406,700. — AFP





This announcement is prepared for promotional purposes and does not omit any essential information related to the investment in the financial security subject of this announcement.

## Invitation to Participate in the Increase of the Share Capital of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait K.S.C.P.

The Board of Directors of Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait K.S.C.P. (the "Issuer" or the "Bank") would like to invite the shareholders who are registered on the share register of the Issuer at the end of trading on 24 August 2023 ("Record Date") and the holders of the pre-emption rights who received the pre-emption rights ("Pre-emption Rights") during the Pre-emption Rights Trading Period to subscribe in the increase of the Issuer's share capital by 500,000,000 new ordinary shares (the "Issue Shares") with a nominal value of KWD 50,000,000,000 and at an Offer Price of 200 Kuwaiti fils per Issue Share (including the nominal value of 100 Kuwaiti fils and the issuance premium of 100 Kuwaiti fils) during the Offering Period commencing on 27 August 2023 (inclusive) and closing on 10 September 2023 at 1:00pm.

Note: Please refer to the Prospectus for the definition of all capitalized terms.

### Overview of the Offering

**Issuer:**  
Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait K.S.C.P.

**Commercial Registration No:**  
3705

**Total Value of the Offering:**  
KWD 100,000,000

**Offering Price:**  
200 Kuwaiti fils per share (including the nominal value of 100 Kuwaiti fils and the issuance premium of 100 Kuwaiti fils).

**Eligible Subscribers (or "Subscribers"):**  
Holders of the Existing Shares registered at the end of the Record Date before the Subscription Period, i.e., the shareholders whose names are registered in the Bank's shareholders register with the Clearing and Depository Agent ("Kuwait Clearing Company", or "KCC") on the Record Date. For clarity, any trades made on the Bank's shares prior to the Record Date that have not completed the trade settlement process of Boursa Kuwait as of the Record Date (Ex Rights Date), and as a result have not yet been registered on the Bank's shareholder register, will not be considered in determining the Eligible Shareholders of record as of the Record Date. Owners of Pre-emption Rights include persons that acquired, by assignment or purchase, the Pre-emption Rights during the trading period of such rights.

In the event that the Issue Shares are not fully subscribed for by the Eligible Shareholders and Owners of Pre-emption Rights during the Subscription Period or any extension thereof, the Board of Directors may open a Public Offering for the subscription by the public in the unsubscribed Issue Shares.

**Issue Shares Entitlement:**  
Approximately 26.9% of their total Existing Shares held as of the Record Date. This is calculated after taking into consideration the Issuer's Treasury Shares of which the rights arising from said Treasury Shares have been allocated to Eligible Shareholders as of the Record Date.

**Minimum Subscription:**  
One (1) Issue Share.

**Maximum Subscription:**  
There is no maximum subscription amount. Subscribers may subscribe to any number of shares which can exceed the total number of Issue Shares.

**Rights Issue Offering Period:**  
The Subscription Period will commence on Sunday 27 August 2023 and will remain open for a period of fifteen (15) calendar days up to and including Sunday 10 September 2023. The Board of Directors of the Issuer may also extend the Subscription Period at its absolute discretion, in the event subscription has not been covered, for similar or lesser terms so that the original Subscription Period and its extension in total do not exceed three (3) months, provided that the approval of the CMA is obtained. The Board of Directors may also, after expiry of the original or extended Subscription Period, offer the remaining unsubscribed Issue Shares to the public (the "Public Offering") including new shareholders and third parties (the "Eligible Investors").

**Consequences of non-Subscription of Eligible Shareholders:**  
Eligible Shareholders who choose not to subscribe to the Issue Shares will be subject to a reduction in their percentage of ownership in the Issuer's capital in addition to what they may face from a change in the value of their Existing Shares.

**Means of Disposal of Pre-emption Rights:**  
Pre-emption Rights may be disposed of, traded or assigned, without any charge, and without any restrictions and in accordance with the applicable rules of Boursa Kuwait and the Clearing and Depository Agent. Approval of the Prospectus constitutes approval of the listing and trading of Pre-emption Rights during the Subscription Period for the Issue Shares, and the listing shall be cancelled when the Bank discloses the results of the subscription to the capital increase.

**Subscribers shall have the following options in respect of the Issue Shares:**

- Exercise their Pre-emption Rights to subscribe for the Issue Shares wholly or partially;
- Exercise their Pre-emption Rights to subscribe for the Issue Shares and subscribe for Additional Issue Shares;
- Assigning their Pre-emption Right for subscription in the Issue Shares as per the approved mechanism at least five (5) business days before the Offering is closed in accordance with the relevant rules applied by Boursa Kuwait;
- Waiving, free of charge, their Pre-emption Right to subscribe to the Issue Shares (and to subscribe to additional Issue Shares, as the case may be, or part thereof) according to the approved mechanism for this during the Subscription Period, at least five (5) business days before close of subscription, in accordance with the relevant rules applied by Boursa Kuwait and the Clearing and Depository Agent; or,
- Refraining from resorting to any of the above options, whether by trading, waiving, or exercising the Pre-emption Right to subscribe to the Issue Shares and leaving the right to subscribe to the unsubscribed shares to the rest of the Subscribers.

**Pre-emptive Rights Trading Period:**  
The period for disposal of Pre-emption Rights starts from the date of opening of subscription until at least five (5) business days prior to the end of the Subscription Period. 27 August 2023 has been set as the date for the start of trading and waiving Pre-emption Rights and 3 September 2023 as the last day of trading in Pre-emption Rights.

**Subscription for Additional Issue Shares:**  
Subscribers have the right to subscribe for additional Issue Shares ("Additional Issue Shares") in addition to their entitlement to Issue Shares. Such subscription shall be made at the Offering Price of 200 fils per Additional Issue Share.

Subscriber's failure to subscribe, sell or assign the Pre-emption Right to subscribe, is considered a waiver of such right to subscribe to the share capital increase shares in favour of other Subscribers who wish to subscribe to a number of shares exceeding the percentage allotted to each of them. The unsubscribed Issue Shares will be allocated to the Subscribers applying for Additional Issue Shares pro-rata to the subscription for the Additional Issue Shares.

**Pre-emption Rights ISIN Code:**  
KW000160117

**Lead Manager and Subscription Agent:**  
Kamco Investment Company K.S.C. (Public) - "Kamco Invest"

**Joint Lead Manager and Subscription Agent:**  
Ahli Capital Investment Company K.S.C.C. - "ABK Capital"

**Clearing and Depository Agent:**  
Kuwait Clearing Company K.S.C.

### Subscription Instructions

#### Subscription Process

Subscriptions and all required documents must be submitted through the Subscription Website.  
General subscription procedures:

The subscription site allows subscribers to pay through K-NET or bank transfer.

#### The Subscriber shall:

1. Login to the Subscription Website via the link: <https://www.ipo.com.kw>
2. For an individual Subscriber, register the Civil ID number. The system shall verify the Subscriber's eligibility and entitlement.
3. For corporate Subscribers, enter the commercial registration number. The system shall verify the Subscriber's eligibility and entitlement.
4. Record the number of shares to be subscribed for.
5. The Subscriber must make the payment through either K-NET service or Bank wire transfer as follows:

Subscribers are advised to confirm with their bank that their payment limit on their K-NET card will enable them to pay for their subscription.

#### For Subscribers paying through K-NET service, the Subscriber shall:

- Pay from his/her/its own account (no other person may pay on behalf of the Subscriber except in the cases provided for under the law and the Subscriber shall bear all legal consequences in case of violation).

Or,

#### For Subscribers paying through Bank wire transfer, the Subscriber shall:

- Print the Subscription Application Form and visit his/her/its own bank and submit a copy of the Subscription Application Form printed from the above link and transfer the amount required to the Subscription Bank Account (net amount without any charges by the transferring bank and the receiving Bank) stated below:

**Name of Bank:** AL AHLI BANK OF KUWAIT  
**Account number:** 6030148800000  
**IBAN:** KW54 ABKK 0000 0000 0603 0148 8000 00  
**SWIFT:** ABKKKWKWXXX  
**Beneficiary:** ABK-CAPITAL INCREASE SUBSCRIPTION  
**Reference/Description:** Subscriber civil identification (for residents and citizens)/ passport (for non-residents and non-citizens)/ commercial registration number (for corporates) + Subscriber contact number

- The subscriber shall upload the copy of the original deposit voucher of the amount transferred from his/her own bank in addition to the documents listed below under "Documents required to be submitted with applications to subscribe" through the electronic link that will be sent from the Subscription Website to the subscriber via his/her e-mail and a text message on the registered phone.

The Clearing and Depository Agent shall send an email confirmation to the Subscriber in case of a successful Subscription. Failure of any Subscriber to submit a duly completed Subscription Application Form (together with all applicable supporting documentation thereto) to the Subscription Website, after the transfer or deposit of the Subscription Monies as required in the Prospectus, shall render the Subscription Application Form of a Subscriber null and void. Subscription Monies shall not be accepted in cash.

#### Documents required to be submitted with applications to subscribe

The Subscription Application Form must be submitted through the Subscription Website along with the following documentation, as applicable to the nature of and payment method chosen by the Subscriber:

#### a) Individual Subscribers

- Signed Subscription Application Form;
- Copy of personal civil identification card;
- Copy of passport to verify the signature;
- Copy of the bank transfer receipt;
- Copy of the IBAN number;
- Copy of special legal proxy for subscribing in shares (for proxy subscriber);
- Copy of Certificate of Guardianship for orphans;
- Copy of Certificate of Guardianship for minors; or
- Copy of a Limitation of Succession Deed for beneficiaries.
- Copy of Guardianship Judgement

#### b) Corporate Subscribers

- Signed Subscription Application Form;
- Copy of the bank transfer receipt;
- Copy of the IBAN number;
- Copy of the Authorized Signatories Certificate or the Extract of the Commercial Register; as the case requires; and
- Copy of the personal identification card of the authorized signatory;

#### c) Non-Kuwaiti Subscribers

- Non-Kuwaiti subscribers (whether corporates or individuals, as the case may be) are required to provide the equivalent of the aforementioned documentation as issued by their jurisdictional authorities if they do not have Kuwaiti issued documentation as stated in a) and b) above.

Cash will not be accepted. The Subscription Monies must be paid in full upon submitting the Subscription Application Form on the Subscription Website by authorizing a debit of the appropriate amount from the subscriber's account with the Bank, or by bank transfer. Subscription amounts will be deposited in full in the Issuer's bank account designated by the Issuer (the "Subscription Bank Account"). The Subscriber must, in any event relating to the Issue Shares or the Additional Issue Shares, ensure that the bank debit or the bank transfer has been processed from their respective bank account and that the subscription account with the Issuer has been credited with the appropriate amount at the time of the submission of the Subscription Application Form to the Clearing and Depository Agent.

Without prejudice to the other grounds of rejection of the Subscription Application Forms, the Clearing and Depository Agent, the Bank, and the Subscription Agents shall have the right to reject the Subscription Application Form in the event the Subscription Monies are not received in the subscription account at the time of submission of the Subscription Application Form to the Subscription Agents and the Clearing and Depository Agent.

#### Risk Factors:

**There are some risks related to investing in the Issue Shares, including commercial and legal risk factors such as:**

**Risks Related to the Bank:** Risks relating to Credit Risk Management - Credit Risk Governance - Bank's Credit Risk Monitoring and Concentration Risk - Past due Credit Exposures and Provisions - Credit Risk Mitigation - Market Risk - Foreign Exchange Risk - Liquidity Risk - Operational Risk - Interest Rate Risk - Capital Adequacy - Credit Ratings - Related Party Exposures - Competitive Banking Industry in Kuwait - Loss of Key Personnel - Impact of regulatory changes - Risks Associated with Pre-emptive Rights "Rights Issue".

**Legal Risks:** Risks relating to Kuwait and the Middle East and North Africa region - Kuwait and other GCC legal systems continue to evolve, and this may create an uncertain environment for investment and business activity - Risks related to changes in significant accounting standards and new standards - Regulatory risks related to the Bank - Bankruptcy under Kuwaiti law - Force Majeure Events.

**Risks Related to the Issue Shares:** Investing in securities in developing and emerging markets generally involves a high level of risk - A decrease in the current ownership percentage - Risks Associated with Non-Profitability and Disposal of Pre-emption Rights - Risks of lack of demand for Pre-emption Rights and shares of the Bank, or forfeit of Subscription - Speculative Risks associated with Pre-emption Rights - Taxes on payments for Issue Shares - Income Tax can be applied to Companies and other entities in Kuwait and Value Added Tax is applied - Change in Law - Risks of Taxation of Dividends - The GCC Countries may enter into a Monetary Union.

For further details on any such risk factors, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering on the Issuer's website ([www.eahli.com](http://www.eahli.com)), the Lead Manager and Subscription Agent's website ([www.kamcoinvest.com](http://www.kamcoinvest.com)), the Joint Lead Manager and Subscription Agent ([www.abk-capital.com](http://www.abk-capital.com)), or Boursa Kuwait's website ([www.boursakuwait.com.kw](http://www.boursakuwait.com.kw)) or obtain a physical copy from the offices of the Issuer, Lead Manager and Subscription Agent, Joint Lead Manager and Subscription Agent or Boursa Kuwait.

Prior to investing in any Issue Shares, prospective investors should carefully consider, together with all other information contained in the Prospectus relating to the Offering, the risk factors highlighted above and seek professional advice before investing (for further details on any information related to the Offering, please refer to the downloadable/printable version of the Prospectus relating to the offering found in the above websites. This announcement does not contain all the information that prospective investors should consider before deciding to invest in the Issue Shares and does not purport to be complete.

#### Subscription Information

The necessary information regarding the investment in the Issue Shares is included in the Prospectus.

**The terms and conditions in the Prospectus and the Subscription Application Forms shall apply. You are hereby advised to seek the advice of an advisor licensed by law and which specializes in advising on the subscription prior to making a decision to subscribe.**

**The Kuwait Capital Markets Authority or any regulatory organization in the State of Kuwait shall not bear any liability for the contents of this announcement or its accuracy, nor did they approve its contents or verify the validity and accuracy of any of the information contained herein, and will not be liable for any loss arising from reliance on any part of this announcement.**

**For any technical support related to the Subscription Website, please email Kuwait Clearing Company at:**  
[support@ipo.com.kw](mailto:support@ipo.com.kw)

**For Inquiries related to the Offering, please contact:**

<b>Kamco Invest</b>	<b>ABK Capital</b>
Email: <a href="mailto:abkci@kamcoinvest.com">abkci@kamcoinvest.com</a>	Email: <a href="mailto:ABKCapital_InvestmentAdvisory@abkuwait.com">ABKCapital_InvestmentAdvisory@abkuwait.com</a>
Tel: (965) 2233-6645 / 2233-6976	Tel: (965) 1 832832 / 2247 7390 / 2290 6706

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To access the  
prospectus and other  
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## Business

# Ecuador votes to halt oil drilling in Amazon reserve

## Referendum hailed as a historic example of climate democracy

**QUITO:** Ecuadorians have voted to stop an oil drilling project in an Amazon reserve, according to the results Monday of a referendum hailed as a historic example of climate democracy.

Ecuador is one of eight nations sharing the Amazon basin, a vital carbon sink facing widespread destruction at a time when the world is grappling to curb climate change. Almost 59 percent of voters chose to halt the exploitation of an oil block in Yasuni National Park, one of the most diverse biospheres in the world.

"This is a historic victory for Ecuador and the planet," environmental group Yasunidos posted on social media. "This consultation, born from citizens, shows great national consensus in Ecuador. It is the first time a country has decided to protect life and leave oil in the ground." The referendum took place alongside a first-round presidential election held under heavy security, with an explosion of violence linked to the drug trade dominating voter concerns. Voters also chose to ban mining in parts of the Choco Andes forest in a second referendum.

### Uncontacted tribes

Oil exploitation has been one of the pillars of Ecuador's economy since the 1970s. Crude oil, its leading export, generated revenues of \$10 billion in 2022, around 10 percent of gross domestic product.

Nearly 500,000 barrels are produced daily in the northeastern Amazon, below the Andes, blighting the environment with wells, pipelines, and flames shooting into the air. The industry has been a boon to state coffers and development, but environmentalists decry terrible pollution. Drilling in Yasuni began in 2016 after years of fraught debate and failed efforts by then-president Rafael Correa to persuade the in-

ternational community to pay cash-strapped Ecuador \$3.6 billion not to drill there. The block is situated in a reserve which stretches over one million hectares (2.5 million acres) and is home to three of the world's last uncontacted Indigenous populations and a bounty of plant and animal species. The reserve is home to the Waorani and Kichwa tribes, as well as the Tagaeri, Taromenane and Dugakaeri, who choose to live isolated from the modern world.

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 of oil per day produced by Ecuador. The government of outgoing President Guillermo Lasso estimated a loss of \$16 billion over the next 20 years if drilling were halted.

Several much older blocks exist in the north of Yasuni, but they are almost depleted. "Ecuador has become the first country in the world to stop oil exploitation due to direct climate democracy," said a joint statement from climate organizations, including Yasunidos and Amazon Frontlines.

### 'Lungs of the earth'

Rainforests are often called the "lungs of the Earth," soaking up planet-warming carbon dioxide and expelling life-giving oxygen. Their protection is crucial in the battle to combat climate change. Scientists warn destruction of the Amazon is pushing the world's biggest rainforest close to a tipping point beyond which trees would die off and release carbon rather than absorb it, with catastrophic consequences for the climate.

"The Yasuni has been like a mother to the world... We need to raise our voices and hands so that our



**QUITO:** (From left) Victoria Jaramillo, Fred Larreategi, Inty Arcos, and Ivonne Ramos of the "Quito Without Mining" collective celebrate during a press conference on Aug 21, 2023. Ecuadorians voted to suspend some oil extraction in an Amazon reserve. — AFP

mother can recover, that she is not injured, that she is not beaten," Alicia Cahuiya, a Waorani leader born in the heart of the jungle, said before the vote. The fate of the reserve drew the attention of celebrities such as Hollywood star and environmental activist Leonar-

do DiCaprio and Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg, who both pushed for a "Yes" vote.

Locals in Yasuni were divided, with some supporting the oil companies and the benefits that economic growth have brought to their villages. — AFP

## US commerce secretary to visit China

**BEIJING:** US commerce secretary Gina Raimondo will visit China next week, Beijing and Washington said Tuesday, adding to a slew of US officials dispatched in recent months to ease tensions between the world's largest economies.

Washington says it is seeking to better manage its frosty relations with China, with the two powers at loggerheads over everything from trade to human rights and Taiwan. "Secretary Raimondo looks forward to constructive discussions on issues relating to the US-China commercial relationship, challenges faced by US businesses, and areas for potential cooperation," the US Department of Commerce said in a statement. She will travel to both Beijing and Shanghai during the August 27 to 30 trip, Washington said.

Beijing also confirmed the visit, adding that Raimondo has been invited by her Chinese counterpart Wang Wentao. Her visit will build on an agreement between Presidents Xi Jinping and Joe Biden in Bali last year "to deepen communication between the US and the PRC on a range of issues," Washington said. Relations between Washington and Beijing have plummeted to some of their worst levels in decades, with Washington's trade curbs among the top of the laundry list of disagreements.

Washington says its restrictions are crucial to safeguarding national security, while Beijing sees them as hampering its economic rise. This month, Biden issued an executive order aimed at restricting certain American investments in sensitive high-tech areas in China — a move Beijing blasted as being "anti-globalization". The long-anticipated rules, expected to be implemented next year, target sectors like semiconductors and artificial intelligence.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen had sought to reassure Chinese officials about the expected curbs during a visit to Beijing last month, promising any new moves would be implemented in a transparent way. She stressed the need for healthy economic competition and improved communication and urged cooperation on the grave threat posed by climate change.

But she also said she had raised serious concerns over what she called unfair economic practices by Beijing as well as issues around the protection of intellectual property.

### Steadying ties

In June, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken travelled to Beijing, where he met Xi and said progress had been made on a number of key sources of contention. Neither Yellen's nor Blinken's visit led to major breakthroughs, and a recent Camp David summit and statement between the US, South Korea and Japan aimed, in part, at countering Beijing sparked condemnation from China. Following that summit, President Biden said he still expects to meet Chinese leader Xi again this year.

Biden is inviting Xi in November to San Francisco when the United States holds a summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, which includes China. The two leaders could potentially also meet next month in New Delhi on the sidelines of a summit of the Group of 20 major economies. — AFP

## ABK unveils new complaint submission feature on Mobile App

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced the launch of a new feature on its mobile app, allowing customers to submit complaints directly through the application. This development aligns with the guidelines set by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), ABK's digital transformation plan, and the Bank's commitment to enhancing customers' overall banking experience.

Upon submission of a complaint through the mobile app, customers will receive an automated SMS confirmation. The grievances will be meticulously investigated and handled by ABK's dedicated Complaints & Customer Protection Unit (CCPU). Upon review, customers will be notified via SMS when the Bank's reply is ready. A written reply will be sent to customers within 15 working days via the mobile app

as a PDF file, allowing them to easily review and print the response for their records.

Loai Muqames, CEO-Kuwait at ABK, shared his thoughts on the introduction of this new feature, stating, "We continuously strive to improve our customers' banking experience and provide them with innovative solutions. The ability to submit complaints through our mobile app is a significant step towards delivering greater convenience and efficiency in handling customer feedback and concerns."

Muqames added, "By embracing digital transformation and leveraging technology, ABK aims to strengthen its relationship with customers and provide them with seamless and efficient banking services." The addition of this new feature supports the 'Let's Be Aware' banking campaign goals. Aiming to enhance awareness about their rights as banking consumers, the campaign, like the new app feature, ensures that customers are protected. The Kuwait CEO stated, "This falls in line with ABK's dedication to empowering and promoting transparency in the banking sector."

Muqames concluded, "The introduction of the complaint submission feature on ABK's mobile

app highlights the Bank's endeavor to achieve excellent customer service and continuous improvement. ABK remains dedicated to meeting expectations while adhering to the highest industry standards."

Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that is today known for offering a simpler banking experience. The Bank offers personal, corporate, and private banking of which includes a wide array of products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital. Enjoying equal stability and strength, the Bank also offers the convenience of banking across the region, servicing other markets in Egypt and the UAE.



Loai Muqames

## China's Baidu reports 15% jump in Q2 income

**BEIJING:** Chinese internet giant Baidu announced on Tuesday "accelerated" revenue growth in the second quarter, as the country's digital sector recovers from a tough crackdown despite a slowing domestic economy.

Beijing tightened the reins on its tech titans from 2020, bringing a string of influential firms to heel with new regulations and hefty fines.

But amid a faltering post-pandemic recovery, authorities indicated last month that its campaign against the industry — a key source of growth and jobs — was finally winding down. Baidu said in an earnings report on Tuesday it made a profit of \$718 million in the three months through June, a year-on-year rise of 43 percent. Revenue was \$4.7 billion, up 15 percent from the equivalent period last year and well above forecasters' expectations.

"In the second quarter of 2023, Baidu

Core accelerated revenue and profit growth, driven by the solid performance of online marketing business and operating leverage," Baidu CEO Robin Li said in a news release on Tuesday. Rival Tencent announced last week a 41 percent year-on-year jump in second-quarter net income, while e-commerce leader Alibaba reported an unexpected 14 percent on-year increase in quarterly sales.

Baidu said income from online marketing, which accounted for more than half its revenue, grew by 15 percent compared with the second quarter last year. "The improvement in profit and margins as well as strong cash generation were primarily driven by revenue acceleration and efficiency gain," Rong Luo, CFO of Baidu, said in the news release. Baidu has faced increased competition in recent years from domestic rivals including Tencent — which operates the WeChat messaging platform —



and ByteDance, which runs the Chinese version of short-video sensation TikTok.

Against this backdrop, Baidu has sought to diversify into cloud computing, autonomous driving, artificial intelligence (AI) and other sectors. In March, Baidu unveiled an AI-powered chatbot similar to ChatGPT, the program de-

veloped by US-based OpenAI whose prowess made global headlines following its release last year. But Baidu's "Ernie Bot" failed to live up to expectations, with the company's shares plunging by 10 percent after a pre-recorded demonstration of its capabilities instead of a live interaction. — AFP

## British chip giant Arm files to go public in US

**NEW YORK:** British chip designing giant Arm has launched the process for a public stock listing in New York, in what could be the biggest US share offering in years.

The firm, which is owned by Japan's SoftBank, is a world leader in designing chips that are used in smartphones across the world and aims to be a major player in artificial intelligence (AI).

The company, which is owned by Japan's SoftBank, said in documents filed on Monday it planned to list on the Nasdaq, which specializes in tech shares, after opting earlier this year against floating on the London stock exchange. It did not specify how many shares it plans to list, so it is impossible to estimate how much the company might raise.

But details in its prospectus showed the firm is valued by SoftBank at \$64 billion, more than double the amount that the Japanese firm paid for it in 2016. That would place it close to the \$68 billion market capitalization of electric vehicle manufacturer Rivian when it listed in 2021

and not far from the \$75 billion for Uber in 2019.

But it would still be far from Chinese conglomerate Alibaba, which floated in 2014 with a valuation of \$231 billion. It was the biggest flotation ever at the time and now has a market cap of \$1.8 trillion.

Arm dominates the design sector for processors in smartphones, with the firm's prospectus claiming around 70 percent of the world's population uses its Arm-based products. "Semiconductor technology has become one of the world's most critical resources, as it enables all electronic devices today," the firm said in its prospectus. "At the heart of these devices is the CPU (central processing unit) and Arm is the industry leader of CPUs."

### AI 'calling card'

Analysts said SoftBank had been careful about choosing the timing of the share offering, with tech stocks having had a wild ride during 2022 involving mass layoffs and costly investments that failed to pay off. "The Japanese conglomerate had been holding out for the best market conditions," said Susannah Streeter, analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

She said the tech market was calmer than it had been last year but recent weaknesses had pushed SoftBank to list Arm sooner rather than later.

The smartphone market is in one of its worst slumps in a decade and semiconductor firms are facing a decline in demand. Arm also said in its pro-



spectus it was "particularly susceptible to economic and political risks" affecting China, the world's biggest market for smartphones.

But, like many companies, it is pivoting hard towards AI. Streeter noted the firm will use the emerging tech as its "calling card" to entice investors. The shares are likely to go on sale in September.

SoftBank had tried to sell Arm last year for \$40 billion to Nvidia, currently the leader in the market for the kind of powerful processors used in AI applications, but the sale collapsed because of regulatory concerns over competition. Arm, headquartered in the city of Cambridge in England, has nearly 6,000 employees. It reported revenue of \$2.7 billion last year, largely the same as the year before. — AFP

## Business

# BRICS summit of emerging economies begins in S Africa

## Bloc seeks to assert its voice as a counterweight to Western dominance

JOHANNESBURG: BRICS leaders began their summit in South Africa on Tuesday as the loose association of major emerging economies seeks to assert its voice as a counterweight to Western dominance in global affairs. The so-called BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa—represent a quarter of the global economy, and interest in joining the club has surged ahead of its three-day summit in Johannesburg.

Security has been bolstered across the city where South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will host China's President Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and some 50 other leaders.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is the target of an international arrest warrant over alleged war crimes in Ukraine and will not attend in person, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sent on his behalf.

Xi, whose country is the most powerful BRICS member, met with Ramaphosa ahead of the summit on just his second international trip of the year. "Now as friends and BRICS partners, we stand together in our shared objective and quest for a better and more egalitarian world that frees the potential of all the people in the world," said Ramaphosa in Pretoria at the opening of Xi's state visit.

"Today, standing at a new historical starting point, inheriting friendship, deepening cooperation, and strengthening coordination are the common aspirations of the two countries, and are also the important tasks entrusted to us by the times," said Xi.

### Ukraine looms large

Representing 40 percent of the world's population, but whose economies have different levels of growth, the BRICS share a common desire for a global order they see as better reflecting their interests and rising clout. The theme of its 15th summit is "BRICS and Africa" and comes as the continent emerges as a renewed diplomatic battleground with the United States, Russia and China jostling for influence.

The summit has underscored divisions over the war in Ukraine and the support Russia enjoys from its other BRICS partners at a time of global isolation.

South Africa, China and India have not condemned Russia's invasion while Brazil has refused to join Western nations in sending arms to Ukraine or imposing sanctions on Moscow. Ahead of the summit, Ramaphosa said his country would "not be drawn into a contest between global powers" and had resisted pressure to align with any influential blocs of nations. In a park near the summit venue, two dozen protesters held up blue and yellow Ukrainian flags and placards reading "Go home Lavrov". "We are here to deliver a message to all BRICS countries and guests currently at the summit to demand Russia to withdraw military forces from Ukraine," said Lesya Karpenko, 41, representative of the Ukrainian Association of South Africa.

### Division and demand

There is growing interest in the bloc, which began as four nations in 2009 but expanded the following

officials at the company's St Louis facility. "MoU signing commitment to purchase 24 F-15EX Fighter Aircraft Units," Subianto wrote on Instagram under an image of him witnessing the deal's signing. Boeing said in a statement Monday the deal would "put Indonesia at the top of air dominance capabilities".

The F-15EX is the most advanced version of the fighter jet and the F-15 is only used by more than half a dozen countries globally. Jakarta currently owns US-made F-16 jets and ageing Russian Sukhoi jets. Last year it agreed to buy 42 French-made Rafale fighter jets in an \$8.1 billion deal. The latest F-15 sale—of which neither side has disclosed the value—is still subject to US government approval. It comes after Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin visited Jakarta in November for negotiations over the deal.



JOHANNESBURG: (From left to right) Wang Tongzhou, Onkar Kanwar, Mikhail Makarov, Stavros Nicolaou, Wamkele Mene and Gugulethu Mfuphi. — AFP

year with the addition of South Africa. Ahead of this summit, at least 40 countries have expressed interest in joining including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and Argentina, officials say.

South Africa will present BRICS leaders with a proposal to expand its membership and a decision on the matter is expected at the summit's close. But analysts are more cautious. The issue of BRICS expansion is divisive, particularly

Austin said he hoped Indonesia would proceed with the sale, saying it would increase interoperability with American forces and complement Jakarta's contingent of F-16 jets. Last year thousands of Indonesian and US troops held joint military drills as Washington and its allies expressed growing concern about China's increasing assertiveness in the Pacific.

The exercise in Indonesia known as "Super Garuda Shield" came after Beijing staged unprecedented war games around Taiwan, which it claims as part of its territory. At least 4,000 American and Indonesian soldiers were joined in the two-week exercise by forces from Australia and Singapore—as well as Japan, which participated in the drills for the first time. Washington said the drills were not aimed at any particular country. —AFP

## Indonesia, Boeing agree deal for sale of F-15 jets

JAKARTA: Indonesia and US aircraft manufacturer Boeing have agreed a deal for the sale of two dozen F-15EX fighter jets as Southeast Asia's biggest economy moves to modernize its fleet, Jakarta's defence minister said Tuesday. Defense Minister Prabowo Subianto witnessed the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) committing to the sale on Monday between Indonesian airforce and Boeing



ST. LOUIS: This handout photo released by Boeing shows Indonesian Minister of Defense Lieutenant General Prabowo Subianto (center) posing during a tour of the Boeing F-15EX production line at Boeing's facility in St. Louis, Missouri, on August 21. — AFP

## Debt cancellation urged to cut fossil fuel reliance

LONDON: Debt obligations faced by countries such as Argentina and Mozambique are forcing them to exploit their fossil fuel resources and should be cancelled, campaigners urged on Monday. Such countries may find it "impossible" to phase out fossil fuels and transition to renewable energy sources, unless the "debt-fossil fuel trap" is resolved, according to a report published by 35 groups including ActionAid International and Friends of the Earth International. The report highlighted Argentina's commitment to fracking in Northern Patagonia, backed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as it seeks to ease its debt crisis.

"High debt levels are a major barrier to phasing out fossil fuels for many global south countries," said Tess Woolfenden from Debt Justice. "Many countries are trapped exploiting fossil fuels to generate revenue to repay debt. "Global north countries must urgently cancel debts for global south countries to prevent further climate turmoil," she urged. Mae Buenaventura, from the Asian People's Movement on Debt and Development, said that the root of the problem was "the global north's relentless extraction of human, economic and environmental resources to feed the drive for profit and greed." —AFP

## Tech stocks help pull markets higher

LONDON: Global stocks markets rose on Tuesday thanks to a rebound in tech shares, although investors remained concerned by China's lacklustre economy and the outlook for US interest rates.

An 8.5-percent jump on Monday in shares in Nvidia—the leader in processors used for developing artificial intelligence applications—set a positive tone for trading across Asia and in Europe on Tuesday. Nvidia shares jumped another 2.5 percent at the start of trading in New York as investors staked out positions ahead of the company reporting second quarter results on Wednesday.

The tech-heavy Nasdaq climbed 0.7 percent at the start of trading, adding to a 1.6-percent jump on Monday due a broad rally in tech shares.

The Dow edged higher and the broader S&P 500 rose 0.4 percent. The "market has a bounce in its step this morning", said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. European stocks were higher in afternoon trading, boosted as well by a drop in bond yields. The gains followed a mixed showing on Monday, when investors tried to turn the tide of losses that have swept over markets in recent weeks.

Markets globally have struggled this month on the prospect that the US Federal Reserve will hike borrowing costs once more before the end of the year in a bid to bring inflation to heel.

A string of data out of Washington in recent weeks has indicated the world's top economy remains resilient and the jobs sector tight, even after more than

a year of rising interest rates squeezing companies and consumers. This has prompted concerns that the Fed could lift rates further and possibly push the economy into recession.

A planned speech this week by Fed chief Jerome Powell at a gathering of central bankers and business leaders will be closely watched for some guidance on officials' thinking and future policy.

"Each incremental hike that they have from here just raises the risk that we have a much sharper slowdown in 2024 and perhaps even a recession," Lori Heinel, at State Street Global Advisors, told Bloomberg Television. However, she added that "as long as inflation remains contained, we think that they will take a pause here".

There is also still unease among traders about the Chinese economy, with another small cut in interest rates doing little to allay fears of a painful slowdown. While authorities have pledged a series of measures to get the post-COVID recovery back on track, there has been little detail and they are facing growing calls to unveil more wide-ranging stimulus. "There are doubts about the effectiveness of further monetary policy stimulus ability to support sluggish credit demand, with the narrower follow-through from the lending finance rate last week leaving hopes for broader stimulus with fiscal policy," said National Australia Bank's Taylor Nugent. Adding to the problems are fears about the country's property sector. A number of major developers, including Country Garden and Evergrande, are on the ropes with vast debts and struggling to meet interest obligations.

"Policy easing announcements intended to invigorate market confidence have fallen short of their desired impact," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes. —AFP

among its two most powerful members, China and India. China is keen to rapidly increase the bloc's rollcall to boost clout but observers say India, its regional rival, is wary. The BRICS operate on consensus and the "China-India rivalry is probably the major challenge that BRICS will eventually be confronted with" said Jakkie Cilliers, founder of the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS) think tank. —AFP



## UK top bosses earn 118 times pay of workers

LONDON: Bosses running Britain's biggest listed companies enjoyed payrises of 16 percent last year as workers' wages struggled with the worst cost of living crisis in a generation, research published Tuesday found. According to independent think-tank the High Pay Centre, the median FTSE 100 chief executive officer was paid 118 times the median UK full-time worker, up from 108 times in 2021.

Pascal Soriot, of pharma giant AstraZeneca, was the highest paid company chief, earning £16.85 million (\$21.5 million) — ahead of Charles Woodburn of BAE Systems, who earned £10.69 million. Average pay for a FTSE 100 CEO rose from £3.38 million in 2021, to £3.91 million in 2022, the research found.

Unions said the findings showed Britain had become "a land of grotesque extremes". "While millions of families have seen their budgets shredded by the cost-of-living crisis, city directors have enjoyed bumper pay rises," said Trade Union Congress general secretary Paul Nowak. Official figures showed workers saw average pay rises of 7.8 percent over the three months to June compared to a year earlier, but this was reduced to 0.6 percent once inflation was taken into account.

"At a time when so many households are struggling with living costs, an economic model that prioritizes a half-a-million-pound pay rise for executives who are already multi-millionaires is surely going wrong somewhere," Luke Hildyard, director of the High Pay Centre said. "We need to give workers more voice on company boards, strengthen trade union rights and enable low- and middle-income earners to get a fairer share in relation to those at the top," he added. — AFP

## EU users to have more power over FB, Instagram content

BRUSSELS: Facebook and Instagram users in Europe will have greater control over how they view content, Meta said on Tuesday, as platforms take steps to meet imminent stricter European Union rules. Under a landmark EU law, digital giants will be forced to more aggressively police content online to protect users, especially against hate speech and disinformation. The web's 19 largest players—including Facebook parent Meta, Amazon, Apple, Google, Microsoft, TikTok and Twitter, now rebranded as X—must comply with the new rules from next week or face heavy fines.

All eyes will be on billionaire Elon Musk, who since taking ownership of X has, often abruptly, modified many rules about language allowed on the site—even if it is found offensive or delivers hate and misinformation—in direct opposition to the EU's new rules. One of the changes announced by Nick Clegg, Meta's president of global affairs, includes giving European users of Facebook and Instagram the option to view different types of content not based on profiling, a requirement under the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA).

"We're now giving our European community the option to view and discover content on Reels, Stories, Search and other parts of Facebook and Instagram that is not ranked by Meta using these systems," Clegg said in a blog post. "For example, on Facebook and Instagram, users will have the option to view Stories and Reels only from people they follow, ranked in chronological order, newest to oldest." —AFP



Sheeps in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps during a monitoring program by Swiss NGO "OPPAL" to watch livestock against wolf.



# Crying wolf to save livestock and their predator



Volunteers Aiki Buhayer-Mach (left) and her husband Francois Mach-Buhayer are seen in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps.

Using a powerful torch, Aiki Buhayer-Mach momentarily drenches a nearby mountain top in light, straining to see if wolves are lurking in the shadows. If the predator were to get past the electric wires stretched around this high-altitude pasture in the Swiss Alps, the 57-year-old biologist knows "it would be a massacre". She and her 60-year-old husband Francois Mach-Buhayer—a leading Swiss cardiologist—have settled in to spend the night watching over some 480 sheep grazing in the remote mountains near the Italian border.

The pair of unlikely herders are among several hundred people volunteering this summer through OPPAL, a Swiss NGO seeking a novel way to protect wolves, by helping chase them away from grazing livestock. "Our goal is that by the end of the summer season, the livestock are still alive... and the wolves too," OPPAL director Jeremie Moulin told AFP.

He co-founded the organization three years ago in a bid to help promote and improve cohabitation between wildlife and human activities, at a time when swelling wolf populations had emotions running high. "I think this project helps enable dialogue," Moulin said.

### Soaring wolf attacks

After being wiped out more than a century ago, wolves have in recent decades begun returning to Switzerland, like several other European countries. Since the first pack was spotted in the wealthy Alpine nation in 2012, the number of packs swelled to around two dozen by the start of this year, with some 250 individual wolves counted. Nature preservation groups have hailed the return, seeing it as a sign of a healthier and more diverse ecosystem.

But breeders and herders decry soaring attacks on livestock, with 1,480 farm animals killed by wolves in Switzerland last year alone. In response, Swiss authorities, who in 2022 authorized the cull of 24 wolves and regulation of four packs, last month relaxed the rules for hunting the protected species. And with news of wolf attacks on livestock dominating the summer headlines, the Swiss Farmers' Union has urged more hunting permits to be

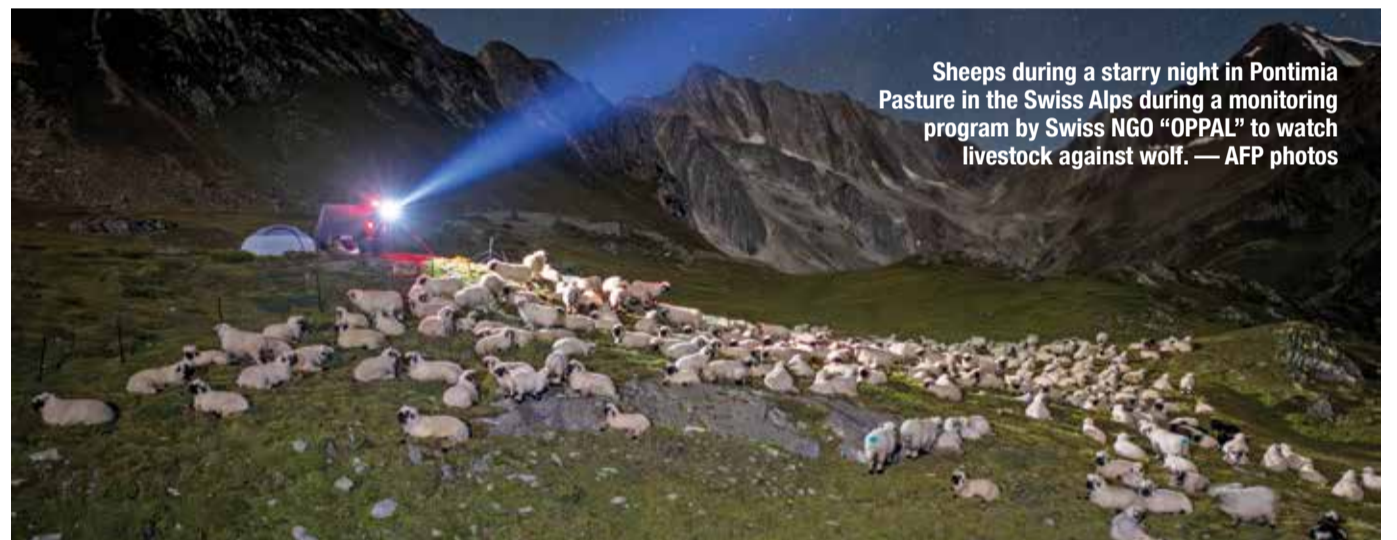
issued to take advantage of the laxer ordinance.

"Rangers alone will not be enough to bring exponentially growing wolf populations back under control and reduce them to a manageable density," it said. Moulin said he understands the farmers' frustration. "For them, the wolf obviously represents a large additional workload," he said, adding that OPPAL

take turns scanning the horizon with thermal, infrared binoculars every 15 minutes for signs of animals moving towards the flock of resting sheep, their bells chiming softly in the darkness. "You have to look often, and you have to look well," Aiki said, "because the wolf can see us in the darkness and knows when to try its luck. And when it moves, it moves extremely fast."

### 'Magical'

To frighten off a wolf, "you can't be all that scared yourself", Francois said, explaining how he and Aiki two nights earlier had chased away wolves three times in a few hours. "It takes two people," he said. "One keeps an eye on the wolf with the binoculars, and the other runs towards the beast with the torch... and a whistle."



Sheeps during a starry night in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps during a monitoring program by Swiss NGO "OPPAL" to watch livestock against wolf. — AFP photos



Volunteer gathers sheeps in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps.

aimed to help sensitize the broader population to the challenges, and also provide some relief.

### 'Extremely fast'

Up to 400 volunteers will take part in OPPAL's monitoring program this summer, spending nights camped out in mountain pastures, watching over grazing sheep and calves. Aiki and Francois joined from the start, and now do two five-day stints in various locations each summer. "It's our vacation time," Francois said, looking around the desolate spot, reached after a four-hour drive from Geneva and a nearly two-hour hike up a steep, rocky path.

At 2,200 meters (7,200 feet) above sea level, temperatures quickly plunge as the sun sets. Using a tarp, the couple have created a lookout shelter, equipped with camping chairs, thermal blankets and a propane coffee maker to get them through the night. They have also pitched a small tent where one could theoretically rest as the other keeps watch, but acknowledge they have barely used it.

All through the frigid night, they

It is an athletic endeavour, running up mountain sides in the dark, tripping over rocks and molehills, he said. "But it is magical." Moulin said OPPAL volunteers on average chase off wolves once every 20 nights, with 32 such events registered last year.

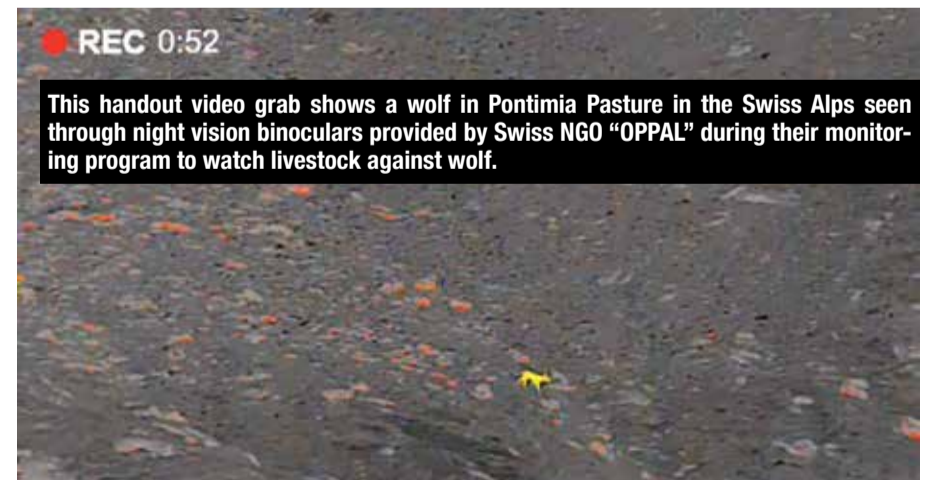
Shepherd Mathis von Siebenthal appreciates the effort. "It is such a big help," he said after delivering the flock to Aiki and Francois for the night. "If OPPAL were not here, I would be always... thinking if the wolf is coming or not," said the 36-year-old German national with a tanned, weathered face. "Like this, I can go to sleep."

After a long, cold, uneventful night under a sky of shooting stars, Aiki said she was looking forward to getting rest at the mountain refuge about a kilometer away. "The last two hours are the worst," she said bleary-eyed. "Between 4:00 and 6:00 am we dream of nothing but morning, coffee, and sleep." —AFP

Shepherd Mathis von Siebenthal leads sheeps in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps.



Volunteer Aiki Buhayer-Mach uses a powerful torch to light the area in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps.



REC 0:52

This handout video grab shows a wolf in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps seen through night vision binoculars provided by Swiss NGO "OPPAL" during their monitoring program to watch livestock against wolf.



Volunteer Aiki Buhayer-Mach uses a powerful torch to light the area in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps.



This photograph shows sheeps during a starry night in Pontimia Pasture in the Swiss Alps.

Lifestyle

### Viral 'Rich Men North of Richmond' tops US Billboard chart

A country song from a previously unknown singer that touches on class struggle in America and has been seized on by politicians has debuted at the top of the US charts, Billboard said Monday. Oliver Anthony's "Rich Men North of Richmond" has overtaken megastars Taylor Swift, Morgan Wallen and Olivia Rodrigo to the number spot on the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart. Billboard said Anthony, who has identified himself as a farmer in rural Virginia, becomes the first artist ever to launch atop the list "with no prior chart history in any form."



US singer-songwriter Taylor Swift performs during her Eras Tour at Sofi stadium in Inglewood, California. — AFP

The song has been streamed 17.5 million times and downloaded 147,000 times in less than a week, Billboard added. The song was released on YouTube on August 11 and quickly soared to the top of Apple's country chart as it hit a nerve on social media and garnered millions of views. In his lyrics Anthony leans into issues of long hours for little pay with high taxes.

He also picks up talking points that have persisted since the business-friendly, pro-austerity Ronald Reagan years, namely against the welfare state. "Lord, we got folks in the street, ain't got nothing to eat / And the obese milking welfare," sings Anthony. "Well God, if you're 5 foot 3 and you're 300 pounds / Taxes ought not to pay for your bags of fudge rounds." In a clip Anthony belts out the twangy tune sitting in front of a wooded area complete with a camo-deer blind, which is used for hunting.

The song's title invokes a common argument that Americans in the south, and more broadly rural areas outside the country's coastal cities, have been left behind by those in power. Richmond is the capital of the state of Virginia and is a couple hours' drive south of Washington. Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene, a US representative from Georgia with a history of aligning herself with far-right conspiracy theories, said on X, the platform formally known as Twitter, that Anthony's track is one "that Washington DC needs to hear."

Conversely, Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut, a Democrat, said on the same social media platform that "progressives should listen to this." In a video posted to his YouTube channel Anthony insists his political views are "pretty dead center." At a concert in North Carolina on Saturday, he told Fox News: "I don't see our country lasting another generation the way we are headed. We got to go back to the roots of what made this country great in the first place." —AFP



### Rihanna a mom again

Rihanna has given birth to a baby boy, her second child with rapper A\$AP Rocky, a report said Monday. The music megastar and beauty entrepreneur became a mother for the second time at the start of month, entertainment outlet TMZ said. "Sources with direct knowledge tell us the baby arrived August 3rd in Los Angeles," TMZ said. "We don't yet know the kid's name, but we do know it starts with 'R' and it's a boy."

The "Lift me up" singer welcomed her first child, a son, in May last year. And she wordlessly announced her second pregnancy at this year's Super

Bowl in Arizona, proudly displaying her baby bump to a global audience of hundreds of millions.

Since releasing "Anti" in early 2016, Robyn Rihanna Fenty has taken a break from recording but has by no means taken it easy: she's become a billionaire, parlaying her music achievements into successful makeup, lingerie and high-fashion brands. Since her last album Rihanna has performed occasional features and more recently recorded music for the "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" soundtrack. —AFP

### 'Beetle' beats 'Barbie' in North American theaters

It was a good news/bad news weekend for "Blue Beetle," the latest superhero film to hit North American theaters and the first built around a live-action Latino protagonist. The DC Studios/Warner Bros. production topped the charts for the Friday-through-Sunday period and even dethroned "Barbie," that reigning queen of pinkness, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday.

But its estimated take of \$25.4 million was "the lowest DC superhero debut of this era" other than 2021's money-losing "Wonder Woman 1984." "Beetle" stars 22-year-old American actor Xolo Mariduena—who is of

mixed Mexican, Cuban and Ecuadorian descent—as a new college graduate whose body is taken over by the mysterious Scarab, which gives him superhuman powers.



Analyst David A. Gross said that while ticket sales for "Beetle" were only a third the average for new superhero flicks, reviews have been good and overseas prospects are strong. "Barbie," in its fifth week out, scored \$21.5 million in ticket sales, "a huge result at this point in its theatrical run," ac-

ording to Variety. The Warner Bros. fantasy-comedy has now taken in an eye-popping \$1.27 billion globally.

In third, also in its fifth week out, was Universal's "Oppenheimer," at \$10.6 million. The historical drama about the origins of the first atomic bomb has passed the \$700 million mark globally. Fourth place went to Paramount's animated "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem," at \$8.4 million. Its huge voice cast includes Maya Rudolph, Ayo Edebiri, John Cena, Jackie Chan, Ice Cube and Paul Rudd.

And in fifth was Universal's new talking-dog comedy "Strays," at \$8.3 million, a concerning start for a movie made on a \$46 million budget. Rounding out the top 10 were:

- "Meg 2: The Trench" (\$6.7 million)
- "Talk to Me" (\$3.2 million)
- "Haunted Mansion" (\$3 million)
- "Mission: Impossible - Dead Reckoning Part One" (\$2.7 million)
- "The Last Voyage of the Demeter" (\$2.5 million) —AFP



Hamanoura no Tanada is one of 100 Best Rice Terraces in Japan.

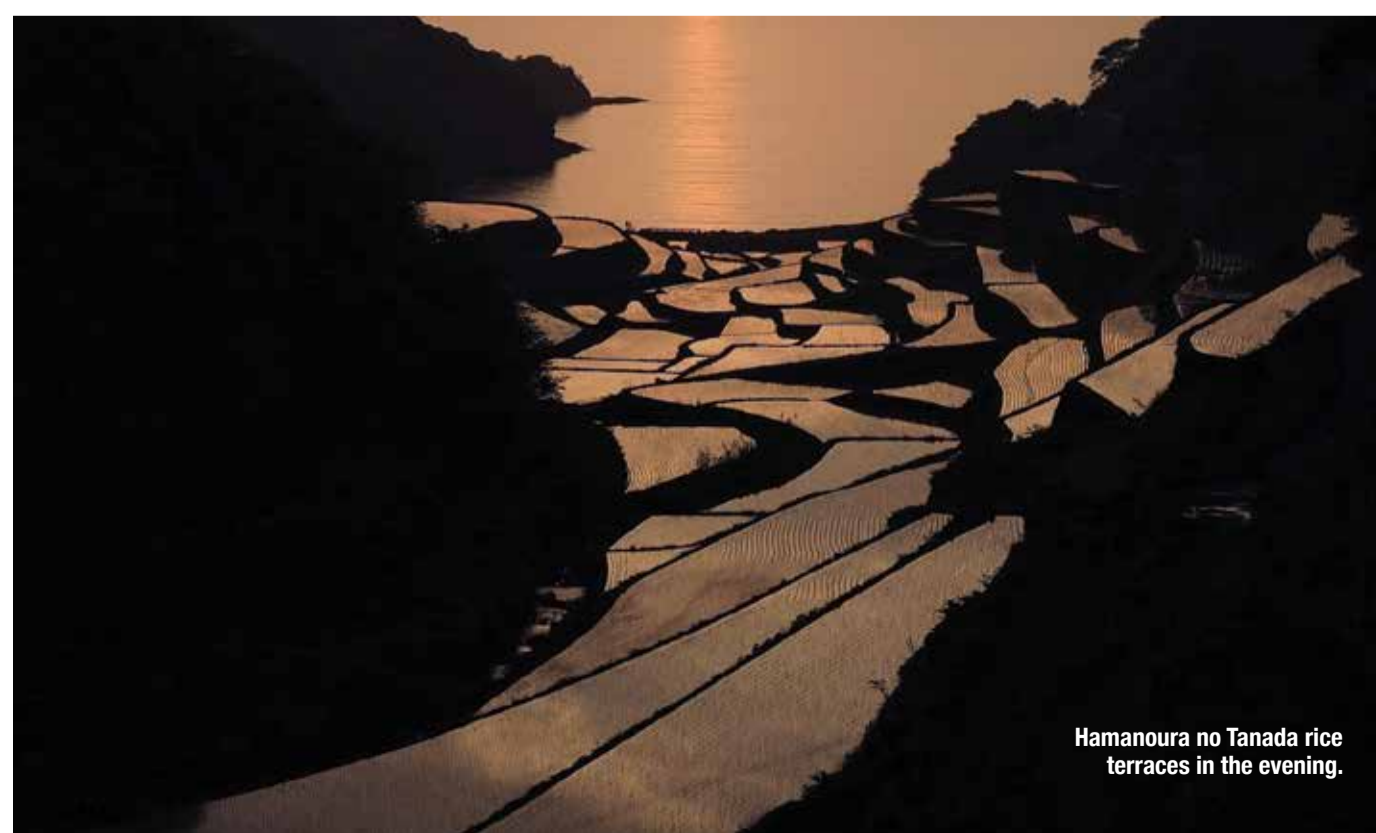
## Japan's age-old terraced rice fields, precious heritage

Rice terraces were used to be common sight on Japan's mountainsides and valleys, and they are often described as unspoiled Japanese landscapes for their age-old beauty. According to the Terraced Field Network, it is not exactly clear when rice paddy terraces were built in Japan, but they are believed to have existed before mid-6th century. "Hamanoura no Tanada," located in the southwestern prefecture of Saga, is one of such

scenic terraced rice fields and has become a popular tourist destination. Like a staircase running up from the coast facing the Genkai Sea, a total of 283 terraced rice fields create different scenes of natural beauty depending on the daily weather.

In particular, after rice planting, the setting sun dyes rice paddies orange, making the formative art of the sky, sea, paddy fields and ridges even more magnificent. In 1999, the Ministry

of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries named the area as one of the "100 Best Rice Terraces in Japan." The ministry also certified 271 excellent rice terraces for "Connecting Rice Terrace Heritage-Pride of Hometown to the Future" last year, including Saga prefecture's "Hamanoura no Tanada," where the local people are working to preserve them and maintain the scenic landscape. —KUNA



Hamanoura no Tanada rice terraces in the evening.

### Rare giraffe born without spots at US zoo - search is on for a name

A US zoo has welcomed one of the rarest animals born in captivity: a giraffe without spots. The female Reticulated giraffe, with a uniform brown color, arrived at Brights Zoo in Tennessee on July 31. According to zookeepers she is the first to be born with the rare pigmentation since 1972, when Tokyo's Ueno Zoo reported the last all-tan specimen.



In the wild, giraffes' distinctive pattern is designed to camouflage them in the scrub of sub-Saharan Africa. The spots also contain vascular blood vessels that can allow them to regulate their temperature in the heat. While each giraffe is born with a different cluster of marks, like a fingerprint that is unique to the animal, it is extremely rare for them to be born in a uniform color.

The park says it hopes to use the unusual birth to highlight the plight of giraffes in the wild, which fall victim to poaching. To do so, Brights zoo is holding a competition to name the newcomer. From today the public can go to their Facebook page to pick a moniker for the monocoloured animal.

"The international coverage of our patternless baby giraffe has created a much-needed spotlight on giraffe conservation," the founder of Brights zoo, Tony Bright, told local television news station WCYB. "Wild populations are silently slipping into extinction, with 40 per cent of the wild giraffe population lost in just the last three decades." The shortlisted options are Kipekee, which means "unique" in Swahili; Firayali, which means unusual; Shakiri, which means "she is most beautiful"; and Jamella, which is "one of great beauty". Two subspecies of giraffe, Kordofan and Nubian giraffes, listed as critically endangered whereas Reticulated giraffes, like the one born at Brights zoo, are classified as endangered.

—www.nzherald.co.nz



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries issued Brochure on 271 excellent rice terraces.

#### 日本の棚田百選



農林水産省

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries issued Brochure on 100 Best Rice Terraces in Japan.

## Sports

# Saudi MMA fighters out to 'prove themselves' in NY bouts

## Qahtani, Mostafa Rashed Neda are set to compete on Wednesday in separate bouts

RIYADH: Abdullah al-Qahtani trades jabs with a sparring partner at a gym in the Saudi capital Riyadh, surrounded by a dozen fighters running through their own drills on the crowded mat. The humble setting is a far cry from where he's headed: the bright lights of Madison Square Garden in New York City, where this week he and another Saudi combatant will try to put the kingdom's mixed martial arts (MMA) scene on the map.

Combining elements of everything from boxing to judo and Muay Thai, MMA had a limited following in Saudi Arabia just a decade ago, but that started to change when the Gulf kingdom hosted the popular regional Desert Force competition in 2014. The sport's popularity has since soared with the rise of fighters from across the Middle East and the establishment of a national MMA foundation to develop Saudi talent.

Qahtani and his Jeddah-based compatriot Mostafa Rashed Neda are set to compete on Wednesday in separate bouts in New York as part of the Professional Fighters League playoffs — a star turn they hope will lead to global recognition. "They are fighting to prove themselves," said Peter Murray, chief executive of the PFL, an MMA promotion company that has come up in the wake of the Ultimate Fighting Championship's success.

Saudi Arabia, Murray added, is strongly placed to become a wellspring of MMA fighters and fans. "We think the talent's there, and there's a need for added capabilities, and we're committed to that." Qahtani, known as "The Reaper", told AFP he was more than prepared to square off against US featherweight David Zelner, despite training primarily in Saudi Arabia and being fairly new to the sport.

"This is an old-school gym," he said of the spot where he often works out, its walls decorated with cartoon sketches of boxing legends Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson and sayings like "The coward dies a thousand times". "It's not the best and it does not have the best equipment, but it has very good fighters."

### 'Sacred' ring

Qahtani spent much of his childhood in Morocco and first learned how to box there. When he returned to Saudi Arabia in 2010, MMA was "not famous or known", and he did not find a local club where he could train regularly until 2016.

Neda, the other Saudi on Wednesday's PFL undercard, was forced to turn to YouTube to learn the basics of MMA, and his first proper sparring partner was an American English teacher who showed him jiu-jitsu fundamentals.

Inspired, Neda took it upon himself to introduce MMA to other Saudis, selling it as a form of "street fighting" and eventually forming a club of his own. "It was a difficult time, but thank God, during the last four or five years, MMA has grown a lot" in the country, he said.

"There is a very large fan base and it's a fast-growing fan base," the PFL's Murray said, noting that the league hopes to hold events in the kingdom as soon as next year. "We're seeing avid MMA fans throughout the Middle East and Saudi Arabia further engaged in the sport."

MMA's journey in Saudi Arabia has not always been smooth. In 2019, a year after Saudi agents had killed journalist Jamal Khashoggi, Ultimate Fighting Championship owner Endeavor sought to distance



RIYADH: Saudi mixed martial arts fighter Abdullah al-Qahtani trains at a gym in Riyadh ahead of his Professional Fighters League featherweight bout. — AFP

itself from Riyadh and returned a \$400-million investment from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund.

For Qahtani and Neda, the kingdom's emergence as an MMA powerhouse is inevitable, something they hope the world better understands on Wednesday af-

ter they step into the cage in Madison Square Garden, hallowed ground for fighting legends. "This fight will seal my destiny... it is a sacred place for us," Qahtani said. "God willing, I will make everyone proud and win. I'm not afraid, but rather excited." — AFP



Alex Hartley

## England women's WCup winner Hartley to retire from cricket

LONDON: Alex Hartley, a member of the England side that won the 2017 Women's World Cup final, has said she will retire from cricket at the end of this season's domestic Hundred competition. Hartley, 29, took 10 wickets in eight matches during England's march to the 50-over global title including 2-58 in a nine-run win over India in the final at Lord's.

That was arguably the high point of an England career that included 28 one-day internationals and four Twenty20s. But the left-arm spinner has not played international cricket since 2019 and briefly stepped away from playing in May after admitting she had been struggling mentally, having fallen out of love with the game.

Hartley made her comeback earlier this month in the Hundred with Welsh Fire, who are guaranteed to reach the eliminator at The Oval on Saturday and could go directly into Sunday's final at Lord's. Regardless of what happens to the Fire, Hartley — who has forged a career as a broadcaster with BBC Radio's Test Match Special — will retire from cricket this weekend. — AFP

## Nepal heads to Asia Cup without rape accused Lamichhane

KATHMANDU: Nepal's cricket squad on Tuesday headed to Pakistan for the ODI Asia Cup without its star spin bowler, who must stay home to stand trial for alleged rape, officials said. Sandeep Lamichhane, 23, was once the poster boy for the rise of cricket in Nepal, but he is accused of raping a 17-year-old girl in a Kathmandu hotel room in August last year.

Lamichhane denies all wrongdoing. "Since there is a case against him sub judice at the court, he is

not going with us now — he also has some health issues," Pradeep Majgaiyan, manager of the Cricket Association of Nepal, told reporters ahead of the team's departure.

Lamichhane must attend the latest hearing in the case on Sunday, and Majgaiyan said it was hoped he would be able to later join the squad for the tournament. The six-nation ODI Asia Cup is scheduled from August 30 to September 17 in Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with cricketing minnows Nepal seen as the outsiders.

"There are still some days left for the match to begin, so there are still chances that he will join later," Majgaiyan added. Last year, Lamichhane was suspended as national captain and arrested, but was freed on bail in January and Nepal then lifted his ban on playing.

## Coles 'gobsmacked' by coach Hansen assisting Australia

WELLINGTON: Veteran All Blacks hooker Dane Coles said he was "gobsmacked" to hear former New Zealand coach Steve Hansen is helping rivals Australia prepare for the Rugby World Cup. Hansen has agreed to assist Australia head coach Eddie Jones, a long-time friend, this week as an unpaid adviser while the Wallabies prepare to face France on Sunday in a World Cup warm-up played in Paris.

Coles, who has played 86 Tests for New Zealand, was stunned to hear his ex-All Blacks boss is currently in the Wallabies camp. "Yeah? Shag what are you up to," the visibly shocked Coles said, using Hansen's nickname.

"That hurts a little bit, to be fair," he added. "I'm actually gobsmacked. He's a bit of an icon in the All Blacks set-up. I'm a bit speechless. It's a bit disappointing, but we can't do much about that." New Zealand reporters broke the news to Coles following a training session in London, where the All Blacks are preparing for their own World Cup warm-up against reigning world champions South Africa.

Hansen coached New Zealand to their 2015 World Cup triumph, in which Coles started in the final against Australia. "He's a great man. He's obviously not in our environment at the moment. I suppose

he can help out Eddie," Coles added.

"Hopefully, he doesn't tell Eddie all our secrets. I think he'll be respectful, that's the main thing." Loose forward Ardie Savea was more circumspect, saying: "Everyone's got to do what they have got to do. Good on him."

Hansen's defection to the Wallabies camp even made it to the corridors of parliament in Wellington. Prime Minister Chris Hipkins quipped to reporters that New Zealand should "cancel his citizenship" when asked about Hansen, adding quickly "that's a joke — just to be very clear".

In a phone interview with New Zealand radio station Newstalk ZB from Paris, Hansen explained that he is observing the Wallabies this week as a favor to Jones. Hansen, 64, said he would "just like to put everybody's mind at rest that I haven't joined the Wallabies for the Rugby World Cup."

"I'm only here for about three or four days at the request of Eddie, a good mate of mine, just to give him some feedback on what he is doing. Rugby is bigger than all of us, so happy to do that," he added.

Hansen made it clear that he is assisting on a voluntary basis. "If you are working for someone, you are getting paid. I'm not working for anyone, I'm just here as a friend," he added. The All Blacks and Wallabies have been drawn in different World Cup pools but could meet in the knockout stages.

New Zealand play hosts France in the opening match on September 8 - the two heavyweights drawn in Pool A alongside Italy, Namibia and Uruguay. Australia play Wales, Fiji, Georgia and Portugal in Pool C. — AFP

Under his bail conditions, Lamichhane has been able to travel abroad, including to Zimbabwe for the World Cup qualifiers. Nepal failed to make the cut for the 50-over showpiece event in India in October. Skipper Rohit Paudel said Lamichhane had his place on the squad.

"It has not been finalized yet that he would not play," Paudel told a press conference. "We are hopeful that he will play — he is really an impactful and big player for our team. He has helped win several matches for us. So, we hope he will join us later." Nepal open the tournament facing hosts Pakistan on August 30 at Multan.

A win at their debut Asia Cup would be a dream for the cricket-mad South Asian nation, whose side will compete against top nations including India and Pakistan. — AFP



All Blacks hooker Dane Coles

## Capuozzo leads Italy's Rugby World Cup charge

MILAN: Ange Capuozzo will travel to the Rugby World Cup in France after being selected in the Azzurri squad announced on Tuesday. Star full-back or wing Capuozzo had been out of action since hurting his shoulder during the Six Nations defeat to Ireland back in February, but scored two tries in Saturday's 57-7 thrashing of Romania.

Capuozzo, who was born in France, has just 11 international caps but has made a serious impact as part of Kieran Crowley's ambitious young team. The 24-year-old announced himself to the rugby world with a double against Scotland on his Test debut in March last year.

And he was key to Italy ending their 36-match Six Nations losing streak in Cardiff against Wales a week later, setting up Edoardo Padovani for one of Italy's greatest ever tries. Toulouse's Capuozzo also scored in last autumn's thrilling 28-27 win over Australia, the first time Italy had ever beaten the Wallabies.

Also selected in the 33-man squad are the Garbisi brothers, Montpellier fly-half Paolo and Treviso scrum-half Alessandro, who played together for Italy for the first

time in Saturday's nine-try victory. Treviso winger Paolo Odogwu, who was part of England's Six Nations squad in 2021 without winning a cap, is included after making his Test debut earlier this month. Crowley has selected a squad with an average age of 26, of whom 24 players will be participating in their first World Cup. New Zealander Crowley will quit the Italy job after the tournament in France, which runs from September 8 to October 28.

Few will give the Azzurri any chance of getting out of Pool A as they are with hosts France and three-time champions New Zealand as well as Namibia and Uruguay. Italy have one more warm-up match before the World Cup, against Japan on Saturday in Treviso. Italy squad for the Rugby World Cup (September 8-October 28) announced on Tuesday:

### Forwards

**Props:** Pietro Ceccarelli (Perpignan/FRA), Simone Ferrari (Treviso), Danilo Fischetti (Zebre), Ivan Nemer (Treviso), Marco Riccioni (Saracens/ENG), Federico Zani (Treviso)

**Hookers:** Luca Bigi (Zebre), Epala-



LONDON: England's flanker Lewis Ludlow tackles Italy's fullback Ange Capuozzo during the Six Nations international rugby union match at Twickenham Stadium on Feb 12, 2023. — AFP

hame Faiva (unattached), Giacomo Nicotera (Treviso)

**Locks:** Niccolò Cannone (Treviso), Dino Lamb (Harlequins/ENG), Federico Ruzza (Treviso), David Sisi (Zebre)

**Back row:** Lorenzo Cannone (Treviso), Toa Halafih (Treviso), Michele Lamaro (Treviso, capt), Sebastian Negri (Treviso), Giovanni Pettinelli (Treviso), Manuel Zuliani (Treviso)

### Backs

**Scrum-halves:** Alessandro Fusco

(Zebre), Alessandro Garbisi (Treviso), Martin Page-Relo (Lyon/FRA), Stephen Varney (Gloucester/ENG)

**Fly-halves:** Tommaso Allan (Perpignan/FRA), Giacomo Da Re (Treviso), Paolo Garbisi (Montpellier/FRA)

**Centres:** Juan Ignacio Brex (Treviso), Luca Morisi (unattached)

**Wings:** Pierre Bruno (Zebre), Paolo Odogwu (Treviso), Montanna Ioane (Lyon/FRA)

**Full-backs:** Ange Capuozzo (Toulouse/FRA) Lorenzo Pani (Zebre). — AFP

## Bangladesh's Ebadot ruled out of Asia Cup

DHAKA: Bangladesh fast bowler Ebadot Hossain has been ruled out of the ODI Asia Cup in Pakistan and Sri Lanka with a knee injury, the Bangladesh Cricket Board said Tuesday. The 29-year-old right-arm quick bowler sustained the injury during the one-day international series against Afghanistan last month.

The BCB said he had not made the expected recovery to be considered for the six-nation Asia Cup but hoped he would be fit to play the upcoming ODI World Cup. BCB chief physician Debashis Chowdhury said in a statement Ebadot's anterior cruciate ligament injury required further treatment.

The Asia Cup is scheduled from August 30 to September 17, while the World Cup opens in India on October 5. "Considering the importance of the Bangladesh team's next major event... the BCB is committed to exploring every safe medical option available for getting Ebadot back to full fitness," Chowdhury said.

The BCB has called up uncapped pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib as Ebadot's replacement. The 20-year-old has taken 57 wickets from 37 List A matches, including nine wickets in three matches in the recent Emerging Men's Asia Cup. Sakib's inclusion means there are five players in the squad from the 2020 ICC U19 World Cup-winning team. Tawhid Hridoy, Shoriful Islam, Shamim Hossain and Tanzid Hasan Tamim are the others included in the Asia Cup squad. Bangladesh will play alongside Sri Lanka and Afghanistan in Group B of the Asia Cup. — AFP

Sports

# Greenwood to leave Man Utd after abuse allegations

**'I did not do the things I was accused of, and in February I was cleared of all charges'**

**LONDON:** Manchester United and Mason Greenwood have mutually agreed for the forward to leave Old Trafford after he faced allegations of abuse involving a young woman, the club announced on Monday. The 21-year-old forward has been suspended by the Premier League giants since January 2022 over the allegations after images and videos were posted online.

Prosecutors said in February they were dropping charges, including attempted rape and sexual assault, against Greenwood, after key witnesses withdrew and new evidence came to light. On Monday, the club said that after a six-month internal investigation into his conduct, it was releasing Greenwood so he could attempt to rebuild his career elsewhere.

The club said Monday: "All those involved, including Mason, recognize the difficulties with him recommencing his career at Manchester United. "It has therefore been mutually agreed that it would be most appropriate for him to do so away from Old Trafford, and we will now work with Mason to achieve that outcome."

Greenwood, whose contract runs until June 2025, said: "I did not do the things I was accused of, and in February

I was cleared of all charges. "However, I fully accept I made mistakes in my relationship, and I take my share of responsibility for the situations which led to the social media post."

He added: "The best decision for us all, is for me to continue my football career away from Old Trafford, where my presence will not be a distraction for the club. "I thank the club for their support since I joined aged seven. There will always be a part of me which is United."

The club said: "Based on the evidence available to us, we have concluded that the material posted online did not provide a full picture and that Mason did not commit the offences in respect of which he was originally charged.

"That said, as Mason publicly acknowledges today, he has made mistakes which he is taking responsibility for." Greenwood was tipped for stardom at United after rising through the Old Trafford youth system and went on to score 35 goals in 129 senior appearances for the club.

**'People will think the worst'**

In his statement, he said: "I want to start by saying I understand that people will judge me because of what they have seen and heard on social media,

and I know people will think the worst. "I was brought up to know that violence or abuse in any relationship is wrong... However, I fully accept I made mistakes in my relationship, and I take my share of responsibility for the situations which led to the social media post.

He added he was "learning to understand my responsibilities to set a good example as a professional footballer, and I'm focused on the big responsibility of being a father, as well as a good partner". Manchester United chief executive Richard Arnold, who was criticized after suggesting this year that Greenwood might be reintegrated back into the first-team squad, wrote an open letter to United's fans.

He acknowledged that while "reintegration was one of the outcomes we considered and planned for," his view had "evolved as our process progressed". Arnold added: "I am also mindful of the challenge that Mason would face rebuilding his career and raising a baby together with his partner in the harsh spotlight of Manchester United.

"The club will continue to offer its support both to the alleged victim and Mason to help them rebuild and move forward positively with their lives." Despite Arnold's attempt to pacify angry



Mason Greenwood

supporters, former Manchester United defender Gary Neville slammed the club's handling of the situation.

"It was clear from day one, for me and anybody who saw the evidence that was initially released, that he wouldn't play for Manchester United again," Neville said. "I would say that the process in

getting there has been pretty horrible. When you have significant and difficult situations like this, it requires an authoritative leadership, that comes the very top and Manchester United don't have that. "On an issue like domestic abuse and violence against women, there needs to be an independent panel." — AFP

## Pulisic strikes as Milan open well at Bologna

**MILAN:** Christian Pulisic netted one and helped set up another in AC Milan's hard-fought 2-0 win at Bologna on Monday in which the USA star made a big impression. The 24-year-old is looking to give his club career a jump start at Milan after being sold by Chelsea and he was key to Stefano Pioli's side claiming the points in their opening match of the season.

Pulisic played the defence-splitting pass which led to Olivier Giroud's 11th-minute opener and then doubled Milan's lead 10 minutes later with a superb strike from the edge of the penalty area. "We saw some really good things today and also some things on which we still need to work loads," Pioli told DAZN.

"I always knew Pulisic was a talent, it was never in doubt. When I spoke to him before he signed it was clear that he

would bring quality to the team." Milan have brought in eight players in the summer transfer window after Sandro Tonali's big-money move to Newcastle United.

And although they looked vulnerable at the back there was enough to suggest that the business done in the close season has rejuvenated a team whose title defence went up in flames midway through the last campaign.

**Creative spark**

Milan created enough promising attacking situations of which a sharper outfit could have made more. Rafael Leao not at his best on the left flank and unlucky not to score late on when a mazy run ended with the Portugal winger hitting the post.

It was two of Milan's new boys who combined brilliantly to set up Giroud for his first goal of the season at a packed, and roasting hot Stadio Dall'Ara. Left with space in front of the area Pulisic clipped over a lofted pass which the excellent Tijjani Reijnders managed to reach and flash back across goal for Giroud.

The France international made no mistake from close range to score his first ever right-footed Milan goal. It was then



Christian Pulisic (center)

Giroud's turn to be the provider, exchanging passes with his former Chelsea teammate Pulisic who then strode forward and clattered in Milan's second of the night.

Bologna could have collapsed under the pressure and the oppressive late summer heat enveloping northern Italy, but to their credit Thiago Motta's side fought back. On the hour mark Dan Ndoye did well to skip

past Davide Calabria but, with a simple pass on to the wide open Riccardo Orsolini, the Swiss forward tried to squeeze in a finish at the near post and clipped the woodwork. And seconds later Mike Maigant unwittingly shouldered away Michel Aebischer's close-range drive, the hosts' last major opportunity of a happy, if sweltering evening, for Milan. — AFP

## KFA receives more offers for rights of broadcasting

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Football Association said it received several offers to get the rights of broadcasting Zain League matches, while still receiving more offers until noon on Wednesday, then all offers will be reviewed and a decision will be made in a way that achieves the most possible benefit from all parties. The Association said in a statement issued Sunday through KUNA in regards to television rights, and Information Ministry paid a major part of dues to KFA.

The association corresponded with the Information Ministry to increase the fees for broadcasting KFA matches, and repeated promises were made that rules and decisions will be reviewed to no avail, and this was discussed at the General Assembly meeting on 26/6/2023, when sports clubs agreed that the broadcast value do not match the current developments and do not cover the costs clubs pay. — KUNA

## Spain PM: Football boss apology over kiss 'insufficient'

**MADRID:** Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Tuesday blasted as "insufficient" the apology given by Spain's football federation chief for kissing star player Jenni Hermoso on the lips after Spain won the Women's World Cup

Football Federation chief Luis Rubiales, 45, kissed Hermoso as he handed the Spanish team their gold medals after they beat England 1-0 in the final on Sunday in Sydney, provoking outrage in Spain. He kissed other players on the cheek or embraced them. "What we saw was an unacceptable gesture," the Socialist premier told a news conference when asked about the outcry over the unsolicited kiss. "I also think the apologies given by Mr. Rubiales are insufficient. And I even think that they are inappropriate, and that he must go further," added Sanchez, whose government has pushed through tougher laws on sexual consent and harassment. As the controversy over the kiss grew, Rubiales apologized on Monday in a video posted on social media. "It was done without any ill intention in a moment of the highest exuberance. Here we saw it as natural and normal but outside it has caused a commotion. "I have no choice but to apologize and to learn from this... and when representing the federation take more care," he said, adding that he thought the furor was "idiotic". Rubiales also stressed that he had a "magnificent relationship" with Hermoso.

**'Didn't like it'**

On Sunday, the 33-year-old player posted a video on Instagram showing the celebrations in the changing room in which she responded to teasing from team-mates by saying: "I didn't like it, eh!" while laughing. She later downplayed the incident in a statement released by the federation, saying it was "a totally spontaneous mutual gesture because of the immense joy that winning a



MADRID: Spanish Royal Football Federation (RFEF) president Luis Rubiales (L) and Spain's coach Jorge Vilda (R) stand as Spain's acting Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (C) receives Spain women's national football team's players after their 2023 World Cup victory at La Moncloa Palace in Madrid. — AFP

World Cup brings". "The president and I have a great relationship. His behavior with all of us has been outstanding and it was a natural gesture of affection and gratitude," she added, according to the federation statement. Video footage circulated online after the match also showed Rubiales, who was sitting in the VIP area of the stadium near Spain's Queen Letizia and FIFA president Gianni Infantino, grab his groin as he celebrated the final whistle.

Deputy Prime Minister Yolanda Diaz had on Monday called for Rubiales' resignation, saying "his excuses do not work at all", while Equality Minister Irene Montero said a non-consensual kiss is "a kind of sex violence all women suffer daily".

"It is very simple. Two people kiss if they both want to, if there

is consent. Only yes is yes," Montero added on social media platform X, which was formerly called Twitter.

Sanchez, a self-described feminist, appointed a government with a record number of 11 women in 17 cabinet posts when he took office in June 2018. "The 21st century should be - I am convinced it will be - the century of women on all fronts," he said earlier on Tuesday at a reception for Spain's winning team. "I believe women's football, women's sport, has a brilliant future, all we can say as representatives of Spanish society is that Spain is proud of you, of what you achieved and how you achieved." Rubiales was also at the reception and received a frosty greeting from Sanchez when he arrived. — AFP

## Emery wants to make 'new history' with Villa in Europe

**LONDON:** Unai Emery has urged Aston Villa to "write a new history" ahead of the Premier League club's first European campaign in 13 years. Villa face Scottish Premiership side Hibernian in the first leg of their Europa Conference League qualifying play-off at the Edinburgh team's Easter Road ground on Wednesday.

Emery, a four-time Europa League winner as a manager, and said pictures of Villa's 1982 European Cup triumph on the walls of the Birmingham side's Bodymoor Heath training were an inspiration to him and his players.

"Everyday when I go to the training ground there is the '82 European Cup (picture)," Emery said on Tuesday. "It's good to have that memory. "This is the history for Aston Villa and it's amazing. Of course we want to write a new history now, doing it our way and hopefully we can do something important here.

"Always when I go in my office I am passing this (picture) and I am always watching the trophy," the 51-year-old added. Emery won the Europa League with Sevilla three years running (2014, 2015 and 2016) and lifted the trophy again with fellow Spanish club Villarreal in 2021. He was also a runner-up when in charge of Arsenal in 2019. — AFP

# 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
Khalidiya	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
Salmiya	25746401

### Change of Name

**I, Abbas**, holder of Indian Passport No. M2309902 having permanent address VPO Vazhi Mohalla, Partapur, Garhi, Banswara, Rajasthan, India, 327024 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as **Abbas Habib Malanawala (#4204) 23/8/2023**

**I, HUSSENA** holder of Indian Passport No. T8196641 having permanent address 131, Naya Pura Bakhal, Vallabh Bhai Patel Marg, Ujjain, Pin 456006, Madhya Pradesh, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) **HUSSAINA and (surname) BAWAJAN. (#4202) 21/8/2023**

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## Richardson trumps Jamaicans for 100m gold

### Grant Holloway claims third consecutive world 110m hurdles title



BUDAPEST: USA's Sha'Carri Richardson (C), Jamaica's Shericka Jackson (R) and Jamaica's Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce celebrate after the women's 100m final during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest. — AFP

BUDAPEST: American Sha'Carri Richardson crushed Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce's hopes of a sixth women's world 100m title when she stormed to victory in Budapest on Monday. Richardson sprinted to a championship record of 10.65sec despite being in lane nine to seal a US 100m double after Noah Lyles' victory in the men's event on Sunday.

Shericka Jackson and veteran Jamaican teammate Fraser-Pryce took silver and bronze in 10.72sec and 10.77sec respectively on the third day of action in the Hungarian capital. It was a remarkable run for the 23-year-old Richardson, who was barred from the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 after testing positive for marijuana.

She then saw her hopes of challenging for a medal at last year's world championships in Eugene go up in smoke when she failed to qualify in the US trials.

"I'm here. I'm the champion. I told you all. I'm not back. I'm better!" said Richardson, whose penchant for regular hair color changes and brightly painted nails has earned inevitable comparisons to the late Florence Griffith-Joyner.

Fraser-Pryce, the reigning champion, said she was "really grateful" for a bronze medal after a difficult season that was hampered by a knee injury.

"Last year I ran and won in a championship record and it took another championship record to win tonight," the 36-year-old told the BBC. "So it just speaks to the level of consistency for female sprinting and being able to make sure that when you show up you have to give 100 percent," she said.

#### 'Three in a row'

In a good night on the track for the USA Grant Holloway became the second athlete after compatriot Greg Foster to claim three consecutive world 110m hurdles titles. Holloway, 25, shot out to a season's best of 12.96sec to win gold ahead of Jamaica's Olympic champion Hansle Parchment, who finished in 13.07sec. "Three in a row!" said Holloway. "The main thing was really just to come through here and defend my title."

"I felt no pressure at all. I just wanted to run cleanly and stay calm at the finish line." The two field event medals on offer went to Sweden and, in a historic first, Burkina Faso.

Olympic champion Daniel Stahl left it late to win a second world discus title that had the crowd gripped. The Swede, who previously triumphed in Doha in 2019, had control of the leaderboard only for defending champion Kristjan Ceh of Slovenia to grab the lead with his sixth and final throw.

All eyes turned to Stahl for the final throw of the competition and the Swede did not disappoint, throwing a championship record of 71.46m. "This was my best performance ever," said Stahl. I had so much focus, I would say 1,000 percent on the last throw after I saw Kristjan." Ceh took silver with 70.02m while Lithuania's 19-year-old Mykolas Alekna claimed bronze with 68.85m.

#### First global title

In the triple jump, Hugues Fabrice Zango gave the west African nation of Burkina Faso its first global athletics title when he won with a mark of 17.64m. Cubans Lazaro Martinez and Cristian Napoles won silver and bronze. "The competition was easy for me," said Zango, who won world silver last year and

also claimed his country's first ever Olympic medal with a bronze in Tokyo in 2021. Zango's path to glory was made easier by the first-round withdrawal through injury of much-vaunted 18-year-old Jamaican Jaydon Hibbert.

In other track events, 400m hurdles stars Karsten Warholm and Femke Bol made short work of their qualifying rounds. World record holder Warholm seemed to barely break sweat despite the sultry conditions as he cruised through to Wednesday's final.

Defending world champion Alison Dos Santos of Brazil and American Rai Benjamin also sailed through. "There is surely going to be someone who challenges me but today it was very good and I felt strong," said Warholm. Bol made up for the disappointment of falling with the line at her mercy in the mixed 4x400m relay by striding clear to ease into Tuesday's semi-finals. "I do not want to talk about what happened last Saturday," said the Dutchwoman, the stand-out favorite in the absence of injured American world record holder Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone. — AFP

## Rojas has new world triple jump record in sights

BUDAPEST: Venezuelan triple jumper Yulimar Rojas, who has reigned supreme at global championships since 2017, insists bettering her own world record remains an objective as she hunts for a fourth consecutive world title in Budapest.

Not only did the 27-year-old win world golds in London in 2017, in Doha two years later and in Eugene last year, but she also became Olympic champion in the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 with a then world record of 15.67m.

That mark was improved to 15.74m when the Venezuelan won her third world indoor title in Belgrade in 2022. The last time Rojas was beaten in her speciality was more than two years ago and although she lost when making her senior global championships debut at the Rio Olympics in 2016, she still secured silver.

In an interview with AFP ahead of her competition in Hungary, which starts with qualifying on Wednesday, Rojas dismissed concerns of battle fatigue. "Every day is a motivation for me, each world championship reconnects everything again," she said.

"Just the possibility of being world champion again motivates me every day, I have that goal of defending my title and continue working to fulfil all my goals." In 2023 she has extended her total of 15-metre-plus jumps to 44. Those performances include a 15.16m win at the Central American and Caribbean Games and a 15.18m victory at the Diamond League meeting in Silesia. Remarkably, that's a barrier that just two other athletes on the entry list have surpassed in their career.

American Jasmine Moore jumped an area record of 15.12m at the NCAA Indoor Championships in Albuquerque in March, while Ukraine's Maryna Bekh-Romanchuk leaped 15.02m to win the 2022 European title in Munich.



Venezuelan triple jumper Yulimar Rojas

#### 'I am my main rival'

Rojas, however, was less concerned with her immediate competition than herself. "I am very well, very happy and excited to be here, but above all I am very focused on doing very well," she said. "The level is high this year, the standard in the triple jump has grown... but I am very focused and I think my main rival is myself, my rival is Yulimar Rojas."

"My rival is my fears, my mistakes, it's how I get up, what I feel on the track. "I am myself and I always try to defeat myself, improve my marks day by day, improving my jumps. That's the main thing." Rojas added: "I respect my opponents a lot and they always bring out the best in me. I know that in Wednesday's qualifying and Friday's final we are going to have a great competition and I am looking forward to that."

Rojas shot out a warning that her record of 15.74m was in her crosshairs. "Beating my record is always a goal," she told AFP. "I don't have a specific day to say I'm going to beat it, it doesn't work that way. "Every day I'm prepared for it, but it depends on the moment, the place, the day, the hour."

"There are many factors that greatly influence this, how the competition is going, how everything is developing and you cannot foresee that. "But without a doubt, a new world record is my big goal and I am happy every time day to go for it, until I can get it." — AFP

## Arsenal sink Palace to extend perfect start

LONDON: Arsenal shrugged off Takehiro Tomiyasu's red card to extend their perfect start to the Premier League season as Martin Odegaard sealed a 1-0 victory against Crystal Palace on Monday. Odegaard's second-half penalty at Selhurst Park put Arsenal on course for their second successive win.

But Mikel Arteta's side had to dig deep to preserve the points after Japan defender Tomiyasu was controversially sent off for a second yellow card midway through the second half. Tomiyasu had been booked for taking too long over a throw-in before his dismissal for making minimal contact on Jordan Ayew.

Arteta was delighted with the way Arsenal refused to surrender their lead as they moved up to third place, behind leaders Brighton and second-placed Manchester City on goal difference. "Great win. I'm so happy. To play 30 minutes away from home with 10 men is extremely difficult," Arteta said.

"Some players were suffering physically. The subs were magnificent, they knew what they had to do. "Today we had a difficult one, we overcame it and it will make us better." Frustrated by Tomiyasu's first booking for time-wasting, Arteta added: "This is the standard. I think it was eight seconds. We might have to play with a stop watch."

Expected to mount a sustained title challenge following last season's late collapse that gifted the trophy to City, the north Londoners look up for the fight after building on their opening weekend win against Nottingham Forest.

While they haven't played their most fluent football yet, this could prove a significant building block in their bid for a first title since 2004. Arsenal had the best away record in the top flight last season and registered a division-best 10 clean sheets on their travels.

Arteta's men looked like road warriors again as they repelled Palace's late flurry of pressure. With new goalkeeper David Raya among the Arsenal substitutes after his loan move from Brentford, the spotlight was on Aaron Ramsdale as the England international fights to hold



LONDON: Arsenal's English goalkeeper #01 Aaron Ramsdale (L) makes a save from Crystal Palace's French striker #22 Odsonne Edouard during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Arsenal at Selhurst Park in south London on August 21, 2023. — AFP

onto his place. Ramsdale rose to the challenge with a confident display from the moment he turned away Eberechi Eze's long-range strike in the early stages.

#### Ice-cool Odegaard

Emulating City boss Pep Guardiola's tactic of instructing a defender to advance forward whenever they have possession, Arteta deployed Thomas Partey at right-back with a license to link up play from his preferred midfield role.

That allowed Arsenal to dominate possession but Eddie Nketiah, deputizing for the injured Gabriel Jesus, failed to make their first-half pressure pay off. The 24-year-old wasted a good chance when he nimbly turned away Joachim Andersen, only to scuff his shot against the far post with just Sam Johnstone to beat.

Palace were denied a penalty after William Saliba's sliding tackle on Ayew was ignored by VAR. Nketiah was profligate again when he chipped over from just six yards after Declan Rice picked out the unmarked forward.

Arsenal kept their composure and Odegaard's fierce 25-yard strike forced a superb tip over from Johnstone. Odegaard wouldn't be denied again as the Norwegian netted from the spot in the 54th minute to reward Arsenal's dominant display. — AFP