

Established 1961

ISSUE NO: 18955  
16 PAGES, 150 FILLS

The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf

RAJAB 12, 1444 AH  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2023



**3** Designer reimagines Kuwait through AI art



**5** Tears, anger as police beating victim Tyre Nichols laid to rest



**11** After 102 children, Ugandan villager says enough is enough



**16** Ahly sweep aside Auckland in Club World Cup opener



## Panel meets to amend demographics

MP asks about education ministry efforts to curb cheating in exams



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah chairs a meeting of the demographics committee on Feb 2, 2023. — KUNA

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** A special government committee entrusted to cut the number of expats in the country adopted at its first meeting on Thursday a series of measures aimed at amending the imbalance in the demographic structure, which is tilted in favor of expats. Headed by Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the committee also adopted the necessary bylaws to help implement a law issued in 2020 aimed at reducing the number of expats and creating more jobs for Kuwaiti citizens.

The law aims at amending the imbalance in the population structure by reducing the number of expats, who currently form nearly 70 percent of the country's 4.5 million. MPs had demanded at the time of passing the law to make expats and Kuwaitis equal within five years. Sheikh Talal said the committee wants to deal with the distortions and imbalances in the population structure and the labor market in the country.

The committee issued a decision making it oblig-

atory for cooperative societies to speed up the process of appointing only Kuwaitis in senior positions at the societies, and increase the mandatory percentage of Kuwaiti employees to create around 3,000 new jobs for nationals. The committee issued a decision requiring the Public Authority of Manpower to design special training programs for Kuwaitis to develop their skills and enable them to find appropriate jobs in the private sector.

Meanwhile, MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi sent a series of questions to the minister of education over the ministry's efforts to curb cheating in exams following the busting of a network of 17 people who leaked the questions of higher secondary exams. He asked for the number of cheating cases in higher secondary exams registered by the ministry during the past five years, and inquired about the measures taken by the ministry to curb cheating. The lawmaker asked the minister if the education ministry had asked the health ministry about installing jamming devices at examination halls, and if yes, what was the answer of the health ministry.

### Adani empire loses more than \$100bn, stock sale canceled

**MUMBAI:** The crisis around Indian tycoon Gautam Adani deepened Thursday with the total loss of value to his indebted empire topping \$100 billion after it abruptly cancelled a stock sale. The going up in smoke of more than a third in value of the billionaire's conglomerate follows allegations of accounting fraud on Jan 24 by US short-seller Hindenburg Research.



Gautam Adani

Flagship firm Adani Enterprises dived more than 25 percent on Thursday on top of an almost 30-percent drop Wednesday. Other listed Adani units were subject to trading halts after falling as much as 10 percent, including Adani Total Gas in which France's TotalEnergies has a 37.4-percent stake. Further panic has seen big banks including Credit Suisse and Citigroup stop accepting Adani bonds as collateral for loans to private clients, according to Bloomberg News.

This raised worries about how Adani will raise fresh funds, with Adani dollar bonds trading at distressed levels and signs of contagion in Indian markets increasing, Bloomberg reported. The latest blow came after Adani late Wednesday cancelled a \$2.5-billion stock sale meant to help reduce debt levels - long a concern - restore confidence and broaden its shareholder base.

The issue failed to attract "mom and dad" retail investors and only sold out thanks to large institutional buyers, fellow Indian moguls and \$400 million from the United Arab Emirates' IHC. The Adani Enterprises board said in a statement that going ahead with the issue "would not be morally correct" and that it would refund all payments.

Adani himself insisted in a video statement that the "fundamentals of our company are very strong, our balance sheet is healthy and assets robust".

Continued on Page 6

### Largest haul of narcotics seized from int'l gang

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti authorities have made their largest-ever seizure of illegal Lyrica (pregabalin) pills, some 15 million, and half a ton of the drug in raw powder form, the interior ministry said on Wednesday. The drugs were found in the possession of an "international gang" during a raid on a storage hideout conducted under the direct supervision of First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the ministry said.

Authorities received information indicating the existence of a gang that obtained the tablets, alongside the drug in powder form, which it packaged in capsules for sale, read a statement by the ministry. After further investigations confirming the validity of the findings, and after obtaining legal permission, the hideout housing the narcotics was raided and searched.

Four people were arrested at the scene, with some 15 million tablets confiscated. Tablet compression and manufacturing devices and equipment alongside a large amount of packages were also seized. "Attempts to flood the country with this scourge have become more ferocious and professional, especially in the fields of promotion and smuggling."

Continued on Page 6



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah supervises the drugs seizure. — KUNA

### UAE 'Sultan of Space' plans to fast on ISS

**DUBAI:** The second Emirati to journey into space, martial arts enthusiast Sultan AlNeyadi, weighed up Thursday performing Ramadan in orbit - and promised to pack his jiu-jitsu suit for the ride. AlNeyadi, 41, dubbed the "Sultan of Space" by his alma mater, will blast off on Feb 26 for the International Space Station (ISS)

aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. During his six months in orbit - a record time for any Arab astronaut - AlNeyadi said he would like to observe the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims typically fast from dawn to sunset.

But space travel presents unique challenges. "The ISS travels quickly... meaning it orbits around the Earth in 90 minutes," he told reporters in Dubai. "On average, there are 16 sunrises and sunsets daily... When do you (start and) break your fast?" AlNeyadi said he could fast according to GMT time, which is used on the

Continued on Page 6



DUBAI: UAE astronaut Sultan AlNeyadi speaks at a press conference at the Museum of the Future on Feb 2, 2023. — AFP

### Egypt mummy ingredients discovered

**PARIS:** The discovery of dozens of beakers and bowls in a mummification workshop has helped reveal how ancient Egyptians embalmed their dead, with some "surprising" ingredients imported from as far as Southeast Asia, a study said Wednesday. The exceptional collection of pottery, dating from around 664-525 BC, was found at the bottom of a 13-m well at the Saqqara Necropolis south of Cairo in 2016.

Inside the vessels, researchers detected tree resin from Asia, cedar oil from Lebanon and bitumen from the Dead Sea, showing that global trade helped embalmers source the very best ingredients from across the world. Ancient Egyptians developed a remarkably advanced process to embalm corpses, believing that if bodies were kept intact they would reach the afterlife.

The process took up to 70 days. It involved desiccating the body with natron salt, and evisceration - removing the lungs, stomach, intestines and liver. The brain also came out. Then the embalmers, accompanied by priests, washed the body and used a variety of substances to prevent it

Continued on Page 6



This handout image shows an artist's impression of embalming scenes which could have taken place in Saqqara in Egypt. — AFP



9 780202 223841

## Local

# Ministry of Education opens employment for non-Kuwaitis

## New regulations to enhance education

**KUWAIT:** The Education Ministry has announced its need for applicants for education jobs from non-Kuwaitis for the 2023/24 academic year for holders of college degrees to work in public schools in specified specialties according to regulations. The rules include having no less than a C college grade, no applicants over 45 years of age, and hiring priority is after accepting all Kuwaitis in required specializations, followed by children of Kuwaiti mothers, then bedoon residents and then GCC nationals.

Expertise requirements include three years for non-education majors and two years for holders of education degrees, as experience certificates will be received in fields of government and private teaching only after being certified by official institutions. Children of Kuwaiti mothers and bedoons are exempt from the experience requirement.

Moreover, holders of PhDs should have at least a B grade, while master's degree holders should have at least an A grade. Graduates of the College of Education at Kuwait University, principal education college at PAAET and all government colleges in Kuwait are also exempt from the experience requirement.

### New regulations

In another development, Education Minister Dr Hamad Al-Adwani announced the Cabinet has granted the national bureau for academic accreditation and education quality assurance (NBAQ) new authorities that can determine requirements for academic accreditation for private universities, affirming their programs and review their performance instead of the council of private universities.

"The Cabinet made a decision to transfer the authority to the NBAQ to regulate education quality and ensure the validity of certificates, programs and performance in private universities. The role of the bureau is no longer limited to identifying lists of accredited universities abroad, but it has finally become able to monitor the quality of higher education locally by applying its academic standards set accurately with accordance to the requirements necessary to measure the level of academic programs and the quality of education in various institutions," Adwani said.

"This is only the first step, and we aspire to regulate the quality of education to expand the scope of the bureau's powers by following up the performance of academic programs in governmental institutions alike, similar to many academic

accreditation bodies in other countries, which are the bodies for academic accreditation locally. It serves as a safety valve to control the quality of education for our students studying abroad, as the recent Cabinet decision is an important step for the bureau to apply its clear and precise standards to educational programs in these institutions to control the quality of education granted to students," he added.

Adwani stressed there are serious steps to combat any negative phenomena that may affect the validity of the certificates obtained by students, praising the efforts of all employees of various higher education sectors in ensuring the validity of the certificates as well as the continuous updating of lists of accredited universities according to the highest academic standards.

## Kuwait and Britain lay groundwork for joint steering group talks

**LONDON:** Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Mansour Al-Otaibi on Wednesday held talks with Britain's Middle East Affairs Minister Lord Tariq Ahmad, ahead of a joint steering committee meeting in Kuwait later this month. The talks examined ongoing preparations for a separate Kuwaiti-British ministerial-level meeting slated for March, in addition to efforts aiming to improve bilateral trade and investment ties, according to a Kuwaiti embassy statement. The Kuwaiti diplomat and British minister also exchanged viewpoints on ongoing developments around the world, added the statement. —KUNA



LONDON: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Mansour Al-Otaibi meets with Britain's Middle East Affairs Minister Lord Tariq Ahmad. —KUNA photos

### Al-Shall Report

## Declining quality of education 'caused a 4.8-year gap'

**KUWAIT:** The government's action plan issued on April 2021 stated exactly as follows: "The declining quality of education has caused a 4.8-year gap as the educational level of a 12th grader is equivalent to that of a 7th grader in countries with similar GDP to that of Kuwait." This is disappointing as the 12th grade in Kuwait's public education system is the graduate level of high-school, and the 7th grade is the second level of middle-school.

However, what worsens the situation is that the student results (supposedly with an educational level equivalent to a 2nd-level middle school student) scored high grades that haven't been scored even in countries with outstanding education. The 2021/2022 educational year that was published last summer and was undertaken by around 44.6 thousand students, showed that 82% have passed and that around 34% scored 90% and above.

These outstanding results have been trending continuously over the last decade. Moreover, we didn't see any explanation from the government or educational authority regarding this contradiction. Students have scored outstanding results in high-school whilst having an educational gap of 4.8 years, and the time for miracles is long gone.

However, the worst is yet to come as there are two justifications for the contradiction. The first justification is that cheating has become a pandemic and what was recently revealed regarding leaking or buying exam answers and who thousands of students, their parents and officials are part of, is just the tip of the iceberg. The other justification is that education has become a bribery tool to gain political loyalty. In other words, it's okay to transform a whole generation to being ignorant for the sake of some guardians who actually protested against changing exam proctors who facilitate cheating.

This is our explanation for the contradiction; however, one of its dire results is appointing individuals, graduating from this system, as authorities with high ranks within the country. Some of these individuals even carry forged certificates. This means that the education gap isn't the only problem and may not be the worst. The worse relies in the integrity gap, and the danger befalls from the fact that current and future generations coming from this era will have a major role in managing the country's affairs.

Even with the aforementioned contradiction, the ministry of education annually establishes three committees to reward its employees for their excellent achievements. To our understanding, excellent achievements in the ministry of education should be based on the integrity and quality of education rather than on employee attendance. In parallel, there are populist suggestions regarding increasing student privileges (not as incentives for enrolling in rare specializations, having outstanding educational performance, or enrolling in reputable universities) as a bribe that adds up to the employee rewards to preserve the continuation of a disappointing educational system.

Destroying the educational system and its integrity is sufficient to inflict damage not even sought by enemies. On the other hand, Kuwait is on the verge of establishing a new government, and we hope for once, that it takes action and prioritizes education on its agenda rather than cloning "quota governments", and the destruction of human capital is irreversible.



Spanish folklore performance.



Children in Spanish costumes participate in the exhibition.



Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait and Abrar Al-Masoud

## 'Feria De Kuwait' exhibition showcases Spanish culture

**KUWAIT:** The "Feria De Kuwait" exhibition offers a glimpse into Spanish culture and heritage via an assortment of activities and featured products. The event, held in Al-Rai district upon the initiative of Abrar Al-Masoud, is sponsored by the Ministry of Information and Ministry of State for Municipal Affairs. Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Maro Aguilar, who attended the exhibition, told KUNA that he was mesmerized by the event for its detailed depiction of several Spanish cities, which became a preferable destination for many Kuwaitis. He also affirmed that he was impressed with the total atmosphere of the exhibition featuring Spanish music and folklore, adding that such functions promoted closer bilateral ties. —KUNA



'Feria De Kuwait' showcases Spanish culture and heritage. —KUNA photos

## Equine glamor on display in Kuwait beauty pageant

**KUWAIT:** Some 298 purebred horses from Kuwait and abroad participated in a beauty pageant on Wednesday - delivering unparalleled equestrian glamour to viewers in attendance. The four-day event is divided into numerous categories that aim to put on display all forms of equine glamour, its chief organizer Nasser Al-Ghaith told KUNA, giving credit to horse breeders and state bodies alike for their contributions towards the event. Hailing the event as emblematic of the region's rich equestrian tradition, he pointed out that a separate contest involving Egyptian-bred horses would be held concurrently. —KUNA



Nasser Al-Ghaith



Local

# Kuwaiti interior designer unveils innovative designs

'Direction of innovation bears significant social, economic, environmental implications'



Apple store in the middle of the desert.



Kuwait Zoo building

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Sustainable architecture can have a significant impact on the development of countries, while innovation is a major driving force of long-term economic growth and sustainable development and can lead to higher productivity. As productivity rises, the direction of innovation bears significant social, economic and environmental development implications. Recently, creative designs went viral on social media platforms representing Kuwait in a new innovative light. Kuwait Times spoke with interior designer Abdullah Erhamah, who has been working in the design industry for 13 years to learn more about his vision for the future of Kuwait.

**Kuwait Times:** When did you start thinking about future visions for Kuwait?

**Abdullah Erhamah:** Recently, I noticed that

unfamiliar and innovative designs are what distinguish one country from another. Such designs attract people to visit the country. With the help of technology, artificial intelligence and modern programs, I was able to combine my ideas with my designs to add a creative touch to the future of Kuwait.

**Kuwait Times:** What is the purpose of the designs?

**Erhamah:** I wanted the designs to be unique and distinguished, while proving the fact that as a Kuwaiti designer, I should not underestimate my abilities.

**Kuwait Times:** Tell us more about the designs and visualizations that were posted on social media platforms.

**Erhamah:** I made sure to design public places in order to be noticed by the public. The designs include innovative bus stops, a zoo, an interna-

tional stadium on the seaside and an airport in Mutlaa. My favorite design is the Apple store in Subiya desert - what distinguishes it is the combination of the concept of modern technology and a primitive desert environment. The idea was to use the space in the desert, preserve the environment and enjoy the beauty of the simple design.

**Kuwait Times:** What distinguishes your designs from current ones?

**Erhamah:** The designs reflect my personal thoughts. I noticed the reaction of people on social media; they wanted distinguished, modern and beautiful designs to keep pace with international sustainable architecture.

**Kuwait Times:** Did anyone reach you from the public sector to implement one of the designs?

**Erhamah:** Yes, I was contacted by a governmental institution, but these designs require effort

and teamwork to convert them into executable plans that suit the Kuwaiti environment. I hope to see these perceptions applied on the ground.

**Kuwait Times:** What are your future plans?

**Erhamah:** Raising awareness of the importance of interior design and the beauty of exterior designs of the building. I am seeking to work more to see Kuwait strive to become the pearl of the world. And I wish and hope to support ambitious Kuwaiti youth and adopt their ideas one day.



Kuwaiti interior designer Abdullah Erhamah

## Collector offers glimpse of historical Kuwaiti flag

**KUWAIT:** The private collection of Abdullah Mohammad Bin Nasser contains a valuable piece offering a glimpse of the old Kuwaiti flag dating back to circa 1936. Bin Nasser acquired the historic flag during extensive tour and search for antiquities. The flag has a red and white color with an inscription of Kuwait and Shahada (profession of faith) on it in addition to a golden embroidery of the Amiri Crown, the state symbol back in the day. The piece reflected the infancy of the modern State of Kuwait. Around the 1960s, it was replaced with the current flag colored in green, white, red, and black.

The historian bin Nasser was able to obtain this precious piece as part of his shuttle and relentless trips to select and acquire precious pieces that reflect the history of Kuwait's establishment and independence, passing through all stages of pearl diving, the desert life and the eventual discovery and extraction of oil.

The documentation of that rare copy of the ancient flag was approved, signed by Dr Abdullah Al-Ghunaim, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait (CRSK). The country's flag went through different stages and accompanied the establishment and development of the state until the late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait at the time, decided in 1960 to replace the old flag with its red and white colors with a new flag consisting of four colors, each with a specific symbol that is still the same in force and officially approved to this day. —KUNA



## Gulf Federation for Cancer Control outlines campaign's success

By Ghadeer Ghoulm

**KUWAIT:** Under the auspices of Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi, the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control marked its 8th year of raising awareness of cancer in GCC countries. The event was held on Feb 1, 2023 to shed light on the campaign's success at improving awareness on detecting different types of cancers in early stages.

It took place at Kuwait Towers in the presence of Dr Hessah Majed Al-Shaheen, committee president of the 8th edition for raising awareness on cancer, Dr Khaled Ahmad Al-Saleh, General Secretary of the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control, Dr Assad Hafeez, WHO representative in Kuwait, and Dr Hmood Al-Zoubi, Director of the department of non-communicable diseases.

Dr Shaheen said that this year the president of the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control decided to include the support of people who have recovered from cancer. She said this category deserves everyone's encouragement because they have experienced cancer and recovered, therefore, they take part in uplifting those who are still fighting the disease. Their positivity affects ill people psychologically and motivates them towards quick recovery. The campaign worked towards focusing part of its activities on this brave category and harnessing their important role in delivering the awareness message the campaign is initiating this year, in addition to shedding light on the importance of their role in society.

Dr Shaheen said the slogan that is chosen for this

year is "Our Gulf is Wise", signifying the achievements of this collaborative week that inherits its success from the past seven years. She said the campaign continues to succeed at raising awareness of cancer in its early stages, which affords a high rate of recovery, in addition to constantly encouraging individuals to embrace a healthy lifestyle that includes healthy nutrition, physical exercise and psychological wellbeing.

Dr Saleh further elaborated on the campaign's achievements. He said at the beginning of this campaign, 80 percent of the population in GCC countries used to fear cancer and consider it a fatal disease that cannot be cured. This percentage started decreasing until it reached 55 percent in 2017. According to a 5-year survey conducted from 2014 till 2019, in 2014, 65 percent believed this disease is fatal, 40 percent knew about two risk factors and 20 percent were aware of early checkup programs.

The percentages improved in 2019 as 45 percent believed cancer is an incurable disease, while the awareness of two risk factors increased to 55 percent and awareness of early checkup programs increased to 45 percent. Today, people who come for medication after reaching late stages of cancer are approximately 40 percent. The Gulf Federation for Cancer Control has set a goal that people who reach late stages of cancer do not exceed 10 percent. Dr Saleh said in order to succeed at reaching this goal, constant training and work is a must. Trainers must know the key to success is persistence; therefore, they should not lose hope and enthusiasm.

He added in Kuwait, the campaign has already trained 2,500 male and female nurses and 1,318 dentists, so oral cancer no longer appears in late stages as it used to because the majority of dentists today are trained on the "visual screening program" which makes dentists capable of detecting oral can-



**KUWAIT:** (From left) Dr Hessah Al-Shaheen, Dr Hmood Al-Zoubi, Dr Khaled Al-Saleh and Dr Assad Hafeez are pictured during the event. Under the auspices of Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Abdulwahab Al-Awadhi, the Gulf Federation for Cancer Control celebrated its 8th week for raising awareness on cancer in GCC countries.

cer in their patients. He said 1,265 doctors were trained on detecting various kinds of cancer and the process of treatment, in addition to youths such as female students, who were trained to detect breast cancer, as breast cancer has started appearing at younger ages in Kuwait compared to other countries. The campaign has reached 127,000 students so far.

Additionally, Dr Hafeez emphasized on the importance of awareness of cancer, which the ministry of health, other Gulf countries and WHO are organizing this week. He said prevalence of cancer is rising all around the world, but also in the region and Kuwait. There are various reasons for this, he said, but the good thing is that cancer can now be

managed very well if detected early through screening and proper treatment.

He also said that it is necessary to create awareness among the general public on how to be more aware, what are the options people can access for early screening, early detection and early management of cancer. That's why holding similar activities is very important for any country and any population, Dr Hafeez said. At the end of the event, Dr Zoubi said awareness and programs that detect cancer are essential for preventing cancer, especially breast, colon and colorectal cancer. He said a lot of efforts are being exerted by all departments of the ministry of health to raise awareness and prevent cancer.

## Kuwait committed to OPEC+ decisions on energy supplies

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Oil Minister Bader Al-Mulla on Thursday confirmed Kuwait's full commitment to decisions taken by OPEC+ alliance to guarantee stable energy supplies to global market. Al-Mulla made the remarks in a statement by his ministry, after participating in a joint ministerial committee meeting to monitor production (JMCM), which was held via teleconference Thursday night. The minister praised OPEC+ agreement to maintain the production ceiling until the end of this year, affirming that such decision would support stability and balance in the market. Al-Mulla asserted that OPEC+ is following up closely the oil markets and economic data with a view to maintaining the stability of the energy market.

The Joint Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMCM) of OPEC and non-OPEC member countries reviewed the crude oil production data for the months of November and December 2022. During its 47th Meeting, held via videoconference, the Committee noted the overall conformity for participating OPEC and non-OPEC countries of the Declaration of Cooperation (DoC). The Members of the JMCM reaffirmed their commitment to the DoC, which extends to the end of 2023 as agreed in the 33rd OPEC and non-OPEC Ministerial Meeting (ONOMM) on October 5, 2022. They urged all participating countries to achieve full conformity and adhere to the compensation mechanism, according to a press release from OPEC. The Committee thanked the OPEC Secretariat for their contribution to the meeting, the statement said, adding that the next meeting of the JMCM (48th) is scheduled for April 3, 2023. —KUNA

## Local

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher  
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief  
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 353/3561  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618  
P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.com

## News in brief

## Pan-Arab volunteerism

**KUWAIT:** A Kuwait-based planning body has underlined the significance of more volunteer projects in the wider Arab region, saying such endeavors help usher in national development. Fresh off garnering an international order in recognition of his contributions towards development projects around the globe, Arab Planning Institute (API) Chief Dr Bader Malallah said he was grateful for the accolade, which is a testament to the body's support of volunteerism in the region. The order given to the Kuwaiti official by the Saudi Arabia-based Prince Mohamad bin Fahad institute is in acknowledgment of the "technical and logistical" API has provided in a bid to give impetus to volunteer projects around the region.

## GCC's support for Yemen

**RIYADH:** Newly-appointed Gulf Cooperation Council chief Jassem Al-Budaiwi has reiterated the bloc's support for steps to attain security, peace and stability in Yemen, ensuring an end to the crisis and efforts to reach a comprehensive peaceful solution there. The six-nation GCC also backs efforts to bring peace and development based on the 'three references,' represented by the Gulf initiative, its executive mechanism, the outcomes of the national dialogue and United Nations resolution 2216. Secretary-General Al-Budaiwi added. The GCC is committed to ongoing support for the wellbeing of the Yemen's people alongside regional and international efforts to achieve safety and security there, he said. The remarks were made during a phone call with Yemen's Foreign Minister Ahmad bin Mubarak, who congratulated the new GCC chief on assuming office. The GCC Secretariat said in a statement. Both officials also discussed political, military and economic developments in Yemen. —From KUNA

## Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** Astrophotographers Abdullah Al-Harbi (left) and Mohammad Al-Obaidi follow the comet C/2022 E3 (ZTF) early on Feb 2, 2023 in the Salmi desert, some 120 km northwest of Kuwait City. The comet, visible to the naked eye, is shooting past Earth and the Sun for the first time in 50,000 years. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## South African ambassador thanks media for support

**KUWAIT:** South African Ambassador to Kuwait Manelisi Genge held a dinner on Feb 1, 2023 to thank media houses for their support and role in promoting South Africa in Kuwait and reiterate the embassy's commitment to enhance relations with stakeholders in Kuwait.

The event aimed to invite media to continue being an important partner for South Africa, considering their role in strengthening South Africa's relations with Kuwait. It also sought to inform media of the embassy's intention to continue holding this engagement of South Africa's stakeholders in Kuwait on an annual basis, going forward, for the duration of Ambassador Genge's tour of duty in Kuwait.

The envoy made the following remarks during the event: South Africa and Kuwait have solid cordial diplomatic, political and economic relations. The governments of the two countries have signed agreements/MoUs establishing legal framework of their bilateral relations. The two countries continue to support each other at international fora. Kuwait has become an important market for South



Ambassador Manelisi Genge



**KUWAIT:** Ambassador Manelisi Genge poses for a group photo with journalists and media personnel. Ambassador thanked the media houses for their support and role in promoting South Africa. He reiterated the Embassy's commitment to enhance the relations with its stakeholders in Kuwait.

African high quality food products, which include fresh fruits and vegetables, chilled meat, juices, spices, salad dressings, cereals and dairy products, among others. These food products can be found at Lulu Hypermarket, cooperative societies and other retail outlets.

The value of South Africa's exports to Kuwait during Q3 of 2022 was \$26,723,376, while the value of its imports from Kuwait during Q3 of 2022 was \$295,741,253 and South Africa is hopeful and positive that these figures would increase. Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), Kuwait Auto Parts Import Company (KAPICO), ACICO Group, Al-Handiwe Safari, Al Mawashi Company, Lulu Hypermarket, Universal Al-Abbar Foodstuff and Meat Trading Company, and United Universal Meat Trading and Foodstuff Company, amongst others. There are other SA companies present in Kuwait through franchise, ie The Meat Co, Mugg & Bean and Ocean Basket.

South Africa is open for business and is working on attracting more foreign investors to invest in various sectors including: Mining, agricultural and agro-processed products, livestock, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment, healthcare services, engineering and construction, real estate development, banking services, and storage and logistics services.

South Africa is always ready to welcome Kuwaiti and expatriate travelers, where they can experience its renowned tourist destinations and countless experiences for everyone's interests. South Africa's touristic attractions include wildlife, trans frontier parks, beaches, scenic beauty, adventure activities, history and World Heritage Sites. South Africa's unique weather, well-established infrastructure, friendly people make it one of the rewarding touristic destinations. Tourism in South Africa is also affordable, given its huge choice of accommodation and easy visa processing, amongst others.

South Africa has signed and ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement. AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects of the AU's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want. The continent has a significant economic potential and AfCFTA promises a greater and deepened economic integration, to promote access to the African market by African businesses to build the "Africa We Want"/prosperous Africa. The African continent would be able to eliminate barriers to trade in Africa, improve/strengthen regional value chains and offer countries opportunity to boost competitiveness and diversify product supply; moreover, making Africa the most attractive prospect for foreign investors.

Scan & Subscribe  
KD 20 a year

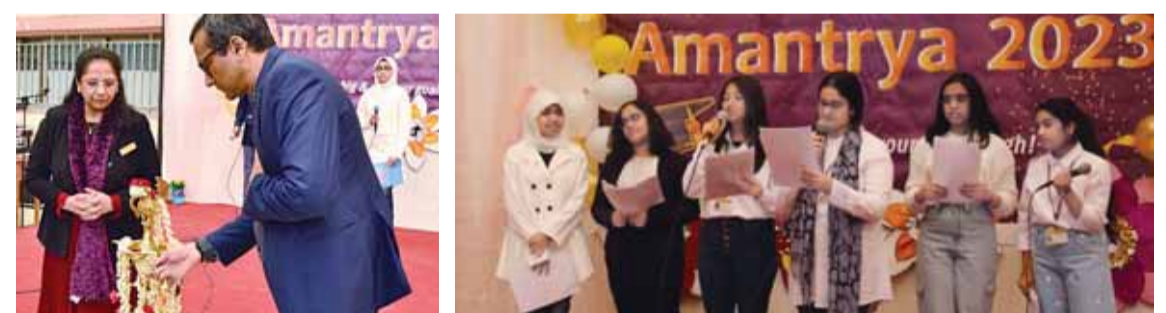
For Individuals Only



Scan Now

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

Tel: 24833199 Ext:220



## ICSK Amman bids farewell to students

**KUWAIT:** Bidding farewell is not easy and parting is always painful. And that too for students leaving their second home, school, a place where they have spent the most wonderful days forging strong friendship and bond is truly painful. Amantraya, the poignant blessing ceremony is an occasion filled with mixed feelings, emotions, joys of achievement and tears of separation.

The Indian Community School Kuwait, Amman, bid farewell to the outgoing batch of class 10 students of the academic year 2022-23 on 29th January, 2023. The program was flawlessly organized and presented with great enthusiasm by the teachers and students of class 9. Amantraya commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran. Following that, Principal Rajesh Nair, Vice Principal Dr Mary Isaac, Supervisor of the secondary section Sumitra Nandakumar and all the class teachers of class 10 lit the lamp spreading the aura of peace and tranquility.

The Vice President of the student Senate warmly welcomed the gathering. The children of primary and secondary took the stage by storm with their awesome, synchronized and fabulous, foot tapping dances and belted out soulful and melodious songs which entertained and enthralled everyone. A short peak into the year of class 10 with an audio-visual presentation took back everyone through the indelible moments of their school life.

The supervisors from Intermediate and secondary sections and the class teachers of class 10 delivered their bountiful best wishes and blessings to the outgoing



batch through their inspirational words tinged with nostalgic feelings. They called upon the Almighty to shower His blessings on the children. They bade the children to remember all the teachers from the very beginning of their school life who helped shape their personality and character.

Principal Rajesh Nair delivered the key note address to the students. Vice Principal Dr. Mary Isaac also addressed the gathering and wished the students well. Their motivational words urged the children to surge ahead with hard work, optimism and cheerfulness. They also advised the children to hold all their teachers, past, present and future in high esteem. A few students of the outgoing batch of 2022-23 reminisced upon their most memorable and awesome moments of their Alma mater that moved everyone.

The Principal then distributed awards of merit in various categories and mementos were handed over to all the outgoing children. Drawing the event to the close was the vote of thanks by the President of the student senate. 'Amantraya' ended with the customary blessings from the Principal, Vice-Principal and all the teachers wishing the children all the very best for their bright future.



US reopens Solomons embassy, vying with China for influence

## Zionist warplanes strike Gaza following rocket fire



MEMPHIS: US Reverend Al Sharpton delivers the eulogy during the funeral service for Tyre Nichols at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church on Feb 1, 2023. — AFP

# Tears, anger as Nichols laid to rest

## We mourn with you, and the people of our country mourn with you: Harris

MEMPHIS: Civil rights leaders, family and friends came together in a Memphis church Wednesday to bid farewell to Tyre Nichols, the 29-year-old African American whose fatal beating by police shocked the nation — and triggered urgent calls for reform.

“We mourn with you, and the people of our country mourn with you,” Vice President Kamala Harris told the young man’s family during a rousing service punctuated by gospel music and emotional speeches. Anger is still simmering over Nichols’ death on January 10, three days after he was beaten and kicked in a traffic stop by five Black police officers — rekindling a national debate about brutality in law enforcement.

Calling out the officers over the deadly “act of violence,” Harris urged Congress to pass a stalled reform bill named for George Floyd, whose murder by police in 2020 ignited waves of unrest across the country and beyond.

Speaking through tears, Nichols’ mother RowVaughn Wells joined Harris in calling on lawmakers to act — flanked by the veteran civil rights leader Al Sharpton who delivered the eulogy for her son. “We need to take some action,” Wells said.

“Because if we don’t, the next child that dies — that blood is going to be on their hands.”

During the ceremony, Nichols was remembered as “a beautiful soul, a son, a father, a brother, a friend, a human being, gone too soon,” in the words of Reverend J. Lawrence Turner. Mourners were shown pictures shot by the young man, a keen photographer, as well as clips of him skateboarding — another passion.

“All I want is my baby brother back,” said Keyana Dixon, his older sister, who noted that even as he was being beaten by police her brother remained polite asking them to “Please stop.” Another relative read a poem inspired by the excruciating footage of his fatal encounter with police, titled “I’m Just Trying To Go Home.”

In a sign of the far-reaching resonance of Nichols’ death, Harris was joined at the funeral by the director Spike Lee, and by relatives of other Black victims of police violence, including George Floyd’s brother Philonise Floyd. Also present was Tamika Palmer, the mother of Breonna Taylor, who was killed in a botched raid on her Kentucky home in 2020. Like Floyd, Taylor has since become one of

the icons of the Black Lives Matter movement seeking police reform and racial justice.

### ‘Thugs’

Nichols was arrested by members of a special police unit called Scorpion in Memphis on January 7 for what police said was a traffic violation. He was beaten viciously, as recorded in body camera and security camera footage that triggered national outrage when it was made public last week.

The five officers involved have been fired and are facing murder charges. Two others along with three firefighters have been suspended as the investigation continues. In his eulogy, Sharpton said the officers had betrayed the spirit of the movement led by Martin Luther King, who was shot dead in a racist attack in Memphis in 1968. African Americans would never have been hired by Memphis police without the campaign led by King, said Sharpton. “People had to march and go to jail and some lost their lives to open the doors for you. And how dare you act like that sacrifice was for nothing?”

“You don’t fight crime by becoming criminals yourself,” he said. “You don’t stand up to thugs in

the street becoming thugs yourself.” Sharpton also argued that Nichols’ race was a factor in how police treated him, saying the officers would not have subjected a white person to such a beating.

City data published by The New York Times showed that while black residents make up two-thirds of the population of Memphis, since 2016 they had accounted for 86 percent of encounters in which police used force.

President Joe Biden had also reached out to Nichols’ family ahead of the funeral, declaring himself “outraged and deeply pained” by his death. Like Harris, the president has renewed calls for police reform — which he is set to discuss at the White House on Thursday with members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

As Nichols’ funeral took place, a new uproar was building over a bystander video from Los Angeles that appears to show the moments before police officers shot dead a double amputee, an African American, as he fled on his stumps. The officers involved said they were responding to reports of an unprovoked stabbing carried out by a man in a wheelchair. — AFP

## Russia strikes Ukraine housing apartment

KYIV: Rescuers searched for survivors in the rubble of an apartment building in eastern Ukraine on Thursday after a Russian strike destroyed it, as Kyiv said it expected a major offensive on the first anniversary of Moscow’s invasion.

At least three people were killed Wednesday and 20 wounded when a Russian rocket struck a residential building in the centre of Kramatorsk, located in Ukraine’s eastern industrial region of Donetsk. Rescuers wearing torches on their heads worked to pull survivors from the debris, their faces covered in dust as they tried to find any signs of life under the cover of night.

After discovering the body of a resident who was crushed under the rubble, rescuers carried the victim away on a stretcher, as firefighters worked their way through the mangled building structure. Donetsk regional police said paramedics, search-and-rescue dogs, and explosive experts were combing the area as they believed that more people could be trapped.

“I first heard a whistle and then everything started to fly around,” said Petro, 71, whose apartment



KRAMATORSK: Rescuers remove debris to search for survivors at a destroyed apartment building hit by a rocket in downtown Kramatorsk. — AFP

was damaged. “Peaceful people died and are under the rubble,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote after the rocket strike.

“This is the daily reality of life in our country.” The strike in Donetsk—where Moscow has claimed to have captured fresh ground recently—came as the first anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine approached.

“Given that (the Russians) live through symbols, we think that they will try something around

February 24,” Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov said during an interview with French television, broadcast late Wednesday.

“They could try an offensive on two fronts... We need arms to counter the enemy,” he said. “We do not underestimate our enemy... Their mobilisation has not stopped,” he said. Reznikov said Kyiv believes Moscow has deployed about half a million troops—far more than Russia’s claim of 300,000 personnel currently mobilised. —AFP

## Pilgrims walk nine days to see Pope Francis

JUBA: Hanah Zachariah is so determined to see Pope Francis in South Sudan that she walked nine days in sandals to reach the capital where he makes his long-awaited visit. On Thursday, the 20-year-old reached the outskirts of Juba after walking most of the way from the central town of Rumbek — a journey of around 400 kilometres (250 miles). She was not alone.

Sixty other young pilgrims and spiritual leaders trod the distance, waving flags, singing hymns and preaching unity in a country scarred by years of civil war. “We are walking for peace. When we reach Juba, we are going to

welcome the pope. I am very excited to see him,” Zachariah told AFP, as passing cars honked their horns and cheered at the colourful convoy.

Francis arrives on Friday for a three-day visit to South Sudan, the first by any pope since the predominantly Christian nation split from Muslim-majority Sudan in 2011. Its history since independence has been marred by five years of ethnic bloodshed that left 380,000 people dead and much of the young country in ruins.

### ‘Blisters’

Many hope Francis can restore a spirit of unity and brotherhood, and South Sudanese are flocking to Juba to hear his message of reconciliation. Among them is John Sebit, a pastoral worker who covered the distance from Rumbek along dirt roads in flip flops. “When we started the journey, it was challenging. Some people had blisters on their feet... But with motivation, we



JUBA: About 60 young pilgrims and spiritual leaders reach Bori village on the outskirts of Juba, on February 2, 2023 after walking most of the way from the central town of Rumbek, a journey of some 400 kilometres, for peace ahead of Pope Francis’ visit to South Sudan. —AFP

kept going,” the 26-year-old told AFP. Father Christian Carlassare, the bishop of Rumbek, confessed to having “sore feet” after setting off on January 25 but said walking was a powerful act of soli-

arity. “You do not walk alone,” said Carlassare, an Italian who has lived in South Sudan for more than 15 years, and was shot multiple times at his home in 2021 after being named bishop. —AFP

## Lula candidate wins Senate chief post

BRASILIA: A lawmaker backed by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was reelected leader of Brazil’s Senate Wednesday, fending off a challenge from a rival supported by far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro. In a win for veteran leftist Lula, Rodrigo Pacheco held onto his post as president of the upper house of Congress, defeating Rogerio Marinho of Bolsonaro’s Liberal Party (PL) by a vote of 49 to 32.

Pacheco is from the centrist Social Democratic Party (PSD), which also managed to displace the PL as the largest party in the incoming Senate thanks to a whirlwind of last-minute deal-making. He promised the “due independence” of the Senate from the executive branch.

But the Congress elected in the October polls that brought Lula to office is still largely dominated by conservatives, with the PL the largest party in the lower house. That threatens to make life difficult for Lula, the 77-year-old former metalworker turned three-time president who narrowly defeated Bolsonaro in an October 30 runoff.

Members of the 513-seat Chamber of Deputies and 81-seat Senate were sworn in Wednesday in a tightly guarded ceremony, less than a month after rioters invaded Congress, the Supreme Court and the presidential palace, claiming Lula’s win was fraudulent.

The lower house leadership vote was won by a record 464 ballots by incumbent speaker Arthur Lira, a key figure in a loose coalition of parties dubbed the “Centrao” that is known for its knack for securing government pork and prized posts. “It is time to douse the flames in Brazil, relax relations and the powers of the Republic must set an example,” Lira said after his victory.

Lula congratulated both men on Twitter, and wished them “good management.” Lira’s post is a powerful one in Brazil. The speaker of the lower house is second in the line of presidential succession, after the vice president, and has the power to decide whether to allow impeachment proceedings to move forward. —AFP

## International

# Zionist warplanes strike Gaza following rocket fire

## Zionist entity target military training camps used by Hamas

**GAZA CITY:** Zionist warplanes struck Gaza early Thursday, drawing retaliatory rocket fire from Palestinian militants, as violence flared despite US calls for "urgent steps" to restore calm. Zionist entity said the pre-dawn strikes were in response to an earlier rocket launch and targeted military training camps used by Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas.

A statement from the Zionist military said fighter jets had "struck a production site for raw chemical material production, preservation and storage along with a weapon manufacturing site" belonging to Hamas. The strikes came "in response to the rocket launch from the Gaza Strip into Zionist entity earlier" Wednesday.

"(Hamas) will face the consequences of the security violations against Zionist entity," the army said on Twitter. Defence Minister Yoav Gallant vowed that the Zionist entity stood ready to respond to any attack. "Every attempt to harm our citizens will be met with the full force of the IDF." Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem called the Zionist strikes "a continuation of the cycle of aggression against the Palestinian people".

He accused Zionist entity of "opening the door to escalation on the ground". During talks with Zionist entity and Palestinian leaders earlier this week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged both sides to prevent further bloodshed. He expressed sorrow for "innocent" Palestinians killed in months of spiralling violence in the Zionist-occupied West Bank, warning that the Palestinian people faced "a shrinking horizon of hope".

The US top diplomat's visit came after a deadly upsurge in violence in the West Bank last week. A Palestinian shot dead seven people outside a synagogue in a Zionist settler neighbourhood of annexed east Jerusalem on Friday, a day after the deadliest army raid in years in the West Bank killed 10 Palestinians.

The synagogue attack on the Jewish Sabbath was the deadliest targeting Zionist civilians in more than a decade and was celebrated by many Palestinians in Gaza and across the West Bank. Zionist entity said its deadly raid on Jenin refugee camp targeted Islamic Jihad militants. An 11th Palestinian was killed elsewhere in the West Bank that day.

This year the conflict has killed 35 Palestinians - including attackers, militants and civilians - as well as the six Zionist civilians, including a child, and one Ukrainian, killed on Friday. Last year was the deadliest year in the West Bank since the United Nations started tracking fatalities in the territory in 2005.

Some 235 people died in the Zionist-Palestinian conflict last year, with nearly 90 percent of the deaths on the Palestinian side, according to AFP figures. The Palestinian governor of Jericho on Wednesday accused the Zionist entity of putting the town under "siege" after a Saturday shooting at a restaurant, which had no casualties.

Jericho's ancient ruins have been a major tourism draw in the past. "This is the fifth day of the siege on Jericho," governor Jihad Abu al-Assal told AFP. Zionist entity's army told AFP it had boosted its forces in the area and "inspections were increased at the



**GAZA CITY:** Smoke rises above buildings in Gaza City as Zionist entity launched air strikes on the Palestinian enclave early on February 2, 2023. Zionist entity conducted air strikes on the central Gaza Strip hours after intercepting a rocket fired from the Palestinian territory. — AFP

city's entrances and exits".

An AFP correspondent said cars were backed up at entrances to the city, with checks to get in and out of the city often taking hours. Islamic Jihad said it would send a delegation led by the militant group's leader Ziad al-Nakhala to Cairo on Thursday at

Egypt's invitation.

The delegation would meet with the head of Egypt's intelligence service to discuss "how to restore calm, especially after the last escalation, including the aggressions against prisoners", said Daoud Shihab, a senior Islamic Jihad member in Gaza. — AFP

## Canada moves to take in 10,000 Uyghur refugees

**OTTAWA:** Canada's parliament on Wednesday unanimously passed a motion to take in 10,000 Uyghur refugees who fled China but are now facing pressure to return. The move builds on a February 2021 move by Canadian lawmakers to label Beijing's treatment of Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in its northwestern Xinjiang territory as genocide.

Rights groups believe at least one million Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim minorities have been incarcerated in internment camps in the region, where China is also accused of forcibly sterilizing women and imposing forced labor. Tens of thousands have fled.

And according to backbench MP Sameer Zuberi, who sponsored the motion, at least 1,600 have been detained in other countries at China's behest or forcibly repatriated. — AFP

## Nigeria election office attacked weeks before vote

**LAGOS:** Gunmen wielding explosives bombed a local election office and a police station in southeast Nigeria, killing a teenage boy and destroying voting materials, officials said, weeks before the country's presidential ballot. The attack on Wednesday on the Idemili office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Anambra state was the latest attack on electoral authorities in the lead up to the February 25 election.

Insecurity is a major issue in the campaign for the vote to succeed President Muhammadu Buhari, a former army commander who is stepping down after two terms allowed in the constitution. "The building was substantially damaged. All furniture and other items were destroyed, including non-sensitive materials recently delivered in readiness for the 2023 General Election," INEC's national spokesman Festus Okoye said in a statement late Wednesday.

He said among the items lost were 729 ballot boxes, 243 voting cubicles and 256 election bags. Okoye said

voters cards yet to be collected by their owners for the ballot were not affected by the fire. "The destruction appears to have been coordinated as the Mobile Police Station in the LGA (local government area) was similarly attacked," he added.

Since it emerged from military rule in 1999, elections in Africa's most populous nation have often been marred by violence, claims of vote-rigging and logistical problems. INEC has expressed concerns over repeated attacks on its facilities, fearing they may jeopardise the election, though INEC's chairman Mahmood Yakubu has said the upcoming ballot will go ahead as planned and without delays.

But Yakubu said this week there were some concerns about recent gasoline shortages affecting logistics on election day. INEC met with the NNPC state oil company to discuss how to manage any scarcity. "The truth is our arrangements may be negatively affected by the non-availability of products," he told reporters.

Anambra police spokesman Ikenga Tochukwu said Wednesday's gunmen, armed also with improvised explosives and petrol bombs, invaded the INEC office, the police station and the residential building in the station. He said a boy was killed and a girl injured in the assault. Violence in southeast Nigeria is often blamed on the separatist militant group Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network.



**LAGOS:** Lagos State governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu (L) gestures as he stands beside Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari (R) during the inauguration of Lagos Rail Mass Transit Blue line at Marina station in Lagos. — AFP

IPOB, which agitates for a separate state for ethnic Igbo people in the southeast, has repeatedly denied any responsibility for the violence. Scores of police and other security personnel have been killed in southeastern states since the beginning of last year in targeted attacks, according to local media tallies. Separatism is sensitive in Nigeria, where a 1967 call for an independent Republic of Biafra in the southeast by Igbo army officers sparked a three-year civil war that left more than one million people dead. — AFP

## Adani empire loses more than...

Continued from Page 1

"Once the market stabilizes, we will review our capital market strategy," he said, stressing that its record on paying back debt was "impeccable". Adani, a 60-year-old publicity-shy school dropout, has seen his operations expand at break-neck speed, with Adani Enterprises shares soaring more than 1,000 percent over the past five years.

Until last week, he was the world's third-richest man. By Thursday he had slipped down to 16th place in the real-time Forbes rich list. According to Hindenburg Research, Adani artificially boosted the share prices of its units by funneling money into the stocks through offshore tax havens. This "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme" is "the largest con in corporate history", Hindenburg said.

Adani said it was the victim of a "maliciously mischievous" reputational attack and issued a 413-page statement on Sunday that it said showed Hindenburg's claims were "nothing but a lie". Hindenburg, which makes money by betting on stocks falling, said in response that Adani failed to answer most of the questions raised in its report. Critics say Adani's close relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is also from Gujarat state, has helped him win business and avoid

proper oversight.

Analysts say the turmoil has hurt India's image just as it seeks to woo overseas investors away from China. Independent markets commentator Srinath Sridharan said the crisis was a key test for India's financial regulators. "Are they asking questions, demanding disclosures? All that is extremely critical," Sridharan told AFP, calling the mayhem a "lesson for India Inc".

India's central bank has asked lenders for details of their exposure to the Adani Group - whose interests include ports, telecoms, airports, media and coal, oil and solar power - Bloomberg reported citing unnamed sources. "Now the question becomes: Are they forced to actually go and sell off crown jewels to strategic investors? I would expect that is what Adani will end up having to do," Tim Buckley, an Australian energy analyst who monitors India, told AFP.

Parliament was adjourned on Thursday morning after repeated interjections from lawmakers demanding the government grant a debate on Adani and the level of exposure by public-sector banks and financial institutions. Other Indian equities have remained steady since Adani's slide and Indian tech minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told Bloomberg TV said he was not worried about a domino effect. "India has a very broad spectrum of infrastructure companies," he said. "Whatever blip is there on the stock market is not going to affect the overall economy, I am very sure of that." — AFP

"may seem like a long time, but I don't mind because the schedule is packed".

It has already been a long journey for AlNeyadi, who served 20 years in the UAE military. He also studied electronics and communications engineering in Britain, and then completed a PhD in data leakage prevention technology at Griffith University in Australia. The UAE is a newcomer to the world of space exploration but quickly making its mark. It sent an unmanned spacecraft to Mars in 2021, in the Arab world's first interplanetary mission, and last year a rover to the Moon.

AlNeyadi said he was "happy" to embark on the mission and would take along "pictures of my family, maybe some toys that belong to my children". "I will also take my jiu-jitsu uniform because of my love for the sport," he added. Asked whether he would do any low-gravity grappling while floating around the ISS, he laughed: "We'll see how it goes." — AFP

## Largest haul of narcotics seized...

Continued from Page 1

the statement quoted Minister Sheikh Talal as saying. "We must double our efforts and take a

## Egypt mummy ingredients...

Continued from Page 1

from decomposing. But exactly how this was done has largely remained lost to time.

Now a team of researchers from Germany's Tuebingen and Munich universities in collaboration with the National Research Centre in Cairo has found some answers by analyzing the residue in 31 ceramic vessels found at the Saqqara mummification workshop. By comparing the residue to containers found in adjacent tombs, they were able to identify which chemicals were used.

The substances had "antifungal, anti-bacterial properties" which helped "preserve human tissues and reduce unpleasant smells", the study's lead author, Maxime Rageot, told a press conference. Helpfully, the vessels have labels on them. "To wash," reads the label of one bowl, while another says: "to make his odor pleasant". The head received the most care with three different concoctions - one of which was labelled "to put on his head".

"We have known the names of many of these embalming ingredients since ancient Egyptian writings were deciphered," Egyptologist Susanne Beck said in a statement from Tuebingen University. "But until now, we could only guess at what substances were behind each name." The labels also helped Egyptologists clear up some confusion about the names of some of the substances.

The scant details they have about the mummification process mostly comes from ancient papyrus, with Greek authors such as Herodotus often filling in gaps. By identifying the residue in their new bowls, the researchers found that the word "antiu", which has long been translated as myrrh or frankincense, can actually be a mixture of numerous different ingredients. In Saqqara, the bowl labelled antiu was a blend of cedar oil, juniper or cypress oil and animal fats.

stand to confront this danger in full force, to fight it and to eliminate it in order to protect the youth of the country," he added.

The drug bust, which falls under the directives of the interior minister, underlines efforts to "decisively address and conduct preemptive raids on drug dealers and smugglers, protect the country's youth from the dangers of this devastating scourge, and tackle gangs specialized in transporting and promoting drugs, psychotropic substances and intoxicants." — KUNA



**This handout image shows an artist's impression of embalming scenes which could have taken place in Saqqara in Egypt. — AFP**

The discovery showed the ancient Egyptians had built up "enormous knowledge accumulated through centuries of embalming," said Philipp Stockhammer of Germany's Max Planck Institute of Geoanthropology. For example, they knew that if the body was taken out of the natron salt, then it was in danger of being immediately "colonized by microbes that would eat up the skin", he said.

Stockhammer said "one of the most surprising findings" was the presence of resins, such as dammar and elemi, which likely came from tropical forests in Southeast Asia, as well as signs of Pistacia, juniper, cypress and olive trees from the Mediterranean. The diversity of substances "shows us that the industry of embalming" drove momentum for "globalization", Stockhammer said. It also shows that "Egyptian embalmers were very interested to experiment and get access to other resins and tars with interesting properties," he added.

The embalmers are believed to have taken advantage of a trade route that came to Egypt through present-day Indonesia, India, the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea from around 2000 BC. The Saqqara excavation was led by Ramadan Hussein, a Tuebingen University archaeologist, who died last year before the research was published in the journal Nature on Wednesday. — AFP

## UAE 'Sultan of Space' plans...

Continued from Page 1

ISS, if circumstances allow. Fasting is not compulsory for certain groups of people, including those who are travelling or unwell. "I will prepare for the month of Ramadan with the intention to fast," AlNeyadi said.

He will become the second man from the wealthy United Arab Emirates to go to space, after Hazzaa Al-Mansoori's eight-day mission in 2019. During the voyage, AlNeyadi will study the impacts of micro-gravity on the human body in preparation for future missions to the Moon and Mars, he said. Six months

## International

# Philippines expands US access to military bases

## Four new locations bring total number of sites accessible to US forces to nine

**MANILA:** The United States and the Philippines announced a deal Thursday to give US troops access to another four bases in the Southeast Asian nation, as the longtime allies seek to counter China's military rise. The agreement to expand cooperation in "strategic areas of the country" was made during a visit by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. It comes as the countries seek to repair ties that were fractured in recent years. Previous Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte favoured China over his country's former colonial master, but the new administration of Ferdinand Marcos has been keen to reverse that.

Beijing's growing assertiveness on Taiwan and its building of bases in the disputed South China Sea have given fresh impetus to Washington and Manila to strengthen their partnership. Given its proximity to Taiwan and its surrounding waters, cooperation from the Philippines would be key in the event of a conflict with China, which a four-star US Air Force general has warned could happen as early as 2025.

The four new locations bring the total number of sites accessible to US forces to nine, Austin told reporters on Thursday. Talks were ongoing for a potential 10th site, a senior Philippine official told AFP. The announcement came as the United States reopened its embassy in the Solomon Islands after a 30-year hiatus as it competes with China for influence in the South Pacific.

The United States and the Philippines have a decades-old security alliance that includes a mutual defence treaty and the 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, which allows US troops to rotate through five Philippine bases, including those near disputed waters.



**MANILA:** US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III (L) talks beside his Philippine counterpart Carlito Galvez Jr at a joint press conference in Camp Aguinaldo military headquarters in metro Manila. — AFP

It also allows the US military to store defence equipment and supplies on those bases. The EDCA stalled under Duterte, but Marcos has sought to accelerate its implementation. Philippine defence secretary Carlito Galvez told reporters the location of the new sites would be made public after local communities and officials had been consulted.

But it has been widely reported that most of the locations are on the main island of Luzon—the closest Philippine landmass to Taiwan—where the United States already has access to two bases. The fourth will report-

edly be on the western island of Palawan, facing the Spratly Islands in the hotly contested South China Sea, taking the number of sites there to two.

### 'Illegitimate claims'

Austin said the allies were committed to "strengthening our mutual capacities to resist armed attack", as he accused China of making "illegitimate claims in the West Philippine Sea". Manila refers to waters immediately west of the country as the West Philippine Sea.

Beijing responded Thursday, saying Washington was

exacerbating "regional tensions" by continuously strengthening its military deployment. The United States is also seeking to bolster alliances with other nations to counter China's rapid military advances, including its AUKUS partnership with Australia and Britain.

Australia has agreed to step up the pace of military interactions with Washington, while Japan is planning to enter joint exercises with both countries. While Marcos has sought to strike a balance between China and the United States, he has insisted he will not let Beijing trample on Manila's maritime rights.

About 500 US military personnel are currently in the Philippines, with others rotating through the country for joint exercises as required.

### Protest against EDCA

The US military presence has long been a sensitive issue in the Philippines. Around 100 protesters rallied outside the country's military headquarters on Thursday calling for the EDCA to be scrapped. The United States previously had two major bases in its former colony, but in 1991 the Senate voted to terminate the lease agreement after growing nationalist sentiment.

Beijing claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea and has ignored a ruling at The Hague that its claims have no legal basis. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei also have overlapping claims to parts of the sea.

China also claims self-ruled, democratic Taiwan as part of its territory, to be reclaimed one day, by force if necessary. "Looking at the location of the proposed sites, it seems pretty clear that these sites are in relation to a Taiwan contingency," said Greg Wyatt of PSA Philippines Consultancy. — AFP

## Indian journalist walks free after two years in jail

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian journalist held in custody for more than two years without trial walked free on Thursday after being granted bail in a money laundering case. Siddique Kappan was arrested in October 2020 in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, where he had travelled to report on a high-profile gang rape case.

He and three others were accused of belonging to an Islamist fundamentalist group and eventually charged with conspiracy to incite violence. Kappan has maintained his innocence and says that he had only travelled from his home state of Kerala to do his duties as a journalist. He was bailed in the case in September last year but remained behind bars for months longer because of a separate money laundering case against him. "I will continue my fight against draconian laws. They kept me in jail even after I got bail," he told NDTV news network after his release from jail in the city of Lucknow.

"These two years were very tough, but I was never afraid." India has slipped 10 places in the Reporters Without Borders press freedom ranking to 150 out of 180 surveyed countries since the Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014.

Critical reporters often find themselves behind bars and hounded on social media by supporters of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Nine other journalists are currently in Indian prisons, according to Reporters Without Borders. — AFP



**LUCKNOW:** Journalist Siddique Kappan walks out from Lucknow district jail after being granted bail on Feb 2, 2023. — AFP

## Sweden to toughen anti-terror laws

**STOCKHOLM:** Sweden's government on Thursday proposed new legislation to ban activities linked to extremist groups, in a move to toughen anti-terror laws, a key demand from Turkey to approve Stockholm's NATO bid.

The proposed legislation widens the scope of activities that can be prosecuted. "This is a wider criminalisation that takes aim at a slew of activities within a terrorist organisation that don't need to be concretely connected to a specific terrorist crime," Justice Minister Gunnar Strommer told a press conference.

Actions such as handling equipment, organising camps or locations for meetings, cooking or being in charge of transport for designated terrorist organisa-



**PESHAWAR:** Moazzam Jah Ansari (C), head of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province police force, speaks during a press conference at the Police Headquarters in Peshawar. — AFP

## Pakistan mosque suicide bomber 'was in police uniform'

**PESHAWAR:** The suicide bomber who killed more than 80 police officers at a mosque inside a sensitive compound earlier this week entered wearing a uniform and helmet, a provincial police chief said Thursday.

Hundreds of police were attending afternoon prayers inside what should have been a tightly controlled police headquarters in the northwest city of Peshawar on Monday when the blast erupted, causing a wall to collapse and crush officers.

"Those on duty didn't check him because he was in a police uniform... It was a security lapse," Moazzam Jah Ansari, the head of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial police force, told a news conference.

The suspect is shown in CCTV images arriving at the gates on a motorcycle before walking through a security checkpoint and asking officers where the mosque was located. Authorities are investigating how a major breach could happen in one of the most sensitive areas in the city, which houses the intelligence and counter-terrorism bureaus.

"Our comrades were martyred in this uniform, but the bomber made it worthless for us," Amanullah Khan, a police officer on duty at a checkpoint in Peshawar, wearing a bulletproof jacket and a helmet with a Kalashnikov in his hands, told AFP.

"Now I will doubt the uniformed officials as well as other people, which is very sad and which has created a distrust." It is Pakistan's deadliest assault in several years and the worst since violence began to resurge in the northwest bordering Afghanistan after the Taliban seized power in Kabul in 2021. On Thursday, police officials revised down the death toll, putting it at 83 policemen and one woman civilian, after saying there was confusion in registering bodies.

tions would be criminalised under the new law, which Strommer stressed was a "considerable widening of the scope compared to current legislation".

In November, the country amended its constitution to allow the proposed bill to move forward, as it was deemed to infringe on Sweden's freedom of association laws. The government intends to put the draft legislation to a vote in parliament in March, with the aim of it entering into force in June.

Sweden has been adopting tougher anti-terror laws since 2017, when an Uzbek asylum seeker who had sworn allegiance to the Islamic State group (IS) drove a truck down a busy shopping street in Stockholm, killing five people.

Cracking down on extremist groups has also been a key demand from Ankara before it will approve the country's stalled bid to join NATO. After Russia invaded Ukraine, Sweden and Finland abandoned their long-held policy of non-alignment and applied to join the military alliance in May of 2022.

### A city on edge

The assault has put a scarred city on edge, harking back to when Peshawar was at the centre of rampant violence carried out by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), also known as the Pakistani Taliban.

Most TTP fighters were rounded up, killed or pushed into Afghanistan in a military clearance operation beginning in 2014. But analysts say Islamist militant groups—which are highly factional—have become emboldened since US and NATO troops withdrew from Afghanistan and the Taliban swept into Kabul, with Islamabad accusing Afghanistan's new rulers of failing to secure their borders.

The TTP, separate from the Afghan Taliban but with a similar ideology, has mostly targeted security forces at checkpoints. Ansari blamed militant group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar—an occasional affiliate of the TTP—for the attack, adding that they were searching for the bomber's handlers. The TTP—who once frequently attacked places of worship and schools—has distanced itself from the Peshawar blast, claiming it no longer attacks mosques. "They first claimed this attack and later denied any involvement after a public backlash," said Ansari.

### 'Not trained to fight a war'

Bickering politicians who are months away from contesting a general election amid a severe economic crisis have traded blame for the deteriorating security situation. "Multiple institutions with no policy have no ability to take a decision on launching a decisive offensive against the militant groups. We need empowered political leadership," security analyst Saad Muhammad told AFP. "Our current police force is not trained to fight a war," he added. Police said they have a "fair idea" about the bomber's identity, after matching his head-found at the scene—with security footage. Authorities are also investigating the possibility that people inside the compound helped to coordinate the attack, a senior city police official told AFP on condition of anonymity on Wednesday. —AFP

But Turkey has blocked the bids, accusing Sweden in particular of providing a safe haven for what it considers "terrorists", especially members of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Among other things, pro-Kurdish demonstrations in Sweden, where PKK flags have been common, have been a thorn in Ankara's side. But Strommer noted that "partaking in a demonstration or at a meeting will not in itself be punishable".

He also said flag-waving in itself would not be criminalised but such activities could potentially be used as evidence in court. The government intends to put the legislation to a vote in parliament in March, with the aim of it entering into force in June.

Negotiations between Sweden and Turkey have stalled since Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticised Swedish police for allowing a far-right activist to burn a copy of the Koran outside Turkey's Stockholm embassy. — AFP

## US reopens Solomons embassy, vying with China for influence

**HONIARA:** The United States reopened its embassy in the Solomon Islands Thursday after a 30-year hiatus, part of a bid to counter China's growing influence in the South Pacific. Re-establishing the diplomatic outpost was a renewal "of our commitment to the people of Solomon Islands and our partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region", US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

The US closed its embassy in the capital Honiara in 1993 after the end of the Cold War led to a reduction in diplomatic posts and a shift in priorities. Washington signalled its intent to reopen it in early 2022, before the Solomons signed a secret security pact with China.

The deal, penned by Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and Beijing, sparked fears among Western powers that the Solomons could provide China with a new foothold in the Pacific. US diplomat Russell Comeau, the interim representative in Honiara, said at the opening ceremony that the embassy would "serve as a key platform" between his government and the Solomons.

Blinken's statement added that the reopening "builds on our efforts to place more diplomatic personnel throughout the region and engage further with our Pacific neighbours". Sogavare did not attend the opening ceremony, but foreign affairs secretary Colin Beck said the embassy's reopening was "welcomed by the government and people of the Solomon Islands".

On the streets of Honiara, there were mixed reactions to the re-opening. Local artist Natty Sala described it as a "step in the right direction" for improved diplomatic ties. Sala hoped the US would step up efforts to remove the tonnes of unexploded Japanese and American ordnance which still litters the Solomons' shores, dating back to some of the fiercest battles of World War II.

"This is good news for the Solomon Islands." While 50-year-old Lois Bana appreciated the United States re-establishing an embassy, she worried whether it was just part of the "geopolitics" to counter China's influence in the region. — AFP



**HONIARA:** Solomon Islands' Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade Colin Beck (C), director EAP/ANP of the US Department of State Taylor Ruggles (L) and Charge d'Affaires Interim, US Embassy Solomon Islands Russell Comeau attend the reopening ceremony of the US embassy in Honiara, Solomon Islands. — AFP

## Business

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2023

## ECB hikes rates, vows more in March

## Bank of England hikes rates for a 10th time in a row

**FRANKFURT:** The European Central Bank raised interest rates again Thursday and signalled it would "stay the course" with an identical hike next month, even as the outlook in the eurozone brightens. The ECB lifted its key rates half a percentage point, as widely expected, seeking to curb soaring prices of energy and food fuelled by Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Earlier the same day, the Bank of England hiked rates for a 10th time in a row, while America's Federal Reserve raised borrowing costs again Wednesday-albeit at a slower pace. The ECB has now raised borrowing costs three percentage points since launching its unprecedented campaign of monetary tightening in July. Signs are growing the eurozone may have passed the worst of an economic shock, with inflation slowing from a peak in October and the single currency area eking out growth at the end of 2022.

But making its latest rate hike, the bank said it would "stay the course in raising interest rates significantly at a steady pace", repeating the same hawkish language used after its last meeting in December. The ECB "intends to raise interest rates by another 50 basis points at its next monetary policy meeting in March, and it will then evaluate the subsequent path of its monetary policy", the statement said.

## 'Ground to cover'

With markets looking for clues about what might

happen after March, ECB president Christine Lagarde told a press conference that the Frankfurt-based institution still has "ground to cover" in raising rates. "We know that we are not done," she said, adding that the ECB's determination to return inflation to its two-percent target "should not be doubted".

While consumer price growth in the eurozone has eased, slowing to 8.5 percent in January according to preliminary data, it is still way above target. Although the ECB has repeatedly stressed its determination to fight inflation, policymakers are walking a fine line—seeking to tighten enough but not so much that it dramatically deepens economic pain across Europe.

Lagarde offered relatively upbeat comments about the 20-nation currency club's prospects, saying it had faced the fallout from Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and surging energy costs better than expected.

"Overall, the economy has proved more resilient than expected and should recover over the coming quarters," she said, citing improved confidence, easing supply chain bottlenecks and stable gas supplies.

ING economist Carsten Brzeski said that by announcing a further hike next month, the ECB was "opening the door to either a pause or a slower rate hike pace beyond March". But Andrew Kenningham, chief Europe economist from Capital Economics, said the bank's statement "does not amount to a

clear change in the policy stance", and they expected significant rate hikes in the coming months.

Thursday's rate increase was the ECB's fifth in a row, taking its key rates to a range between 2.50 and 3.25 percent. It followed a half-point hike in December, but was lower than two jumbo 75-basis-point increases before that.

## Where next?

The recent less gloomy data have given cause for hope that Russia's efforts to strangle crucial gas supplies to Europe may not trigger the deep downturn once feared. As Moscow slashed deliveries following its invasion of Ukraine, European governments rolled out relief measures to cushion consumers and businesses from surging prices, and rushed to fill up storage facilities.

Wholesale gas prices have been easing while relatively mild winter weather has meant reserves have not been used up as quickly as expected. Analysts hope that other factors, such as easing supply chain problems and the reopening of China's COVID-hit economy, are now offsetting the fallout from Ukraine. Signs of weakness are still causing concerns, however.

Europe's top economy, Germany, unexpectedly contracted at the end of 2022, signalling it may be about to tip into recession. But it is expected to be a shallow contraction, and the government has forecast the economy will expand slightly over 2023 as a whole. —AFP



**FRANKFURT:** European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde addresses a press conference on the eurozone's monetary policy in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany on February 2, 2023. — AFP

## Iraq, Saudi seek to boost economic cooperation

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's foreign minister on Thursday called for more economic cooperation with Saudi Arabia, namely in investment and electricity, during a visit to Baghdad by his Saudi counterpart. Fuad Hussein made no mention of resuming talks between Saudi Arabia and arch-rival Iran—previously mediated by Iraq—during a joint press conference.

"This important visit comes at a time marked by great challenges, so it is essential to talk and discuss these challenges which affect the region as a whole," Hussein said, alongside Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan.

Hussein hailed "total cooperation" with Saudi Arabia on oil, particularly with the OPEC cartel. Iraq's foreign minister said Riyadh was ready to back Saudi companies investing in Iraq, and welcomed it. "We hope Iraq will be supplied with electricity, either via the Saudi network or that in the Gulf," he said.

Citing "positive economic development" in Iraq, Prince Faisal said this created opportunities for cooperation between the two countries' private sectors. Despite being oil-rich, Iraq suffers from crumbling infrastructure and public services, after decades of conflict and endemic corruption.

Baghdad is currently heavily dependent on neighbouring Iran for its electricity and gas, and has sought to diversify its energy sources. Arch-rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia back opposing sides in various conflicts in the region, including in Yemen.

Baghdad has taken a role as a mediator between the regional rivals, after diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran froze in 2016. Since April 2021, Iraq has hosted a series of meetings



**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani (L) meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan in Baghdad on February 2, 2023. —AFP

between the two sides, but no talks have been publicly announced since April 2022.

Meanwhile, Iraq admitted Thursday it had differences with France's TotalEnergies over a \$10-billion contract, including over the distribution of investments, but expressed hope they can be resolved through talks.

"We have given ourselves time to continue the dialogue and reach a satisfactory solution for the parties involved regarding certain points of contention, including the percentage of participation in the project," oil ministry spokesman Assem Jihad told reporters.

A senior Iraqi government official, who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the subject, said TotalEnergies was "unhappy and had decided to withdraw from Iraq", without providing further details. Contacted by AFP, TotalEnergies declined to comment.

The French energy giant had signed the \$10-billion contract with Iraq in September 2021, but the partnership has struggled to materialise amid

reported signs of discord between the two sides. The oil ministry spokesman Jihad told AFP that the Iraqi authorities had hoped for a 40 percent share in the investment, against 60 percent for TotalEnergies.

A source at the ministry said the French company wanted Iraq to have a smaller stake. "There is a temporary delay that could extend for several months," Jihad said in reference to the negotiations. "The government and the ministry are in favour of continuing the agreement."

"As for the information that some employees are withdrawing, you can ask Total," he added. The \$10-billion contract covers the construction of oil and gas processing facilities with the capacity for electricity production, along with a one-gigawatt photovoltaic power plant.

The tensions arose days after Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia al-Sudani made his first visit to Paris last week, during which he signed a "strategic partnership treaty" with French President Emmanuel Macron. —AFP

high for the earnings announcements by the other tech giants after markets closed later in the day.

Following in Meta's wake, Google's parent company is expected to also announce a slump in ad sales, which would be only the second quarterly fall in since the search engine giant went public in 2004.

Google, which has long seen itself as an innovation leader, was caught off guard by the sudden rise of user-friendly AI apps such as ChatGPT, which is seen as a potential rival to Google's all-powerful search engine.

CEO Sundar Pichai last month announced a plan to lay off 12,000 people in order to reverse pandemic over-hiring and focus on new areas, especially artificial intelligence.

Apple is the only tech giant that has yet to announce major layoffs in recent weeks and investors will be taking a hard look at how its sales have been affected by China's zero-Covid policy that was only recently lifted.

China remains the key manufacturing hub for iPhones and the drastic restrictions adversely affected Apple's ability to export the iPhone 14 during the key holiday season. Apple, the world's biggest company in terms of market value, will also be burdened by a drop in smartphone sales worldwide, its key driver for profits.

According to the International Data Corporation, worldwide smartphone shipments declined 18.3 percent year-on-year to 300.3 million units in the fourth quarter of 2022. Amazon is also expected to report a hit to sales after the company announced a round of layoffs to correct for a hiring binge during the pandemic when business growth ramped up.

## Big Tech earnings expected as Meta shares skyrocket

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Tech giants Google, Apple and Amazon will report their latest results on Thursday as shares in Meta skyrocketed after the Facebook owner posted a smaller-than-expected slump in sales for 2022.

The results of the world's biggest tech companies follow several weeks of unprecedented layoff rounds in the usually unassailable sector amid pessimism about the economic outlook. The souring mood followed a long spell of outsized growth during the peak COVID-19 period when consumers went online for work, shopping and entertainment.

Meta as expected on Wednesday said sales fell last year, the first time that occurred on an annual basis since the company went public in 2012. The social media giant said sales dropped one percent to \$116.6 billion, while it also announced that the number of daily users on Facebook hit two billion for the first time.

But CEO and founder Mark Zuckerberg said he was upbeat about the future, pointing to the success of short videos and better delivery of ads after Apple made targeting users harder on the iPhone. He also assured investors that Meta would take bolder decisions and run a much nimbler operation, hinting at more layoffs. Shares in Meta jumped as much as 25 percent on Thursday, setting the bar

## Airbus, Qatar Airways resolve A350 dispute

**DOHA:** Qatar Airways and Airbus announced Wednesday the end of a \$2.5 billion dollar battle over peeling paint on passenger jets before it became an embarrassing court case. After months of negotiations and talks between French and Qatari leaders, the two sides said they were "pleased to have reached an amicable and mutually agreeable settlement" over the surface degradation that forced the grounding of 29 A350 jets.

Experts said neither side wanted a prolonged court case. Qatar Airways needs jets for its expansion plans while Airbus could not afford to alienate one of its most important customers. Qatar Airways had sought about \$2.5 billion in damages and penalties before a British court where the case was due to be heard from June.

"A repair project is now underway and both parties look forward to getting these aircraft safely back in the air," they said in a statement. The European jet builder and the fast-growing Gulf airline said that the details of their accord would remain "confidential" and that "the settlement agreement is not an admission of liability for either party."

"This agreement will enable Qatar Airways and Airbus to move forward and work together as partners," they added. Qatar grounded the jets in 2021 after paint started peeling on the exterior of some of its long-haul wide-body A350 planes. Its regulator said there could be a threat to the jet's lightning protection.

While Airbus acknowledged the paint problem, the company and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) said there was no threat to airworthiness. Qatar Airways launched a legal battle and refused to take deliveries of more of the models. In retaliation, Airbus cancelled the sale of 19 A350 jets and 50 A321 medium-haul planes.

An Airbus spokesman told AFP the latest agreement meant that the orders, worth more than \$14 billion at list prices, had been re-established. "This is obviously a beneficial outcome for both parties," said Michel Merluzeau, a director of aerospace and defence analysis at the AIR consultancy.

He said it would be difficult for Qatar Airways "to decide that they don't want to trade with Airbus", particularly with high profile problems at its US rival Boeing. The state-owned airline has launched a multibillion-dollar expansion of its operations and its Hamad International Airport base.

"It would mean postponing new routes, and the A321XLR is integral to Qatar Airways' planning for new routes from Doha," Merluzeau said. "Airbus could not afford to alienate an important client like Qatar Airways." While the pain was a "significant concern" for Qatar Airways, he added, the aviation industry in general felt that "it was not a particular safety-of-flight issue". Qatar Airways and Airbus started serious reconciliation talks last year, and in October the plane maker held a breakthrough technical meeting with the Qatari regulator. —AFP



**TOULOUSE:** File photo taken on January 12, 2023 a smartphone and a computer screen display the logos of the Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and their parent company Meta. —AFP

Last month, the company said it would let go more than 18,000 employees after the workforce swelled by 800,000 employees during the peak years of the pandemic period. —AFP



Business

# Record Shell profit on soaring energy prices sparks outrage

## Greenpeace protest outside Shell's London headquarters

LONDON: British energy giant Shell on Thursday unveiled record annual net profit of \$42.3 billion thanks to surging oil and gas prices, sparking outrage from green groups and unions as the UK endures a cost-of-living crisis.

The post-tax figure, fuelled by the invasion of Ukraine by major energy producer Russia, was more than double the amount achieved in 2021, Shell's earnings statement revealed. Revenue rocketed 45 percent to a dizzying \$381 billion in 2022, mirroring huge gains by rivals.

Colossal profits for energy majors worldwide have sparked public fury as consumers see the cost of heating and lighting their homes and businesses rocket. Environmental campaigner Greenpeace on Thursday protested outside Shell's London headquarters, arguing that the group is "profiteering from climate destruction".

The Trades Union Congress said an increased windfall tax could help fund wage rises for public sector workers currently locked in a wave of strikes in protests over pay that lags soaring inflation. "Instead of holding down the pay of paramedics, teachers, firefighters and millions of other hard-pressed public servants, ministers should be making big oil and gas pay their fair share," said TUC general secretary Paul Nowak.

### Billions for shareholders

Shell said it would return a further \$4 billion to shareholders following huge buybacks already last year-and would significantly lift its dividend-following the record earnings. "Our results in the fourth quarter and across the full year demonstrate the strength of Shell's differentiated portfolio, as well as our capacity to deliver vital energy to our customers in a volatile world," new chief executive Wael Sawan said in the results statement.

Shell is looking to reinvent itself under the company's former renewables boss Sawan, who replaced Ben van Beurden in the top seat at the start of the year. Energy firms are under increasing pressure to step up efforts to transition away from fossil fuels as the world scrambles to become a net-zero emissions economy by 2050.

But Shell rival BP said Monday that while the transition could be accelerated by Russia's war in Ukraine, "oil continues to play a major role in the global energy system for the next 15-20 years". The



LONDON: Activists from Greenpeace set up a mock-petrol station price board displaying the company's net profit for 2022, as they demonstrate outside the headquarters of Shell, in London. —AFP

invasion a year ago of Ukraine by its neighbour Russia sent oil and gas prices rocketing. Russia is a major producer of fossil fuels and the war resulted in slashed supplies.

### Record US profits

Shell's update comes two days after US energy major ExxonMobil reported an even bigger record profit of almost \$56 billion, handing massive windfalls to shareholders. This has caused US President Joe Biden to hit out at American energy giants, including Chevron, insisting they should be helping to reduce energy prices during a cost-of-living crisis. On Tuesday Biden tweeted that the only thing "stopping Big Oil from increasing production (and therefore lowering prices) is their decision to pay shareholders billions instead of reinvesting profits".

The president's intervention came after a White House spokesperson told the BBC that Exxon's

record profits were "outrageous", especially after "the American people were forced to pay such high prices at the pump" in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In a bid to ease the pain for consumers, governments have introduced windfall taxes on the mammoth profits. Shell has revealed that windfall taxes imposed by the European Union and UK following the surge in earnings would cost the group about \$2 billion.

"Shell has once more flexed its financial muscles on a massive scale, while riding the waves of an economic cycle which can bring major challenges as well as rewards," said Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

"The fluctuating opinions surrounding demand from China following its reopening will continue, and there could also be bumps in the road should even a mild global recession ensue." — AFP

## Bangladesh seeks extended oil credit

DHAKA: Cash-strapped Bangladesh asked Saudi Arabia for extended credit on oil supplies, Dhaka's foreign ministry said, as the South Asian nation grapples with dwindling foreign exchange reserves. Saudi Arabia supplies more than half of Bangladesh's crude imports, but Bangladesh has been hit hard by the global surge in energy and food prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

At the same time the taka has depreciated about 25 percent against the US dollar, driving up costs for petrol distributors and power utilities that have rippled across the rest of the economy. Nationwide blackouts of up to 13 hours a day hit the electricity grid last year and the government offered food relief for households unable to afford rice and other staples.

In a meeting Wednesday with Riyadh's ambassador, foreign minister A.K. Abdul Momen asked Saudi Arabia to consider supplying crude and refined oil "on a deferred payment basis", the foreign ministry said in a statement. The economic strains come with a general election due by next January.

The opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party has blamed the government for the crisis, accusing it of squandering cash on multibillion-dollar vanity projects. It has organised a series of rallies demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's resignation and an early poll under a neutral administration.

Authorities hiked retail electricity prices by five percent Tuesday, the second such increase in three weeks, while gas prices for generators were raised by an eye-watering 178 percent last month. On Monday, the International Monetary Fund signed off on a \$4.7 billion support package for Bangladesh. The South Asian country's foreign exchange reserves have dropped from \$46 billion in January last year to \$32 billion at the end of last month. — AFP



شركة الصفاء للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 2 FEBRUARY 2023

(965) 22 675 140  
Al-Safat Tower, Hawalli, Beirut St.  
alsafatinvest.com  
research@alsafatinvest.com  
alsafatinvestment  
al-safat-investment-company

No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,101	1,119	1,121	1,093	28	24,144,147	18	1.63%	3.80%	1,113	1,131	16.6	2.07	2.2%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	319	320	321	313	8	14,782,597	1	0.31%	1.91%	316	321	16.5	1.43	2.1%	1.27
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	204	204	206	202	4	23,864,601	1	0.49%	4.08%	203	209	36.8	0.65	1.9%	1.16
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	228	223	229	222	7	2,943,152	-3	-1.33%	1.83%	222	227	22.3	0.81	2.1%	1.28
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	835	837	841	816	25	68,499,477	4	0.48%	1.70%	825	840	28.1	3.44	1.3%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	806	792	810	777	33	5,842,536	-10	-1.25%	-0.75%	791	803	56.5	3.11	0.6%	1.09
204	National Investments	Financial Services	246	239	249	237	12	2,485,447	-7	-2.85%	0.84%	237	244	17.4	0.97	19.0%	1.87
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	114	117	117	111	6	15,845,199	3.0	2.63%	4.46%	116	122	-	0.59	4.3%	1.00
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	71.1	66.4	71.4	66.2	5.2	6,318,010	-4.6	-6.48%	-11.35%	66.2	69.1	-	0.41	13.5%	1.23
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	110	110	112	107	5	36,974,989	0	0.00%	1.85%	108	111	15.9	0.80	2.7%	1.08
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	843	849	860	830	30	1,875,153	16	1.92%	0.12%	839	850	17.3	1.84	1.5%	1.03
501	National Industries	Financial Services	217	214	217	210	7	10,464,880	-1	-0.47%	-1.38%	210	215	10.8	0.95	5.2%	1.51
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,215	1,230	1,244	1,209	35	244,504	5	0.41%	1.23%	1,226	1,260	11.9	1.18	4.9%	1.01
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	799	803	813	789	24	776,739	7	0.88%	0.38%	790	813	8.3	1.57	7.5%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	597	602	607	583	24	29,091,034	8	1.35%	-16.39%	593	625	39.4	1.10	2.8%	1.57
605	Zain	Telecommunications	563	564	564	550	14	19,676,249	3	0.53%	0.18%	557	571	12.9	2.01	5.9%	0.77
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,471	3,441	3,471	3,377	94	1,000,623	17	0.50%	-2.24%	3,400	3,499	7.1	3.41	11.8%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	216	217	220	212	8	5,761,250	2	0.93%	6.90%	217	222	-	0.91	0.0%	1.18
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,650	1,626	1,650	1,617	33	763,310	-14	-0.85%	-14.42%	1,616	1,650	12.4	9.58	2.8%	1.43
821	Warba Bank	Banking	244	247	248	238	10	12,817,932	5	2.07%	5.11%	2,430	249	24.7	1.34	0.0%	1.09
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	409	392	409	388	21	2,526,420	-17	-4.16%	-0.25%	380	405	-	1.28	3.9%	0.48
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	372	368	372	362	10	4,901,790	4	1.10%	-0.54%	358	371	23.7	1.48	2.7%	0.73
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	182	180	183	179	4	1,627,645	-2	-1.10%	-4.26%	179	182	15.0	1.69	9.9%	0.49
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,037	2,036	2,076	2,036	40	152,697	0	0.00%	-0.78%	2,032	2,070	21.2	6.54	3.2%	0.98
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	838	853	875	837	38	3,414,594	19	2.28%	5.96%	830	850	12.2	4.24	5.6%	0.48

\* As of end of week closing

# Global growth raised marginally amid cautious optimism

## IMF marginally raise World GDP growth expectations for 2023 by 20 bps to 2.9%

KUWAIT: In its latest World Economic Outlook report, the IMF highlighted continued impact of elevated inflation levels and the resultant rate hikes as well as the Russia/Ukraine war on growth during 2023. A resurgence of COVID-19 cases in China could also affect the ongoing recovery in the country, the agency highlighted. Nevertheless, the IMF said that the adverse forces have moderated vs previous expectations especially led by pent-up demand from a number of economies, while a faster-than-expected decline in inflation could also be beneficial. As a result, the IMF marginally raised World GDP growth expectations for 2023 by 20 bps to 2.9% but lowered 2024 forecast by 10 bps to 3.1%. The downward revisions were made to growth rates for both Advanced Economies as well as Emerging Market and Developing Economies. Growth expectation for EM and Developing Economies witnessed an upward revision of 30 bps for 2023 to an expected growth of 4.0% but a downward revision of 10 bps was made to the forecast for 2024 with growth expected to reach 4.2% next year. On the other hand, growth estimates for Advanced Economies witnessed an upward revision of 10 bps to 1.2% for 2023 and downward revision of 20 bps for 2024 to 1.4%. The IMF revised the global growth for two large economies, the United States and China, for 2023 that are expected to grow faster than what was predicted in October last year.

The IMF raised the growth forecast for US by 40 bps to a growth of 1.4% in 2023 followed by 20 bps downward revision to growth in 2024 that is expected to come in at 1.0%. The upward revision for 2023 indicates the spillover effects from 2022 domestic demand resilience. On the other hand, the downward revision for 2024 is due to Federal Reserve rate hikes, which is expected to reach a peak of around 5.1% in 2023. The IMF anticipates growth rate in the Euro Area to reach 1.6% in 2024 after hitting a low of 0.7% in 2023. The 20 bps upward revision to growth this year reflects lower wholesale energy prices, and new announcements of fiscal purchasing power support in the form of cash transfers and energy price controls. However, ECB's rate hikes and the decline in real incomes are expected to partially offset the overall growth.

In contrast, growth in the United Kingdom is forecasted to decline by 0.6% in 2023, a 90 bps downgrade from October-2022 forecast, due to tighter financial conditions, monetary and fiscal policies, and still-high energy retail prices that are straining household budgets. For the Asia region, IMF upgraded China's forecast by 80 bps to 5.2% in 2023 after 3.0% growth in 2022, reflecting the improved mobility in the country. However, growth in 2024 is expected to decline to 4.5% due to slow structural reform progress. Growth forecast for India was retained at 6.1% in 2023 followed by a faster growth of 6.8% in 2024, buoyed by solid domestic demand despite external constraints.

The IMF forecasts the rate of global inflation to fall from 8.8% in 2022 to 6.6% in 2023 and 4.3% in 2024, albeit slightly higher than pre-pandemic levels of around 3.5% (2017-19). With greater variability in Emerging Market and Developing nations, upside inflation shocks have been most common in Advanced Economies, according to the IMF. However, the agency said that the 3Q-2022 saw unexpectedly strong household consumption, business investment, and economic growth prompting to better-than-expected resiliency to the European energy crisis. That said, the IMF said that core inflation, which includes more volatile energy and food costs, is although yet to peak in many countries, it has shown improvement with overall measures of inflation now declining in the majority of the countries.

### MENA Region

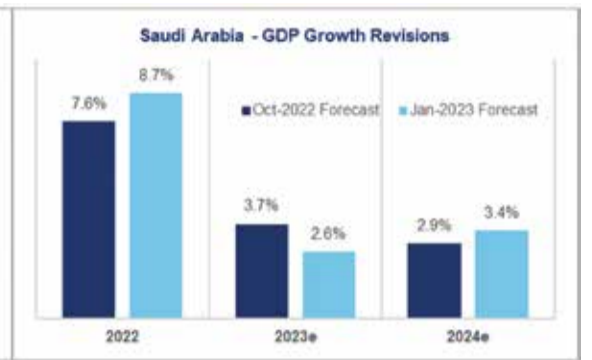
Growth in the MENA region was lowered by 40 bps to 3.2% for 2023 and revised upward by 20 bps to 3.5% for 2024. The downgrade for 2023 is mainly due to lower oil production in accordance with an OPEC+ agreement, but non-oil growth is likely to remain resilient. The downward revision for 2023 was also reflected in the forecast for Saudi Arabia that is now expected to grow by 2.6% this year, a downward revision of 110 bps, followed by 3.4% in 2024 with an upward revision of 50 bps.

### Global Trade Volumes

Global trade volume is expected to grow by 2.4%



Source: IMF WEO Update - Jan-2023



in 2023, a downward revision of 10 bps, despite an easing of supply bottlenecks. The revision reflected downward revision to forecast for Emerging Market and Developing economies which is expected to slow by 30 bps to 2.6% in 2023, whereas the growth for the Advanced Economies was kept unchanged. Next year, Advanced Economies is expected to see downward revision of 40 bps to 2.7% while growth for the Emerging market and Developing Economies was kept unchanged. According to the IMF, Global trade growth and international commodity prices have declined as a result of China's slowdown.

### Global Growth

The forecasted weak growth in 2023 is mainly due to the conflict between Ukraine/Russia and the hike in central bank rates to combat inflation, particularly in advanced economies. On the other hand, growth in emerging market and developing economies is expected to have peaked in 2022. A complete reopening of the Chinese economy this year is also expected to support growth in China. The economies are predicted to see a faster growth in 2024 as a result of inflation slowing down and a gradual recovery from the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine. However, despite the easing of supply bottlenecks, it is predicted that world trade growth will follow the direction of global demand and fall to 2.4% in 2023 before

increasing to 3.4% in 2024.

According to the IMF, 84% of nations would have lower inflation in 2023 than they did in 2022. Global inflation is expected to decline from 8.8% in 2022 to 6.6% in 2023 and 4.3% in 2024, which is still higher than pre-pandemic levels of roughly 3.5%. The expected deflation which reflects falling worldwide gasoline and nonfuel commodity prices as a result of reduced global demand reflects the cooling effects of monetary policy tightening on underlying inflation, which is predicted to fall globally from 6.9% in the fourth quarter of 2022 to 4.5% in the fourth quarter of 2023.

Annual average inflation in advanced economies is expected to fall from 7.3% in 2022 to 4.6% in 2023 and 2.6% in 2024, whereas in emerging market and developing economies inflation is anticipated to fall from 9.9% in 2022 to 8.1% in 2023 and 5.5% in 2024, which is above the pre-pandemic level of 4.9%. In low-income developing countries, inflation is expected to fall from 14.2% in 2022 to 8.6% in 2024, remaining high but returning to pre-pandemic levels. A faster recovery in China's economy or higher-than-anticipated costs for food, gas, and oil as a result of the conflict in the Ukraine might push headline inflation up once more and trickle down to underlying inflation. Such changes can lead to a de-anchoring of inflation expectations and necessitate a stricter monetary policy, according to the IMF.

## ADNOC inks deal for local manufacturing worth AED 17bn

ABU DHABI: ADNOC, a reliable and responsible provider of lower-carbon intensity energy, on Thursday announced it has signed agreements with 23 UAE and international companies for local manufacturing opportunities across a wide range of critical industrial products worth AED17 billion (\$4.63 billion).

The agreements outline the intention of the companies to manufacture these products in the UAE, supporting the 'Make it in the Emirates' initiative and the 'Abu Dhabi Industrial Strategy'. The products are part of the AED70 billion (\$19 billion) worth of products in ADNOC's procurement pipeline that the company identified for domestic manufacturing in July 2022.

ADNOC continues to encourage the private sector to capitalize on the commercial opportunities for domestic manufacturing across its value chain through its In-Country Value (ICV) program, as it expands and decarbonizes its operations.

Dr. Saleh Al Hashimi, ADNOC Director, Commercial & In-Country Value Directorate, said: "In line with the directives of the UAE's wise leadership, ADNOC is creating long-term domestic manufacturing opportunities from our procurement pipeline to enhance the UAE's industrial base and strengthen the resilience of our supply chains as we make today's energy cleaner and invest in the clean energies of the future. These agreements reinforce our role as a critical engine for the UAE's industrial growth and they offer significant potential to further increase our GDP contributions, stimulate economic diversification and create more skilled job opportunities for UAE Nationals. We look forward to working with these companies to deliver on these important agreements and drive more sustainable value to the UAE."

Last year, ADNOC signed agreements for local manufacturing commitments worth over AED25 billion (\$6.8 billion) with UAE and international companies. The company continues to take a transparent approach to showcasing its product outlook as part of its ICV program. This approach underscores ADNOC's efforts to ensure business continuity and incentivize investors and suppliers to set up or expand manufacturing capacity in the UAE. ADNOC aims to drive AED175 billion (\$48 billion) back into the UAE economy through its ICV program as part of its five-year business plan for 2023-2027.

## Santander bank posts record profit, rates rise

MADRID: Spanish banking giant Banco Santander reported on Thursday record profits for 2022, becoming the latest European lender to get a boost from higher interest rates. The bank posted an annual net profit of 9.6 billion euros (\$10.6 billion), up 18 percent from 2021 and higher than forecast by analysts polled by financial data firm FactSet.

The result smashed the previous record annual profit of 9.06 billion euros seen in 2007, before the global financial crisis of 2008. "2022 was another strong year for Santander as we made further progress in growing our customer base profitably, while maintaining a rock-solid balance sheet," Banco Santander head Ana Botin said.

Net profit in the fourth quarter hit 2.29 billion euros, up 1.0 percent from the same period a year ago, as higher loan provisions weighed down earnings. Central banks have hiked interest rates worldwide in an effort to tame runaway inflation, which jumped after economies emerged from COVID restrictions, and surged higher still after Russia invaded Ukraine last year.

Banks across Europe have benefited from higher borrowing costs. BBVA-Spain's second-biggest lender by market value after Santander-posted a 38 percent jump in net profit on Wednesday to a record 6.42 billion euros in 2022. And on Thursday Germany's largest lender,

Deutsche Bank, said it booked its highest annual profit since 2007 last year, thanks to higher interest rates.

### Client growth

Botin said central banks and governments are expected to continue to focus on bringing down inflation this year. "Our team has proven experience in navigating these conditions successfully and we expect revenue growth will continue to offset cost inflation pressures and the anticipated increase in cost of risk," she said.

The bank, which has a strong presence in Europe and Latin America, added seven million new clients last year, bringing its worldwide total to 160 million. This helped total loans to increase by 5.0 percent and deposits to rise 9.0 percent.

Santander's net interest income, the equivalent of its revenue, rose 16 percent to reach 38.6 billion euros, slightly higher than forecast by FactSet. The lender said it expects to post double-digit revenue growth in 2023 despite the rise in costs due to inflation and a rocky outlook for the global economy.

While the sharp rise in inflation led to a seven percent rise in overall costs, the bank said it had continued to improve productivity last year, aided by a growing number of customers doing their banking online.

Santander said its cost-to-income ratio—an efficiency indicator which is the ratio of total costs to total income of the bank—was 45.8 percent in 2022, inching up from 45.4 percent in the previous year. It said this is one of the best levels of Europe's major banks.

### Temporary tax

The bank confirmed that shareholders would

## Balanced budget and aspirations of India's youth and MSMEs

KUWAIT: As India navigates a period of global economic shocks, the country's economic resilience has managed to hold steady. Youth and MSMEs, two foundational strengths of the country have been part of this growth story.

The Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has checked several boxes, and Adeb Ahamed, Managing Director of LuLu Financial Holdings termed it a balanced budget, with equal focus on traditional and emerging sectors, agreeing that, "the way forward is to build a technology and knowledge-based economy."

With the UN declaring 2023 as International Year of Millets, Adeb applauded the efforts of the government to raise global awareness about India's millet farmers, as well as provision schemes in the budget to make India a hub for millet production and research.

Touching upon the matter of financial inclusion, Adeb, who has significant investments in India's financial services sector in the form of

LuLu Forex and LuLu Finserv - an NBFC providing micro loans, said that the move to ramp up the credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs will give a fillip to enabling faster access to financial services.

He added that the decision to expand the scope of services in DigiLocker to include MSMEs and make PAN a common identifier, will give a big boost to user documentation, supporting the onboarding efforts of NBFCs and fintechs driving financial inclusion among such companies.

Adeb, who also has investments in the travel & luxury hospitality sector felt that the proposal to adopt an integrated and innovative approach to develop destinations augurs well for the tourism sector. "It is encouraging to note that under the Swadesh Darshan and Dekho-AppaDesh schemes, the government will be rolling out physical initiatives such as the Unity Mallo to raise the global profile of GI products as well as virtual assets to enhance the experience of domestic and international travelers in some of the top destinations."

"The proposal to develop the tourism sector through the converge of public and private stakeholders will surely help generate adequate employment opportunities. The proposal to open 50 new airports will further drive more inbound traffic and add to the overall economic



BOADILLA DEL MONTE: Spanish Santander Bank executive chairperson Ana Botin addresses a press conference to present the company's 2022 results, in Boadilla del Monte, near Madrid, on February 2, 2023. —AFP

receive a payout of around 40 percent of the group's underlying profit, divided equally between cash dividends and share buybacks. Spain's left-wing government plans to impose a temporary windfall tax on big banks in 2023 and 2024 to finance measures aimed at helping households cope with higher prices.

The measure is expected to add 1.5 billion euros to the state budget this year and a similar amount in 2024. Botin estimated the tax will cost Santander between 220 million euros and 230 million euros in 2023. Santander is mulling challenging the new tax in court, she told a news conference called to discuss the results, adding banks already pay more taxes than other firms.

"We absolutely agree that governments have to levy taxes...but everyone must pay," Botin said. Santander said it paid 4.49 billion euros in tax on its profit in 2022, a "effective tax rate" of 29 percent. —AFP

prospects of the sector," he added.

Tourism is already one of the highest generators of employment in the country but suffers from high operating expenses and low margins, and Adeb admitted that it would have been beneficial to also relook the existing GST rates, apart from rolling out sector-specific schemes to encourage domestic and foreign investment into the sector.

He also acknowledged the Budget's focus on skill development under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 4.0 and setting up of 30 Skill India international centres, many of who can add immense value in service-based sectors. LuLu Financial Holdings has been an active participant in the upskilling of India's youth, having partnered last year with NSDC International, a newly formed subsidiary of National Skill Development Corporation of India, for the latter's Project Tejas to train, certify and place 10,000 Indian workers and professionals internationally.



Adeb Ahamed

Lifestyle | Features



Musa Hasahya (center) pose for a picture with some of his wives, children and grandchildren outside their family home in Butaleja district in Eastern Uganda. — AFP photos



Musa Hasahya (center) poses for a picture with his wives outside their family home in Butaleja district in Eastern Uganda.

## After 102 children, Ugandan villager says enough is enough

Musa Hasahya Kaseera has so many children he can't remember most of their names. The Ugandan villager is struggling to provide for his vast family that he says includes 12 wives, 102 children and 578 grandchildren, and now feels enough is enough.

"At first it was a joke... but now this

but has become something of a tourist attraction in his village, said his wives now take birth control to stop the family expanding further. "My wives are on contraceptives but I am not. I don't expect to have more children because I have learnt from my irresponsible act of producing so many children that I can't look after."

brother, relatives and friends to marry many wives to produce many children to expand our family heritage," Hasahya said.

### No fighting

Attracted by his then status as a cattle trader and butcher, Hasahya said villagers would offer their daughters' hand in marriage, even some below the age of 18. Child marriage was only banned in Uganda in 1995, while polygamy is allowed in the East African country according to certain religious traditions. Hasahya's 102 children range in age from 10 to 50, while the youngest wife is aged about 35.

"The challenge is I can only remember the name of my first and the last born but some of the children I can't recall their names," he said as he rummaged through piles of old notebooks looking for details about their births. "It's the mothers who help me to identify them."

But Hasahya can't even recall the names of some of his wives, and has to consult one of his sons, Shaban Magino, a 30-year-old primary school teacher who helps run the family's affairs and is one of the few to have received an education. To resolve disputes in such a huge set-up, Hasahya says they have monthly family meetings.

A local official who oversees Bugisa, a village of about 4,000 people, said that despite the challenges, Hasahya has "brought up his children very well" and there had been no cases of theft or fighting for example.



Musa Hasahya's (not seen) children and grandchildren share a jackfruit harvested from a tree in their garden outside their family home in Butaleja district in Eastern Uganda.



Musa Hasahya's (not seen) child plait the hair of another outside their family home in Butaleja district in Eastern Uganda.

### 'Barely enough'

Bugisa's residents are largely peasants involved in small-scale farming of crops such as rice, cassava, coffee, or raising cattle. Many members of Hasahya's family try to earn money or food by doing chores for their neighbors, or spend their days fetching firewood and water, often travelling long distances on foot.

Those at home sit around the grounds, some women weaving mats or plaiting hair, while the men play cards under the shelter of a tree. When the midday meal of boiled cassava is ready, Hasahya saunters out of the hut where he spends most of his day, and calls out in a commanding voice for the family to line up to eat.

"But the food is barely enough. We are forced to feed the children once or on a good day twice," says Hasahya's third wife Zabina. She said if she had known he had other wives, she would not have agreed to marry him. "Even when I came and resigned myself to my fate... he brought the fourth, fifth until he reached 12," she added in despair.

Two of his wives have already left Hasahya, and another three now live in another town about two kilometres (1.2 miles) away because of the overcrowding at the homestead. When asked why he thought more of his wives did not abandon him, Hasahya declared: "They all love me, you see they are happy!" — AFP



Musa Hasahya's (not seen) children play a traditional game outside their family home in Butaleja district in Eastern Uganda.

has its problems," the 68-year-old told AFP at his homestead in the village of Bugisa in Butaleja district, a remote rural area of eastern Uganda. "With my health failing and merely two acres of land for such a huge family, two of my wives left because I could not afford the basics like food, education, clothing."

Hasahya, who is currently unemployed

Hasahya's brood lives largely in a rapidly dilapidating house, its corrugated iron roof rusting away, or in about two dozen grass-thatched mud huts nearby. He married his first wife in 1972 at a traditional ceremony when they were both about 17 and his first child Sandra Nabwire was born a year later. "Because we were born only two of us, I was advised by my

## Who are the best new artists? Check TikTok

After several years of Grammy ceremonies with clear frontrunners for Best New Artist, Sunday's race is wide open-but no matter who wins, many of the nominees have TikTok to thank. The short-form video app has been a powerful force in music for years now-a jump-off point for artists looking to make it and a means of promotion for those already established in the industry.

And though the Recording Academy is not exactly known for reflecting the zeitgeist-its voters routinely favor legacy performers and throwback acts-the Best New Artist category has grown increasingly eclectic and representative of the internet age's impact on popular music.

"Social media over time has made the music industry a lot more reactive to what people are raising their hands for, rather than taking this top-down approach of kind of deciding, okay, this is the star of the moment," said Tatiana

Cirisano, a music industry analyst at MIDiA Research.

It's not new for artists to come up through social media-Justin Bieber was discovered on YouTube, and Shawn Mendes gained traction on the video app Vine-but "TikTok has just really exploded," Cirisano said. "It's clear that it's an integral part of pretty much every artist's strategy."

TikTok named three of this year's artists vying for the Best New Artist prize-Latto, Muni Long and Omar Apollo-as top emerging artists on its app. Also up for the coveted Grammy are Brazil's Anitta, who found viral TikTok fame with a dance challenge to her smash "Envolver," and Italy's Maneskin, the Eurovision rockers who saw their cover of "Beggin'" strike algorithm gold.

The past two Best New Artist winners, Olivia Rodrigo and Megan Thee Stallion, also found resounding success on TikTok. The other 2023 nominees-indie act Wet Leg, jazz duo JD Beck and Domi, rapper-singer Tobe Nwigwe, bluegrass artist Molly Tuttle and jazz singer Samara Joy-all also boast strong followings on the app. Joy told NPR last year she had recently joined "because that's where my generation is."

"I posted a couple of videos, and a

month later, 100,000 people-I was like, I can't," she said with a laugh. "People now are, like, coming up to me like, 'I found you on social media. I found you on TikTok, and I just had to, you know, come see a show.'"

### 'The new MTV'

While most Grammy awards have little to nothing to do with fan base or commercial success, the primary eligibility requirement for Best New Artist is breaking into the public consciousness-and thus it's the award "that the people have the biggest impact on," Cirisano told AFP. "These days, 90 percent of artists' breakthroughs into public consciousness is happening on TikTok," the analyst said.

Cassie Petrey, the founder of the digital marketing company Crowd Surf, agrees: "TikTok is the new MTV. When I was younger, all the artists in the Best New Artist category generally would have been on the radio or on MTV... TikTok is one of those mainstream media platforms of our time."

And Cirisano says it's changed the way record labels find new talent in the first place. While scouts used to check out local shows, find potential artists and then cultivate them, labels now are "looking for them to already have an audience, and already have had sort of a breakthrough moment on their own," she explains.

In some ways, Cirisano says, this has been democratizing, opening doors "for so many artists that maybe never would have had the means or the resources, or just by luck been able to get the attention of anyone in the industry."

But it's also left some artists bemoaning the mental health toll that a robust online presence can have, or the stress they feel over spending too much time on social media instead of making music. Marketer Petrey said that while promotion is important, it's not the job of artists to figure out strategy. "You just have to stay focused on art-that's your job," she said. "We're reminding people of that all the time."

And though there have been complaints among some people in the industry that artists are tailoring their music to make it more social media-friendly, Cirisano thinks those concerns are overblown, noting that past developments like Auto-Tune or ringtones triggered similar worry.

"I would just encourage people to recognize how every new technology has been met with a similar reaction," she said. "I tend to think that those concerns are a little bit overstated. I think that good music will always shine through at the end of the day." — AFP

## Hong Kong offers 500,000 free flights after COVID isolation

Hong Kong is ready to welcome the world back, its leader said Thursday, pledging more than half a million free flights and positive publicity to resurrect the once-vibrant global hub after three years of COVID-enforced isolation. The government's rebranding campaign, "Hello, Hong Kong", bills itself as an effort to tell "good stories" about the southern Chinese city, where years of political repression, coupled with pandemic curbs, have tarnished its business-friendly reputation.

Promising "no isolation, no quarantine and no restrictions" during a speech to business and tourism heavyweights, Chief Executive John Lee announced 500,000 free air tickets for visitors to experience the city's "hustle and bustle". The giveaway will open in March, and mainly be distributed by local airlines Cathay Pacific, HK Express and Hong Kong Airlines.

Another 80,000 tickets will be offered to residents in the summer, with the carriers yet to announce destinations. "This, ladies and gentlemen, is probably the world's biggest welcome ever," Lee said. Adherence to Beijing's zero-COVID doctrine of quarantine, closed borders and face masks kept Hong Kong largely virus-free until a deadly Omicron outbreak at the start of 2022.

But it also contributed to an economic recession and the exodus of more than 2.5 percent of the population. Even as business leaders warned Hong Kong would need a full COVID exit plan before any meaningful reboot, officials insisted

on gradually rolling back restrictions. The controls closed off what was previously one of Asia's most connected cities. Hong Kong welcomed just 600,000 visitors in 2022, less than one percent of 2018's figure.

### 'Proof will be in the pudding'

More than 130 international companies have shuttered their Hong Kong offices over the past three years, while a recent survey of 253 Japanese firms showed securing quality workers was their top concern. More than a quarter of the surveyed companies worried about brain drain due to the national security law Beijing imposed in 2020 to quell huge and often violent protests.

According to official figures, more than 140,000 people left Hong Kong's labor force last year, when the economy contracted by 3.5 percent. The top US diplomat in Hong Kong, Greg May, said last week that the city's reputation as a financial centre will hinge on its ability to uphold human rights.

"Our view continues to be that Beijing's actions could further force many of the city's best and brightest to flee," he said. Lee, a former security chief currently under US sanctions over his role in snuffing out 2019's protests, promised to correct the poor publicity he and other government officials have blamed for the metropolis's malaise.

"I will personally carry the promotional messages of our prowess as the world's freest economy and China's international financial centre." Speaking to AFP at the campaign launch, Peter Burnett, the former chair of the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, said "the proof will be in the pudding" for the reboot. "At least they're doing something about it. And that to me is very, very encouraging." — AFP



People attend the TikTok Awards ceremony in Mexico City. — AFP



A man walks near an art installation of penguin sculptures in Hong Kong. — AFP photos

## Lifestyle | Features

## Beyonce announces North American, European tour



In this file photo US singer/songwriter Beyonce arrives for the world premiere of Disney's "The Lion King" at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood. — AFP

Pop megastar Beyonce on Wednesday announced plans to tour Europe and North America later this year, following the release of her latest album "Renaissance" — just days before a Grammy Awards ceremony where she is the most-nominated artist. The concerts — set for May and June in Europe and July to September in the United States and Canada — mark the singer's "first solo tour in over six years," according to a statement from producer Live Nation.

The announcement four days ahead of the 65th Grammys — where she has

been nominated for nine awards — has ignited hope among fans that Queen Bey could make an appearance at the show in Los Angeles Sunday.

According to Variety, there is speculation she may even perform at the ceremony — possibly alongside her husband and fellow superstar Jay-Z, who the entertainment magazine reports will take the stage with rapper and producer DJ Khaled. Sunday's ceremony could come down to a matchup between Beyonce and British pop diva Adele, who has been nominated for seven awards.

The release of pulsating club track collection "Renaissance," the 41-year-old's seventh solo album, was considered by many the biggest music industry event of 2022, further solidifying Beyonce's spot as the uncontested queen of the dance floor.

According to the announcement, the artist's charitable organization BeyGood will support small businesses, scholarship funds and local community initiatives in cities throughout the tour. Tickets for North American shows are set to go on sale February 6, via Ticketmaster. — AFP

## UK schools fight misogyny peddled by online influencer Tate

When Nick Hewlett, head of a London school, was told about controversial online influencer Andrew Tate by a parent, he had never heard the name. Yet he soon found out that his students were familiar with all of Tate's misogynist posts on social media.

The head teacher of St Dunstan's College decided to counter the problem, even before Tate's arrest in December in Romania. Hewlett's solution, and that of some other schools, is to openly talk to students about Tate's ideas.

Tate, a 36-year-old former kick boxer, is being investigated along with his brother on accusations of "forming an organized criminal group, human trafficking and rape", charges which they deny. When this news broke, many adults learned for the first time of this British man's existence and that he was already an internet star for teenagers across English-speaking countries and beyond. Tate's name was one of the most-searched-for terms on Google in 2022. He is known for his motivational videos, in which he lays out his vision of masculinity and success, waving a cigar and baring his chest.

For him, success is synonymous with wealth, domination and possessing women and luxury cars. In one of his most disturbing messages, he talks about women being "the property" of men. In a tweet, he wrote: "A man without struggle is never going to be a powerful man... If you're going to be a hero, you're going to suffer." He also said: "Masculine life is war".

## 'Talks about women like objects'

Just mentioning Tate's name is enough to set off a heated debate among teenagers. "At one point, I thought his message was good. He was encouraging men to go the gym," says 17-year-old Kieran, outside his state school in north London. "He talked about masculinity while a lot of men are lost. They are asked to behave in a certain way."

Tate's ban from some social media has not been enough to stop him reaching minors. "After his arrest, I talked with my mother and my sister and I realized how serious it was," says Kieran. He says he has tried to block Tate from his social media but keeps seeing the content popping up anyway. Kieran's friend Jon, 18, says he likes some of Tate's messages, but has noticed that he "talks about women like objects". "I've never liked him," says Lilly, 17, the only girl in the group.

## 'Toxic masculinity'

"Do we have a defined sense of what modern masculinity looks like? I'm not sure we do... I think that creates a huge vacuum in particular for young boys. And some exploit that", said the head of St Dunstan's College. To deal with the prob-



In this file photo British-US influencer Andrew Tate arrives handcuffed and escorted by police at a courthouse in Bucharest on February 1, 2023 to hear the court decision on his appeal against pre-trial detention for alleged human trafficking, rape and forming a criminal group. — AFP

lem, the private school in south London has added Tate's story to a lesson topic already being taught. From the age of 11, students learn about gender stereotypes and equality. At the age of around 13, they cover "toxic masculinity".

"We have 1,200 children here. So, inevitably, some are going to be falling under his influence — or his spell," says Hewlett. "If schools don't respond to that, who is going to challenge their views? (...) You'll create a generation of young people who have a completely distorted view of what success looks like."

The students learn about this topic through discussions between girls and boys, with the teacher playing the role of facilitator. Together, they deconstruct the discourse of Tate and other influencers.

## Baffled parents

Natasha Eeles heads Bold Voices, a social enterprise she founded in 2018 that visits schools and universities to teach students about gender inequality. She says she first heard of Tate in May 2022. Currently, 70 percent of schools that contact her want her to talk about him. "A lot of his rhetoric relies on stereotypes on masculinity. It's very difficult to challenge that," she says.

Last autumn, Bold Voices put together a toolkit to help parents start a conversation with children about Tate. The advice includes asking open questions such as "What do you think of him?" and explaining what misogyny and homophobia mean. "There's a panic and fear among lots of parents, carers, teachers about Andrew Tate," says Michael Conroy, founder of Men at Work, a social enterprise that helps teachers and social workers talk to young men. "Teachers say young men are frequently bringing him into the classroom by quoting him, whatever the context," he says.

For example in a business studies class, some will give him as an example, saying: "he's the greatest businessman in the world". While Tate is being held in detention pending investigation, his videos are still going viral and he and his close allies are still tweeting. Asked whether a jail term would reduce Tate's influence, Conroy is skeptical. "If he stays in jail, let's not be naive. Others will fill the space." — AFP

am extremely happy and overjoyed."

Chinese holidaymakers have endured years of lockdowns and travel restrictions driven by Beijing's fervent pursuit of its "zero-COVID" policy, followed by a sudden reopening and accompanying spike in infections. Now a lucky few armed with selfie-sticks and clad in tropical shirts and straw hats are on long-awaited getaways to the "Island of Gods".

In recent years Chinese visitor numbers to Bali plunged after both countries



Chinese tourists are seen shopping at a mall in Denpasar, on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. — AFP

## Jailed Iran filmmaker Jafar Panahi says on hunger strike

Acclaimed Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi, who has been jailed for the last six months, said he has begun a hunger strike to protest his continued detention, according to a statement published by his wife Thursday. Panahi, whose films have won prizes at all of Europe's main film festivals, was arrested in July even before the current wave of protests that have shaken the regime started in September.

There were expectations last month that the judiciary could order his release, but he remains behind bars in Tehran's Evin prison. He started his dry hunger strike, refusing food and water, from Wednesday, he said in the statement. "Today, like many people trapped in Iran, I have no choice but to protest against this inhumane behavior with my dearest possession-my life," said Panahi.

"In protest against the illegal and inhumane behavior of the judicial and security apparatus and this hostage-taking, I have started a dry hunger strike as of February 1. I will refuse to eat and drink any food and medicine until the time of my release. "I will remain in this state until perhaps my lifeless body is freed from prison." Panahi, 62, was arrested on July 11 and had been due to serve a six-year sentence handed down in 2010 after his conviction for "propaganda against the system".

But on October 15, the Supreme Court quashed the conviction and ordered a retrial, raising hopes among his legal team he could be released. Panahi won a Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 2000 for his film "The Circle". In 2015, he won the Golden Bear at Berlin for "Taxi Tehran", and in 2018, he won the best screenplay prize at Cannes for "Three



Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi

Faces". Panahi's July arrest came after he attended a court hearing for fellow film director Mohammad Rasoulof, who had been detained a few days earlier.

Rasoulof was released from prison on January 7 after being granted a two-week furlough for health reasons and is still believed to be outside of jail. Cinema figures have been among the thousands of people arrested by Iran in its crackdown on the protests sparked by the September 16 death in custody of Mahsa Amini, 22, who had been arrested for allegedly violating its strict dress code for women.

Star actor Taraneh Alikadoosti, who had published images of herself without wearing the Islamic headscarf, was among those detained although she was released in early January after being held for almost three weeks. — AFP

## After miraculous comeback, damselfly in distress again

When the damselfly reappeared in France in 2009 after a 133-year absence, it was considered a small miracle. But the dragonfly's smaller cousin hasn't been seen in four years, sparking fresh fears it may be gone for good—a worrying indicator of the health of the world's precious wetlands in which it breeds.



This handout photograph released by Office Pour les Insectes et Leur Environnement (OPIE) shows a damselfly (Nehalennia speciosa) at Negenborn, Germany. — AFP

Damselflies face menaces on multiple fronts. In Asia, the wetlands and jungles in which they live are often cleared for crops like palm oil. In Latin America their

habitats are razed to build houses and offices. In Europe and North America, pesticides, pollutants and climate change have posed the biggest threat.

So when the *Nehalennia speciosa* damselfly was spotted in wetlands in the Jura region of eastern France for the first time since 1876, scientists were overjoyed-calling the rediscovery an "ecological scoop". But that comeback was probably only a "remission from the collapse that our biodiversity is suffering," said naturalist Francois Dehondt.

The last confirmed sighting was in 2019, when a severe drought gripped the Jura, and experts fear there might not be a second comeback. "The water source that shelters the insect was reduced to nothing" by drought, Dehondt wrote in France's *Le Monde* newspaper in December. In 2020, water levels remained low. The following year, some water returned to the bogs of the Jura where a dozen or so damselflies had been spotted in 2009. And then last year—the hottest on record in France—the region was once again parched. Damselflies were nowhere to be seen. — AFP

## 'Happy occasion'

Though only several hundred Chinese tourists have arrived so far on a once-weekly flight from Shenzhen, the Indonesian government says four more airlines have applied to fly regularly to Bali from China.

Officials are anticipating a return to normal Chinese tourist levels—which once amounted to a fifth of all visitors-on the island by 2025. The government also plans to ramp up its marketing of Bali as a paradise destination, according to the tourism minister.

At a mall in the Balinese capital Denpasar, Dong Yi was one of those who didn't need to be persuaded, vowing to return to Indonesia now mainlanders could travel back and forth. "From the moment I stepped off the plane, I could feel the passionate hospitality of the Bali islanders. I really like it here," said the 47-year-old finance worker. "In the future, I will come here often to travel"

Li said the pandemic was a "tough period" for him and his compatriots, and after the agonizing three-year wait, "just being able to leave the country is a happy occasion". — AFP

## Libraries offer novel 'warm space' for hard-up Britons

As Britain endures a cost-of-living crisis, public libraries and other community hubs are providing "warm spaces" for vulnerable members of society to stay safe and access free food this winter. In Ipswich, a town in eastern England, local resident Marina Flynn has been a regular visitor to Chantry Library over the past year. "It's a great warm space to come to, obviously with the cost of heating these days," Flynn told AFP as the outdoor temperature registered about five degrees Celsius (41 degrees Fahrenheit). "It's been as cold in my house as outside" this winter, added 54-year-old Flynn, who is unemployed and relies on the library's foodbank that provides donated staples and sanitary products for free.

"The foodbank I use quite a lot with the cost-of-living crisis, not being able to afford food," said Flynn, who competes to be heard against a babble from babies and toddlers heading home with carers following a musical activity organized by the library. UK public libraries are government-funded via local councils but have suffered from large budget cuts in recent years, causing many to fundraise and rely on volunteers to help bridge gaps.

## 'Areas of deprivation'

With inflation soaring worldwide last year on surging energy costs, a charity seeking to improve UK library services produced national guidance for organizations wanting to set up "warm spaces" ahead of the current winter. Local councils are using the guidance—an idea of money-saving expert and television personality Martin Lewis—to help set up warm spaces in other community venues such as churches and village halls. "The services have been well used," said Nick Poole, chief executive of the library charity CILIP. "It's mainly been focused on areas where you've got multiple deprivation or older and vulnerable communities," he told AFP.



Chantry Library is pictured in Ipswich, eastern England.

The government of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is subsidizing electricity and gas bills this winter but households and businesses are still left paying far more than a year ago. Poole would rather that extended support services did not exist in Britain's thousands of libraries. "But if they're going to, we want them to be safe and welcoming and inclusive." In one corner of Chantry Library stands a small cafe, which provides free hot drinks and soup on Sundays. "We have customers come in that are sad and we help them out as much as we possibly can," said Mark Dyer, the eatery's 48-year-old owner.

## 'Come for company'

Poole said it feels like "a natural extension of the function of" libraries to be safe and warm spaces. "People don't want to admit they're in trouble. People have used the (cost-of-living) services but don't like talking about it very much," he added. Visitors whose needs cannot be met by the library are signposted to other support groups. "I live on my own so I tend to come up here for company," said Flynn, who attends a weekly men's talking group.

Later in the day, a group of women gather round a table to knit, while donated clothes hang next to the library's entrance on "kindness racks". "We have had a clothes rack since before the cost-of-living" crisis, said Vicki Mann, manager of Chantry Library.

"But that has grown given the fact that we don't just offer children's clothes now... and we can't keep it replenished enough." According to Poole, libraries "are always there to meet local needs. "But at the same time, we can't do everything for everyone with no money... It's very hard for the libraries to exist themselves. They cost money to heat and light." — AFP

## Pandemic to paradise: Chinese tourists return to Bali after three years

Donning yellow "Bali" hats featuring a surfer as the last letter, Chinese tourists walked along the Indonesian backpacker hotspot's pristine blue waters, forgetting three years of COVID-19 misery. Exploring "turtle island", taking day trips to neighboring Lombok and hitting Bali's famed beaches, the world's biggest-spending tourists were back after the Lunar New Year kicked off and Beijing reopened to the world last month.

"I am especially happy to travel because, before the pandemic, I was someone who liked to travel a lot, going all over to see the sights, experience different cultures and people," Li Zhao-long, a 28-year-old internet company worker from Kunming in southwest Yunnan province, told AFP. "Three years on, being able to come from China to Indonesia, I



Aerial pictures of snow removal operations in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. — AFP photos



# MONTREAL SNOW-CLEARING: GOOD FOR TRAFFIC, BAD FOR ENVIRONMENT

A choreographed ballet of massive trucks, snowplows and snowblowers takes over the streets of Montreal whenever it snows, an enormous logistical effort with a significant environmental cost. Hundreds of snow-clearing vehicles are deployed across the frigid Canadian city for 100 or more days each year on average, dusting the road with salt and belching emissions into the air. "The snow challenge in Montreal is colossal," says city spokesperson Philippe Sabourin.

If the city's streets and sidewalks were put end to end, they would total

10,000 kilometers (6,200 miles) or the equivalent of the distance from Montreal to Beijing, he said. Some 3,000 employees and 2,200 vehicles go into action day and night every time it snows, helping make the streets passable. In Montreal alone, the equivalent of 150,000 tons of salt is spread on roads and sidewalks over the winter.

"It has an impact on ecosystems," Florent Barbecot, a professor of hydrogeology at the University of Quebec in Montreal, told AFP. "We have seen for a few years the level of salt which is rising a little bit everywhere in the environment."

Some of it stays on the roads, dries and evaporates when temperatures warm, "ending up in the atmosphere... which will affect future precipitation," he said. The city recognizes that salt is bad for the environment, but despite ongoing research, no effective substitute has been found.

It is "a material that does us a great service," by lowering the freezing temperature of ice and melting icy patches, Sabourin explained. With almost two meters (six feet) of snowfall in Montreal each year, the city simply cannot go without massive snow management.



Aerial picture of snow removal operation in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.



## People 'not happy'

As a substitute, "we tried coffee grinds, it smelled good, but it was not a success," Sabourin added. Beetroot juice has also been tried, which is less corrosive than salt, "but it stained floors a lot, people were not happy," he said.

Until the late 1990s, snow soiled by waste and pollution was dumped directly into the St. Lawrence River, before the practice was banned. Some of it is now poured into snow chutes connected to the sewer system. But the majority (75 percent) is stored in quarries, where the snow is piled high. One mound on the city's south side stretches the width of several football fields and rises ten storeys high.

At the foot, trucks appear tiny in comparison as they dump snow, most of it looking more grey than white. In a few months, the spring thaw will melt the

snow, and waste and gravel will be separated from the water, which is treated before being discharged into the river.

## 'Societal choice'

According to Barbecot, the city should simply use less salt, but that would require changing "the way we live" by limiting urban sprawl and driving less. "That's a societal choice," he said. In the streets, locals do not seem ready to embrace such a massive shift.

According to Charles Drolet, who was working behind the wheel of a city snowblower, residents mostly just want to see more frequent ploughing of streets. For resident Francine Lalonde, salting roads and snow removal "is a necessary evil," despite the negative environmental impacts. — AFP

## Australia to remove British monarch from banknotes

Australia will remove the British monarch from its banknotes, replacing the late Queen Elizabeth II's image on its \$5 note with a design honoring Indigenous culture, the central bank said Thursday. The decision to leave her successor King Charles III off the \$5 note means no monarch would remain on Australia's paper currency.

The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) said it would consult Indigenous people on a new design that "honors the culture and history of the First Australians". Queen Elizabeth's death on September 8 last year was marked by public mourning in Australia, but some Indigenous groups also protested against the destructive impact of colo-



This photo illustration taken in Hong Kong shows the Australian \$5 banknote. — AFP

nia Britain, calling for the abolition of the monarchy.

Australia is a constitutional monarchy, a democracy with King Charles III as its head of state. A referendum proposing a switch to a republic was narrowly defeated in 1999. The central bank said its decision was supported by the centre-left Labor government of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, who favors an eventual move to an Australian republic.

The new banknote would take "a number of years" to be designed and printed, it said, with the existing \$5 note remaining legal tender even after the new design is in people's hands.

## 'No longer justifiable'

The RBA's move was hailed by the nation's republican movement, which noted that Indigenous people predated British settlement by 65,000 years. "Australia believes in meritocracy so the idea that someone should be on our currency by birthright is irreconcilable, as is the notion that they should be our head of state by birthright," said Australian Republic Movement chair Craig Foster. "To think that an unelected king should be on our currency in place of First Nations leaders and elders and eminent Australians is no longer justifiable at a time of truth-telling, reconciliation and ultimately formal, cultural and intellectual independence."

The Australian Monarchist League said the decision was "virtually neo-communism in action". "Before a referendum is held on whether the people want to retain the King as sovereign or opt for a President, this government has arbitrarily moved to discard the King's head from Australia's five dollar note," it said in a statement. "It is certainly not Australian democracy."

A British monarch has featured on Australian banknotes since 1923 and was on all paper bills until 1953, the year of Elizabeth II's coronation. The queen's face adorned the 1-pound banknote and then the new \$1 note from 1966.

## Rock paintings

That first \$1 banknote also included imagery of Aboriginal rock paintings and carvings based on a bark painting by Indigenous artist David Malangi Daymiringu. The queen's face has peered up at Australians from the polymer \$5 note since 1992. But the central bank's governor Philip Lowe announced three months ago that it had begun talking with the government about whether to forego replacing the queen's image with a portrait of King Charles III. Australian coins, which are issued by the Royal Australian Mint, currently feature an image of the queen. — AFP

## Neanderthals hunted, butchered massive elephants

Neanderthals may have lived in larger groups than previously believed, hunting massive elephants that were up to three times bigger than those of today, according to a new study. The researchers reached their conclusions, published in the journal *Science Advances* on Wednesday, based on examinations of the 125,000-year-old skeletal remains of straight-tusked elephants found near Halle in central Germany.

The bones of around 70 elephants from the Pleistocene era were discovered in the 1980s in a huge coal quarry that has since been converted into an artificial lake. Elephants of the time were much larger than the woolly mammoth and three times the size of



Dr Sabine Gaudzinski-Windheuser examines the femur of a large adult male elephant for the presence of cut marks.

the present day Asian elephant, and an adult male could weigh up to 13 metric tons.

"Hunting these giant animals and completely butchering them was part of Neanderthal subsistence activities at this location," Wil Roebroeks, a co-author of the study, told AFP. "This constitutes the first clear-cut evidence of elephant hunting in human evolution," said Roebroeks, a professor of archeology at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

The study suggests that the Neanderthals who lived in the area for 2,000

traps. "And they are the biggest calorie bombs that are walking around in these landscapes."

The researchers said the Neanderthals were able to preserve the huge quantities of food provided by a single elephant and it would sustain them for months. "An average male elephant of about 10 tons would have yielded something like, minimally, 2,500 daily portions for an adult Neanderthal," Roebroeks said. "They could deal with it, either by preserving it for longer time periods—that is already something that



In this undated image shows cut marks on a foot bone of an elephant made by stone tools during disarticulation of the foot. — AFP photos

to 4,000 years were less mobile and formed social units "substantially larger than commonly envisaged." "Neanderthals were not simple slaves of nature, original hippies living off the land," Roebroeks said. "They were actually shaping their environment, by fire... and also by having a big impact on the biggest animals that were around in the world at that time."

## 'Calorie bombs'

The researchers determined the elephants had been hunted—and not just scavenged—because of the age and sex profile of the remains found in the quarry. Most of them were males and there were few young or old ones. "It's a typical selection made by hunters who went for the biggest prey," Roebroeks said. Adult male elephants would have been easier to hunt than females, who tend to move in herds protecting their young.

"Whereas adult males are solitary animals most of the time," Roebroeks said. "So they are easier to immobilize, driving them into mud and pit



This undated image released by Leiden University in the Netherlands, shows deep cut marks on the heel bone of a male elephant, some 50 years of age at death.

we didn't know—or simply by the fact that they lived in much, much larger groups than we commonly infer."

## Cut marks

The researchers said the Neanderthals used flint tools to butcher the animals which left clear traces on the well preserved bones. "They are classical cut marks that are generated by cutting and scraping off the meat from the bones," Roebroeks said.

Traces of charcoal fires used by the Neanderthals were also found, suggesting they may have dried meat by hanging it on racks and building a fire underneath. Roebroeks said that while the study provides evidence the Neanderthals lived in large social units it is difficult to estimate exactly how large those groups actually were. "But if you have a 10-ton elephant and you want to process that animal before it becomes rotten you need something like 20 people to finish it in a week," he said. — AFP

## Sports

# Indian Premier League set to eclipse American football's NFL

## IPL will become 'world's biggest domestic sporting event'

**LONDON:** Former England captain Andrew Strauss forecast Wednesday the Indian Premier League would eclipse American football's NFL to become "the biggest domestic sporting event in the world" as he praised it for sparking one of cricket's "great steps forward". He also said the recent creation of a women's IPL would "accelerate" the growth of the female game in spectacular fashion.

A highly lucrative franchise T20 event backed by wealthy business figures and entertainment stars, the IPL has also led to the creation of similar competitions, such as Australia's Big Bash and the Caribbean Premier League. In the process, players on the global T20 circuit earn a good living from cricket without having to represent their countries. This has led to fears about the future of international cricket, in particular five-day Tests, but Strauss said issues of "overkill" had existed before the advent of the IPL in 2008 and were still evident at international and county level.

Strauss, delivering the annual Cowdrey lecture at Lord's, urged his audience to embrace the IPL despite fears it meant the game had "sold its soul". "As the Indian economy grows, it is expected that by the time it reaches parity with the size of the USA in 2040, the value of the IPL is likely to be six times what it is today-this is going to be the biggest domestic sporting tournament in the world, bar none," Strauss said.

### 'Earth-shattering sum'

"If you allow yourself to keep bound up in the thesis that the purpose of the game is to bring diverse people together, whether playing or watching, and to allow cricket to educate and connect, then surely the rise of franchise cricket is one of the great steps forward. "More players are playing in different parts of the world, experiencing new places and meeting new people, more and more people around the globe are engaged with

the great game that we all love so much."

Turning to the new five-team women's IPL, Strauss said it would "accelerate" the growth of women's cricket. "The first IPL franchises have just been sold for an earth shattering sum of £465 million (\$572.5 million)," the 45-year-old former opener added. "Women's cricket is truly standing on its own two feet and is likely to be in the top three sports for earning potential for any young girl with talent and an ambition to play sport professionally."

Strauss, meanwhile, said the attacking way in which England red-ball coach Brendon McCullum and captain Ben Stokes had overseen nine wins from 10 Tests since taking charge in May, compared to a mere one in 17 before they joined forces, augured well for the future of the five-day game. "I firmly believe that the Test series that capture our imaginations today-the ones that we really look forward to-aren't going anywhere," Strauss insisted. — AFP



## KIB, Suffix conclude the first phase of sporting initiative

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait International Bank (KIB) concluded the first phase of KIB | The STADIUM sporting initiative, crowning the winners of the GCC Masters Padel games following 5 days of continuous excitement. The first-of-its-kind event, "KIB | The Stadium" is organized by Suffix Events and comes as part of KIB's dedicated patronage of Kuwait's sporting culture, which is led by the Bank's expansive social responsibility program.

The first phase of "KIB | The STADIUM" kicked off on Wednesday, January 25, in a grand opening ceremony which inaugurated the first round of the Padel games and was held under the supervision of the Kuwait Padel Federation. After an exciting final day of competitions, Abdullah Ahli and Omar Behroozian from the UAE were crowned as the winners in the male category, while Fatma Al-Nabhani and Sarah Al-Balushi from Oman were crowned as the winners in the female category.

Speaking on behalf of KIB as the Bank announced the winner, Assistant Manager - Marketing Department and Corporate Communication Unit, Marwa Maarafi, expressed her happiness with the positive results the first phase achieved on all levels, pointing to the unprecedented



interaction on social media, as well as the large participation and remarkable presence of spectators from the public. She celebrated the success of this unique community initiative, and its achievement of the Bank's development and social impact goals, on which the sporting initiative was built and organized; with a vision that believes in the importance of such goals, and that strives to reach them for the benefit of the Kuwaiti society and its aspiring youth.

Maarafi also thanked Suffix Events for all the support it has provided and its immaculate organization of the event with constant follow ups to ensure the success of "KIB | The STADIUM" with international standards. She also thanked Food Buzz for helping bring the event alive with local F&B vendors and creating a community that supports such projects.

The second phase of "KIB | The STADIUM" is slated to commence within a few days with fitness competitions in a variety of sports activities, in

which professional teams will compete. Announcing the winners would conclude the "KIB | The STADIUM" initiative, after having taken place for a period of two weeks.

"KIB | The STADIUM" is an initiative organized under the auspices of the Bank, in its continuous endeavor to expand the scope of its pioneering social responsibility program, aiming to advance various fields in Kuwait, such as sports, arts, literature and health, and to develop them, in line with its motto, "Bank for Life". As a leading financial and banking institution in Kuwait, KIB always aspires for the prosperity of the community, and support and benefit talented Kuwaitis across multiple areas of interest and expertise.

In its concluding remarks, KIB said that spectator entry tickets can now be purchased online via Suffix's official website (suffix.events) under "KIB | The STADIUM".



## Fatat and Tadhamon battle for supremacy

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The fifth edition of Women Futsal League will be concluded with the final match to be held on Saturday (6:00 pm) - between holders Fatat and Tadhamon clubs. The match will be preceded with a match between Kuwait and Fatat Al-Oyoun to decide the third and fourth position. Kuwait Football Association Board Member Fatima Hayat supervised the preparations for the final ceremony to make sure it reflects the efforts of the teams.

Tadhamon and Fatat qualified for the final by defeating Fatayat Al-Oyoun and Kuwait in the semi final following the three stages of the league. The championship witnessed a two-day fight for the standings. Tadhamon has many outstanding players such as Fajer Ahmad, Shorouq Basha, Zaina Salama, Razan Al-Enezi and Shaima Ibrahim, in addition to professional players and the Columbian Coach. Meanwhile, Fatat Coach Mohammad Al-Kandary will be in the second consecutive final and they also have several players who can make the difference such as Dina Ali, Mariam Baroun, Yaseen Saadoun, Sheikha Waleed and Ayesha Faisal.

## Kuwait Rhythmic Gymnastics team in Hungary



By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The girls Rhythmic Gymnastics team traveled to Hungary to participate in the International Championship which is scheduled from 2 until 6 February. The team was led by Ukrainian coach with six players.

They include: Nour Al-Ruzaihan, Liyan Behbehani, Talia Behbehani, Raya Al-Qassar, Fawziya Al-Abdelkareem and Nabila Al-Kharafi. The tournament will give Kuwait team the opportunity to gain experience and improve their level while preparing for other events.

## Celtic maul Nets as Sixers bounce back

**LOS ANGELES:** Jayson Tatum scored 31 points as the Boston Celtics put the depleted Brooklyn Nets firmly in their place with a brutal 139-96 mauling on Wednesday. The heavy-weight clash between the two Eastern Conference rivals ended with the Nets reeling on the ropes as the Celtics laid down a marker with an emphatic wire-to-wire victory at the TD Garden.

Boston dominated from the outset, running up a remarkable 46 points in the first quarter alone, with Tatum contributing 18 points. By half-time, the Celtics had raced into a 34-point lead against a Brooklyn side still missing the injured Kevin Durant. Tatum's 31-point haul included seven three-pointers from 12-of-19 shooting while Jaylen Brown provided scoring support with 26 points. Six Boston players finished in double figures after a lopsided rout.

Kyrie Irving led the Brooklyn Nets scoring with 20 points. "A couple of days off did us good, we felt refreshed," Boston star Tatum said afterwards. "We have depth and a next-man-up mentality." Tatum reserved special praise for Robert Williams III, who finished with 16 points and nine rebounds. "On any given night, Rob might be the most important guy to our long-term success," Tatum said. "To get to where we want to get to, we need Rob on the floor and we need him healthy."

### Sixers bounce back

Elsewhere, the Philadelphia 76ers bounced back from their upset loss to the Orlando Magic on Monday with a comprehensive 105-94 defeat of the Florida club. The Sixers had been on a roll heading into Monday's game with seven straight wins, but somehow squandered a 21-point advantage to crash 119-109.

A scheduling quirk meant the Sixers did not have to wait long to avenge that loss, and Philadelphia duly seized the opportunity on Wednesday. A reinvigorated Sixers side turned the tables with a convincing victory thanks to 28 points from Joel Embiid and 26 points from James Harden. Harden narrowly missed out on a triple double, finishing with nine rebounds and 10 assists, with a points tally that included six three-pointers.

Markelle Fultz topped the Magic scoring with 18 points. In Memphis, the prolific Damian Lillard poured in 42 points for a second straight game as the Portland Trail Blazers downed the Grizzlies 122-112. Lillard, who also had 10 assists and eight rebounds, is now tied with Shaquille O'Neal in 19th place on the rankings of players with the most 40-point games in NBA history. Lillard, who also scored 42 points in a win over Atlanta on Monday, now has 49 40-point games. — AFP

## England win; Malan, Butler hit centuries

**KIMBERLEY:** Dawid Malan and captain Jos Buttler hit centuries to set up a 59-run win for England in the third and final one-day international against South Africa at the Diamond Oval in Kimberley on Wednesday. Malan made 118 and Buttler scored 131 in an England total of 346 for seven. South Africa were bowled out for 287 with fast bowler Jofra Archer taking a career-best six for 40.

South Africa had already clinched the series by winning the first two matches but England captain Jos Buttler said Wednesday's win was a reward for the hard work his players had put in during the short series. "There's been some really good stuff. Guys getting hundreds and Jofra Archer was brilliant. We've got a good thing going. We're building nicely," said Buttler, who was named player of the match and player of the series.

South African captain Temba Bavuma said the series win was important. "We came in under a lot of pressure. We've done ourselves justice and come closer to automatic qualification for the World Cup." South Africa need one win in their remaining two matches against the Netherlands to move ahead of West Indies into one of the eight qualifying places in the World Cup Super League, although Sri Lanka could still move ahead of them in a forthcoming series against New Zealand.

The left-handed Malan and his right-handed captain shared a fourth wicket partnership of 232 off 211 balls after coming together with their team in trouble at 14 for three in the sixth over. A slow start to the partnership became a torrent of runs as they took command on a slow pitch. England scored 217 runs in the last 20 overs of their innings, scoring rapidly even after the two centuries were dismissed. South Africa opted to go into the match without their two fastest bowlers, Anrich Nortje and Kagiso Rabada, and appeared powerless to keep the scoring in check. When South Africa batted they were 59 runs ahead on comparative scores after 30 overs. — AFP

Sports

# Barcelona extend La Liga lead, overwhelm Betis 2-1

## Catalans put pressure on Real Madrid

SEVILLE: Raphinha and Robert Lewandowski's strikes helped Barcelona move eight points clear at the top of La Liga with a 2-1 win at Real Betis on Wednesday. The Catalans put pressure on second-placed Real Madrid, who hosted Valencia on Thursday, by scraping a narrow win from an intense clash at the Benito Villamarin.

With French winger Ousmane Dembele out injured for the next few weeks, Raphinha grabbed his chance to prove himself. Dembele's superb form had limited the Brazilian's minutes since his move from Leeds United last summer. Raphinha put Barcelona ahead in the 65th minute and Lewandowski, back after a three-match league ban, netted the second with 10 minutes to go. Jules Kounde scored an unfortunate own goal to give Betis a fighting chance of a point in the final stages but Barcelona held out for the win.

"I think we had a good game, our play was very good, excellent I would say," Barca coach Xavi Hernandez told Movistar. "We played a great game at a very difficult place to come. I'm very happy not just for the result but for how we played, we've improved a lot from the Girona game." Barcelona had won their previous three league games 1-0, includ-

ing against Catalan rivals Girona last weekend in a flat performance, but were operating on a higher level in Seville.

Betis started well in front of their boisterous support, with Alejandro Balde doing well to block Luiz Henrique's effort in the opening exchanges. At the other end Lewandowski headed wide, while Pedri could not find a finish when racing through on goal. Raphinha had a goal ruled out for a clear offside and Kounde flung himself in the way of Sergio Canales's strike. Betis goalkeeper Rui Silva denied Pedri either side of half-time as the Spain international tried to continue his own goalscoring form after netting the winner in Girona.

### Eight points clear

Raphinha appealed unsuccessfully for a penalty after a tangle with Abner Vinicius in the area, but the Brazilian's complaints soon turned to celebrations. Frenkie de Jong cleverly fed Balde from a quick free-kick and the young left-back slid a ball across the face of goal for Raphinha to tap home. "It's about attitude, competitiveness, desire, faith, our hopes are huge," said Xavi when asked about De Jong's quick thinking. "We are at a good moment with this, we have confidence and the morale to

achieve success. That matters, too, it's about competing well."

La Liga's top scorer Lewandowski's return was largely a frustrating one for the striker, having a shot blocked after Sergio Busquets set him up, while his touch was unusually clunky. However the Polish international finished clinically after Ronald Araujo headed down to him, to net his 14th league goal of the season and 23rd across all competitions. Substitute Ansu Fati headed wide from another fine Balde cross, before Kounde accidentally chested a ball into his own net past the outstretched arm of Marc-Andre ter Stegen, setting up a nervy finale.

Barcelona survived to round off the first half of their league campaign with a victory, aiming to win the title for the first time since 2019. Betis, sixth, had William Carvalho sent off after the full-time whistle for protesting some of the refereeing decisions. The Andalusians sit three points behind Atletico Madrid in fourth. "Against Barca the games are always like this, it's hard to take the ball off them, they are capable of pushing you back and keeping you in your own half," Betis forward Borja Iglesias told Movistar. "Until their goal we were doing well, from there it was a different game." —AFP



SEVILLE: Real Betis' Spanish midfielder Sergio Canales (center) fights for the ball with Barcelona's French defender Jules Kounde (left) and Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Sergio Busquets during the Spanish league football match between Real Betis and FC Barcelona on February 1, 2023. — AFP

## Bayern thrash 10-man Mainz in German Cup

BERLIN: New Bayern Munich signing Joao Cancelo set up a goal to help his side secure a first win of 2023 with a 4-0 triumph at 10-man Mainz in the German Cup on Wednesday. Cancelo, who joined the German champions on loan from Man City on Tuesday, made an immediate impact, floating in a lofted cross to Cameroon striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting, who hammered home from close range. Winless in their first three league games of 2023, Bayern entered the game under significant pressure to advance to the German Cup quarter-finals for the first time in three seasons.

Choupo-Moting's 17th-minute strike settled the visitors' nerves and they had a second on the 30-minute mark when Bayern veteran Thomas Mueller found teenage forward Jamal Musiala, who slammed the ball across the face of goal to make it 2-0. Winger Leroy Sane scored the third with one minute of the first half remaining, sliding in a looped assist from former Mainz forward Choupo-Moting.

Canadian wing-back Alphonso Davies, who came on for Cancelo with 20 minutes to go, added a fourth late in the game, heading in a floated assist from



MAINZ: Bayern Munich's German midfielder Leon Goretzka (center) jumps for a header during the German Cup (DFB Pokal) last 16 football match between 1 FSV Mainz 05 and FC Bayern Munich on February 1, 2023. — AFP

Dutch centre-back Matthijs de Ligt. Mainz had a number of half chances in an increasingly fiery second half which saw centre-back Alexander Hack sent off for a second yellow card, along with Bo Svensson, who was shown a straight red for arguing with the assistant referee moments before Davies' goal.

Svensson complained that the German champions got better treatment from the officials in the

lead up to his red card. "I saw a clear difference in the way Bayern's bench were handled and the way we were handled (by the referees). It's not the first time." Bayern manager Julian Nagelsmann praised his side, saying they were "much more aggressive" than they have been so far this year. "I'm glad we won again. I think the style and manner in which we played was very, very good." — AFP

## Man Utd finish off Forest, cruise into League Cup final

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Erik ten Hag said winning trophies is the standard that should be demanded at Old Trafford after beating Nottingham Forest 2-0 on Wednesday and 5-0 on aggregate to reach the League Cup final. Anthony Martial and Fred scored the goals for Ten Hag's men in the final 17 minutes of the semi-final, second leg as United set up a meeting with Newcastle at Wembley on February 26.

Three managers have left the club since United last won a trophy under Jose Mourinho in 2017. But Ten Hag is now just one game away from ending that drought in his first season in charge. "I think we have a good squad so we have to demand and control the high standards," said the Dutchman. "You have to bring that every game. We are Manchester United. When you are a United player you have to match the standards."

The damage was done for the Red Devils in last week's 3-0 win at the City Ground in the first leg as Ten Hag was able to rotate his squad with United still involved in four competitions. He made six changes from the side that beat Reading 3-1 in the FA Cup



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Portuguese midfielder Bruno Fernandes (center) tackles Nottingham Forest's Nigerian striker Emmanuel Dennis during the English League Cup semi-final second-leg football match on February 1, 2023. — AFP

fourth round on Saturday with Marcus Rashford among those left on the bench. Wout Weghorst came closest to breaking the deadlock before half-time

when the giant Dutch striker's header came back off the post, but the game opened up once Ten Hag made changes on the hour mark. — AFP

## Celtic maintain nine-point lead

GLASGOW: Celtic's lead over Rangers at the top of the Scottish Premiership remains at nine points after comfortable 3-0 wins for both sides of the Glasgow divide on Wednesday. All three of Celtic's goals over Livingston came before half-time as Ange Postecoglou's men took another step towards retaining their title. Greg Taylor's drive opened the scoring before the ball rebounded off Daizen Maeda from an attempted clearance and into the net.

Kyogo Furuhashi then extended his lead as the league's top scorer in first-half stoppage time for his 21st goal of the season. Postecoglou was full of praise for the Japanese striker. "He is a quality player, he is always a threat," said the former Australia boss. "He has composure in his finishing, passion and energy and his appetite to work on everything makes us a better team." Rangers ended Hearts' 10-game unbeaten run with a dominant display at Tynecastle. Alfredo Morelos scored twice for Michael Beale's men and saw another two goals ruled out for offside.

Malik Tillman was also on target as Rangers extended Beale's unbeaten start in charge to 11 games. "We can't drop from that standard now," said Beale. "We should have scored more and have started to keep clean sheets regularly, which is the sign of a good team." Elsewhere, Aberdeen's woes went on despite a change of management as the Dons were beaten 3-1 at home by St Mirren. — AFP

### Today's matches on TV

#### ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea v Fulham 23:00

beIN Sports HD 3 TR  
beIN Sports Connect  
beIN Sports 1 HD

#### SPANISH LEAGUE

Athletic de Bilbao v Cadiz CF 23:00

beIN Sports Connect

#### GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Augsburg v Bayer 04 Leverkusen 22:30

Sky Sports Football UK  
beIN Sports HD 3  
beIN Sports HD 2 English  
beIN Sports FR HD 1  
beIN Sports HD 4 TR

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

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, Arwa holder of passport No. U0747940 do hereby change my name to Arwa (as given Name) Fouji (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Arwa Fouji and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents.

I, Husain holder of passport No. V9368379 do hereby change my name to Husain (as given name) Company (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Husain Company and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2847) - 3-02-2023

Automated enquiry about the Civild card is 1889988

## Al Ahly crush Auckland City

Morocco's Wydad, Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal face off



TANGIER: Ahly's Egyptian midfielder Hussein El-Shahat celebrates scoring his team's first goal during the FIFA Club World Cup first round football match between Egypt's Al-Ahly and New Zealand's Auckland City on February 1, 2023. — AFP

TANGIERS: Egyptian giants Al Ahly brushed past New Zealand's Auckland City 3-0 on Wednesday in the opening round of the Club World Cup in Morocco. Hussein El Shahat hammered in a long-range drive in first-half stoppage time for Al Ahly, who added to their lead with goals from Mohamed Sherif and Percy Tau. El Shahat's strike put him in elite company as the fourth player to score at three different editions of the Club World Cup - joining Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale.

Auckland, the Oceania champions appearing at the tournament for a record 10th time, had defender Adam Mitchell sent off in the closing moments. Al Ahly, runners-up to tournament hosts Wydad Casablanca in last year's

CAF Champions League, will play the Seattle Sounders on Saturday with the winners advancing to meet Real Madrid.

Hussein El Shahat, Mohamed Sherif and Percy Tau all scored as Egyptian side Al Ahly cruised to a 3-0 victory at the Club World Cup in Morocco on Wednesday to set up a second round tie against Seattle Sounders. Ahly, who have won the bronze medal in the previous two editions, dominated the contest at the Ibn Batouta Stadium in Tangier and now look forward to a far more testing outing against Major League Soccer opposition at the same venue on Saturday.

The Cairo club had to wait until first half injury-time for their opener against the Oceania champions, which came when El

Shahat cut inside from the left wing and unleashed a low drive from 30 yards that beat goalkeeper Conor Tracey. It was 2-0 on 56 minutes after Sherif beat the offside trap and slipped the ball past Tracey to end the game as a contest with Auckland unable to muster much in terms of an attacking threat.

South Africa international Tau added a late third with a simple finish following a brilliant back-heel assist by Kahraba. The winner of the match between Ahly and Sounders will face Real Madrid in the semi-finals. Home favorites and African champions Wydad Casablanca tackle Saudi Arabia's Al-Hilal in their second round tie on Saturday. The victor in that fixture will meet Brazilian outfit Flamengo in the semi-finals. — Agencies

## PSG extend lead; Mbappe misses penalty, injured

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain extended their lead at the top of Ligue 1 with a 3-1 win at Montpellier on Wednesday but their evening was overshadowed by an injury to Kylian Mbappe, who had earlier missed a penalty. The France superstar had an eighth-minute spot-kick saved by Montpellier's Benjamin Lecomte and then remarkably saw his second attempt turned onto the post by the goalkeeper after the referee ordered a retake.

Mbappe then limped off with what looked like a hamstring injury midway through the first half, raising the alarm for PSG with the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie against Bayern Munich now less than two weeks away. Speaking after the game, coach Christophe Galtier suggested the injury was down to a knock rather than a muscle problem. "He took a knock to the back of the knee or the back of the thigh, so we'll see," said Galtier. "I'm not too worried," he added. "It's a bruise or a contusion, we don't know yet. "With the run of matches we don't want to take risks with a very busy fixture list, but it doesn't appear that serious."

PSG host Bayern in Paris on February 14, with the second leg in Germany on March 8. They are desperate to avoid a repeat of last season when they were knocked out at the same stage of the Champions League by Real Madrid. After winning just one

of their last four league games, Wednesday's awkward trip for PSG saw them also lose Sergio Ramos to injury and have two goals disallowed before Fabian Ruiz put them ahead 10 minutes into the second half.

### Messi on target

Ruiz then set up Lionel Messi to make it 2-0 with a deft finish in the 72nd minute, the Argentine scoring his 14th club goal of the season. Sixteen-year-old midfielder Warren Zaire-Emery made sure of the win in stoppage time after Arnaud Nordin - a friend of Mbappe's from their time together at France's national training academy - had pulled one back. PSG, who were without the rested Neymar, extended their lead at the top of the table from three to five points after Lens lost 1-0 at home to Nice.

"It was a good performance in general," Galtier said. "There was an incredible scenario in the first half with the retaken penalty, we hit the post, had goals disallowed and two injuries because Sergio Ramos was involved in a collision and on falling he hurt his adductor, but apparently it is nothing serious." The win for PSG came after a frustrating end to the January transfer window on Tuesday as they failed to process the paperwork to complete the loan signing of Hakim Ziyech from Chelsea after the Moroccan winger had passed a medical. — AFP



MONTPELLIER: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe lies on the ground after getting injured during the French L1 football match between Montpellier Hérault SC and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on February 1, 2023. — AFP

## Morocco's 'ultras' steal soccer show

CASABLANCA: When Morocco's "ultras" crowd into a football stadium, the fan groups' full-throated chants, spectacular pyrotechnics and sometimes rowdy and anti-authoritarian antics often steal the show. Casablanca's stadium rings to the chants of passionate supporters of the city's Wydad club as they raise colored placards aloft to form a vast, moving mosaic that spells out their motto: "Free souls".

The club's die-hard fan group, known as the "Winners", has a long-earned reputation for flamboyance — singing, setting off smoke bombs and making their cellphone torches dance collectively like fireflies. Some 10,000 of them regularly pack the north curve of Mohammed V stadium in Morocco's economic capital, where they have a reputation for drawing more attention than the action on the pitch.

Thousands of supporters are expected to put on their carefully choreographed show again as the team, fresh from winning the African Champions League, competes in the Club World Cup which started on Wednesday. "I can't describe my love for the Wydad fans, they're very special," said one fan, Houssam Ait Wahman, 18, before a recent Moroccan league match against Fez that he watched with his mother and sisters. "Fans from all over the world can't match us," he boasted about the Winners, who came first in a global ranking by "Ultras World", a popular Facebook page dedicated to the phenomenon.

### 'Crowd effect'

Some ultras in Morocco and beyond have earned a reputation for violence, mostly brawling with rival fans - but the members are quick to defend what they praise as a fra-



CASABLANCA: Wydad Athletic Club supporters cheer during the Botola Pro 1 league football match between Wydad AC and MAS Fez at Stade Mohammed V in Casablanca. — AFP

ternity united in their love for the game. "Supporting Wydad is a passion, a commitment that goes beyond football," said Mohamed, a former Winner in his 30s who asked not to give his full name. The Winners are part of the international ultras culture, which has a strong following across the football-obsessed North African country.

The image of Morocco's ultras has often been associated with violence between rival groups. After two fans were killed in early 2016, authorities banned ultra fans from football grounds nationwide for two years. Former Winner Mohamed blamed the "crowd effect" and explained that sometimes "it takes just one person to do something stupid and it all kicks off". Moroccan sociologist Abderrahim Bourkia, author of a recent essay on the subculture, said some fans "release their frustrations" through chanting, while others resort to violence. "The solution is to invest in the education of the youth," he said.

Not to be outdone by the Winners, fans of Wydad's main Casablanca rival, Raja, also

have a reputation for crowd-pleasing and exuberant performances. "Putting on a show is the hallmark of the ultras," said Bourkia. "It's a way for them to express themselves and showcase themselves." Raja's two ultras groups, the "Green Boys" and "Ultras Eagles", are known for their overtly left-wing political slogans, both in the stadium and on social media. Their song "F bladi delmouni" (They Oppressed Me In My Own Country) calls out inequality and social injustice in the kingdom.

The song has spread beyond Morocco's borders and has been sung by pro-democracy protesters in neighboring Algeria and even by Palestinians. "The Raja fans have an activist culture that gives voice to the voiceless, to stand up against oppression and condemn corruption," a former Raja ultra told AFP. The phenomenon turns stadiums into "spaces of free expression", Bourkia said. "Being part of the ultras is a unique experience," said another Raja supporter. "Feeling that you're being heard helps forge a personality." — AFP