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Arabi beat Salmiya to win Crown Prince Cup



# HORROR AT DAWN

Powerful quake kills over 3,000 in Turkey, Syria

Amir sends condolences, dispatches medics, aid



(Left) Rescuers search for victims and survivors amidst the rubble of a building that collapsed in Adana in Turkey on Feb 6, 2023 after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the country's southeast. (Right) Residents stand in front of a collapsed building following the earthquake in the town of Jandaris in the countryside of Syria's northwestern city of Afrin in Aleppo province on Feb 6, 2023. —AFP

**DIYARBAKIR, Turkey:** The most powerful earthquake to strike Turkey and Syria in nearly a century killed over 3,000 people on Monday, sparked frantic rescues and was felt as far away as Greenland. The 7.8-magnitude early morning quake, followed by dozens of aftershocks, wiped out entire sections of major Turkish cities in a region filled with millions who have fled Syria's civil war and other conflicts.

HHH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, expressing sorrow over the earthquake. In the cable, HHH the Amir expressed condolences to the Turkish president and the victims' families, wishing speedy recovery of those injured. HHH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HHH

the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Erdogan.

Upon orders of HHH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a decree was issued on Monday to dispatch aid and medical equipment by air to Turkey. As part of the relief efforts, teams from the foreign ministry, fire department, Kuwait Red Crescent Society, health ministry and Kuwait army will participate.

Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah expressed on behalf of the country concern over the earthquakes. In a press release, Sheikh Salem presented Kuwait's grave concerns towards the families affected and hoped for a quick recovery. A decree was issued by the

nation's political leadership to operate a designated flight to extract Kuwaiti nationals currently in those areas, while the foreign ministry is keeping a close eye on the situation through its offices in Ankara and Istanbul.

The Kuwaiti Embassy in Turkey urged Kuwaitis in the southern governorates to be cautious and adhere to the instructions issued by official authorities. The embassy urged Kuwaiti citizens to contact the embassy or the consulate general in Istanbul when necessary on the following numbers: 00905331648479, 00905306902097.

Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun sent a cable of condolences Monday to

the President of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Mustafa Sentop, expressing deep sorrow over the earthquake. In his cable, Saadoun also expressed condolences to the victims' families, wishing speedy recovery for those injured.

Rescuers used heavy equipment and their bare hands to peel back rubble in search of survivors, who they could in some cases hear begging for help under the debris. "Since I live in an earthquake zone, I am used to being shaken," said Melisa Salman, a reporter in the Turkish city of Kahramanmaraş. "But that was the first time we have ever experienced anything like that," the 23-year-old told AFP. "We thought it was the apocalypse."

Continued on Page 6

## Kuwait Sat-1 in final launch and early orbit phase

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Sat-1 satellite has reached the final stages of its launch and early orbit phase (LEOP), before it begins taking images of Kuwait, announced Dr Hala Al-Jassar, director of the national project for Kuwait Sat-1 backed by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences.

"This is an initial stage in which any satellite goes into orbit around Earth, which usually lasts for two to three months from the date of launch, during which the first signal is received and tests are conducted on the satellite. Moreover, all its systems are calibrated to ensure they work well and are performing their required functions," Dr Jassar said.

Continued on Page 6

## Zionists kill 5 Palestinians in Jericho raid

**JERICO:** The Zionist entity said its forces killed on Monday five Palestinians in a raid in the occupied West Bank near Jericho. Hamas confirmed its fighters were among the dead, saying in a statement the Gaza-based group was mourning members of its military wing killed "in an armed clash with the Zionist occupation".

The early morning Zionist raid

came amid a spike in Zionist-Palestinian violence and after days of what Jericho authorities have described as a "siege" on the city since a shooting attack late last month. A Zionist security official, requesting anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the media, told AFP the army was holding the bodies of the Palestinian dead.

The army said in a statement "a number" of armed men were killed in a gunfight during the raid on the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp at the entrance to the city, which lies close to the Jordanian border. It reported no casualties among the Zionist forces.

Continued on Page 6



JERICO: Palestinian protesters burn tyres to block a road leading into Jericho in the occupied West Bank on Feb 6, 2023 following a raid by Zionist forces. —AFP

## Adani shares dive again amid demos

**MUMBAI:** Investors dumped more Adani stock on Monday as India's opposition staged protests calling for a full inquiry into allegations of major accounting fraud at the country's biggest conglomerate. The group owned by tycoon Gautam Adani has lost around \$120 billion in value since the claims were levelled by short-seller US investment group Hindenburg Research on January 24.

Trading in Adani Total Gas, in which French oil giant TotalEnergies owns a 37.4-percent stake, and in Adani Power was again suspended on Monday after the stocks fell five percent. Shares in flagship Adani Enterprises, which before the rout had gained more than 1,000 percent in five years, closed 0.7 percent lower, having been off almost 10 percent in volatile early trade.

The slide has raised concerns about the group's ability to raise fresh financing to pay down its debts. It cancelled a share sale, and reportedly also a bond issue, last week. Adani said Monday it was prepaying loans worth \$1.1 billion, taken against shares for three of its companies, ahead of their maturity in

September 2024. Analysts said the move was meant to reassure investors.

The announcement came as The Economic Times newspaper reported that Britain's Standard Chartered had joined Swiss banking giant Credit Suisse and Citigroup in the United States in halting the acceptance of Adani bonds as collateral for loans it advances to private banking clients. The main opposition Congress party, which has called for a "serious investigation" into Adani's companies by the central bank and regulator, on Monday staged protests, including in New Delhi and Mumbai.

Continued on Page 6



## Local

# Zain the 'main sponsor' of Qout Market's latest season

Event featured 100 Kuwait-based SMEs and huge crowds



Zain officials at the company's booth.



The new season attracted thousands of visitors.

**KUWAIT:** Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, announces its main sponsorship of the latest season of Qout Market, the much-loved community event that made a comeback after two years. The new season, held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC), featured 100 Kuwait-based SMEs, artisanal farmers, hand-crafters, and caterers, and has attracted thousands of families and young people.

Zain has always been one of this unique event's top supporters throughout the years and was keen

on being at the forefront of its sponsors in its most unique season yet. The company's support springs from its comprehensive Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy that closely focuses on shouldering local talents and empowering the next generation of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs.

Zain set up its own booth at Qout Market, where it welcomed families and children with a variety of fun and interactive games, creating a positive and engaging vibe and reflecting its cor-

porate values: Zain, A Wonderful World. The company also introduced visitors to its all-new MAX plans that offer the biggest library of entertainment and sports titles, superfast 5G Internet, and the latest Internet devices all in one plan.

Qout, the community-based farmers market, helps and supports local farmers, artisans, and caterers to exchange thoughts and ideas while offering the opportunity for visitors to experience their products and services. Qout Market has a proven record of success, having attracted nearly

18,000 visitors in JACC's outdoor fields. The market's selection of vendors includes a combination of fresh produced items as well as handmade items where people can stop by to enjoy on the spot.

Zain always seeks to shoulder events that uplift local talents to higher levels and encourage outstanding projects and ideas. Zain's support is aimed at investing in the creative abilities of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, preparing them to engage in the business world by encouraging them to pursue excellence and innovation.

## Cancer awareness

In my view

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

local@kuwaittimes.net



**K**uwait, Gulf countries and the Arab world celebrated an outstanding week at the start of November, a week of awareness of cancers which started at the Gulf Cooperation Council level and expanded to become an Arab week for the promotion of awareness against cancer.

Gulf and Arab private societies succeeded in promoting awareness programs in Gulf and Arab societies, and the result is an increase in society's awareness towards three issues - the first is the reduction of fear from the word "cancer", the fear that kept patients, especially women, if they discovered a growth, from seeking medical advice, and which caused them to reach stages where recovery rates become very low. That was in the past, and today the opposite is correct, because most patients come for treatment in early stages and hope for them increases for the future.

Secondly, awareness contributed to spreading knowledge of the risk factors related to cancer, so people become aware of the dangers of obesity, smoking and viral conditions related to cancer. The truth is that awareness of risk factors needs support with laws, which are in the hands of legislators in our countries, and maybe this is the reason behind the limited effect in this field, as we are still in need of strict laws with regards to smoking of all types, specially e-cigarettes, which is the approaching danger.

Thirdly, spreading awareness means the importance of early treatment of cancer and early detection programs, be it by training or using modern technology such as breast x-rays, laparoscopes or tumor markers. This led to the increase in recovery from cancer, reaching in some cases to 95 percent and 85 percent due to people's awareness of the importance of early detection programs. This factor caused a rise in recovery level from cancers as a whole to nearly 70 percent. It is true that there are cancers that are difficult to treat, but most of these diseases have an effective treatment, especially in the early stages.

Awareness has taken excellent steps in fighting cancers, and we are witnessing these days in the Gulf and some Arab countries a cancer awareness week, which occurs on Feb 7 every year. The week is a successful partnership between the Gulf Health Council, which is under the GCC, represented by the Gulf Center for Cancer Control and Gulf NGOs, represented by the Gulf Union for Cancer Control.

This is a good partnership that has saved thousands of lives and made thousands of families happy, as when someone suffers from a chronic disease such as cancer, the entire family is affected. Numbers reveal an improvement in early detection by nearly 20 percent more than what it was in the past. Also, fear of cancer dropped from 85 percent by those who thought cancer has no treatment to 48 percent.

All these numbers reflect success of awareness and hope to one day reach a point when the number of late-stage cases are no more than 10 percent as the case is in some developed countries. This is a hope that will be achieved due to fruitful cooperation between the Gulf governments, the rest of our Arab countries and the private sector, a cooperation that leads to the interest of the Arab citizen to reflect the meaning of our nation's unity.

## Minister hails support for armed forces

**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Sunday affirmed his strong keenness and adherence to translate directives by the country's leadership in providing all forms of support and care for members of the armed forces. In a statement, Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled made the remarks during an inspection visit to Ali Al-Salem Air Base.

The minister noted that the directives to

approve the historical ranking promotions witnessed by the military sectors in the country, paved the way for the younger officers to take over duties, leadership, and the initiative. Sheikh Talal expressed admiration in the honorable and heroic role of the Air Force personnel, calling on them to redouble their efforts and endeavors to strengthen mechanism of coordination and cooperation with the various military sectors through a joint work system aimed at preserving the security of the country and safety of its airspace.

The inspection tour began with a briefing on the nature of the responsibilities, tasks, and duties entrusted to the base, in addition to reviewing modern and development programs, including training plans that are prepared with the aim of enabling its employees to perform their work and carry out their tasks and duties effi-

ciently and competently.

Sheikh Talal took a tour of the Ali Al-Salem Air Base, during which he reviewed several aircraft and listened to a detailed explanation about the tasks and roles assigned to these aircraft, the size of the capabilities and technical capabilities that they enjoy, and their role in supporting and assisting the aviation system of the Kuwaiti Air Force, as well as identifying the qualification stages. —KUNA



Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

## Gulf Bank plays an active role in nurturing talents

**KUWAIT:** Partaking amongst five selected Kuwaiti banks and companies, Gulf Bank has concluded its participation in the seventh edition of the annual Innovation Challenge Program, organized by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) in cooperation with London Business School. The program aims to stimulate innovation and enhance the creative skills in private sector companies, to support economic growth, and contribute towards transforming Kuwait's economy into a knowledge-based economy.

The seventh edition of the Innovation Challenge program witnessed the participation of several talented employees from Gulf Bank, and focused on the interests of the selected companies, to stimulate the financial sector in Kuwait and become more innovative with its various businesses and activities.

Throughout the three-month program, the teams worked together to find solutions and learn more about the experiences of business leaders who have succeeded in developing their projects. This experience helped enhance the participants' sense of innovation and creativity and provided them with the right tools to become successful business leaders.

The Innovation Challenge Program is a multi-stage program, that provides academic knowledge in business administration, through using practical tools that have been adopted and applied by international companies when facing challenges or developing new products or services that have been introduced to the market. Gulf Bank is proud to



announce that Rawan Abulhasan from Financial Institutions and Sovereign, Ahmad Asad from Finance, Nour Buolayan from Internal Audit, Aws Al Ansari from Data, May Al Qabandi, and their Mentor, the Department General Manager of Consumer Banking, Noura Al Houti successfully completing the program.

The General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, Salma Al-Hajjaj said, "Gulf Bank plays an active role in the field of innovation amongst Kuwait's private and banking sector institutions and in nurturing national talents." Al-Hajjaj indicated that Gulf Bank's 2025 strategy focuses primarily on digital transformation and aims to solidify Gulf Bank's leading position in Kuwait as the bank of the future - through facilitating customers with simple and innovative services to achieve sustainable growth.

She added: "Gulf Bank is one of the leading private sector institutions in Kuwait committed to developing and nurturing national talents throughout their careers, in addition to being a financial institution that provides the best banking products and services in Kuwait." She continued: "At Gulf Bank, we believe that human capital is our most valuable asset, and based on this conviction, we are keen on

investing in these resources, to activate the development opportunities available for our employees and provide them with the opportunity to advance their careers.

This can be achieved through providing education and training programs, or through organizing competitions and challenges in cooperation with major institutions, locally and internationally." Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large.

With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience. Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining a robust sustainability program at the community, economic, and environmental levels through sustainability initiatives, that are strategically selected to benefit both the country and the bank. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait's 2035 vision "New Kuwait" and works with various parties to achieve it.

## IBPC honors meritorious Indian students

**KUWAIT:** Indian Business Professional Council (IBPC) held a 'Meritorious Awards' function for Indian schools and students at the Indian Embassy auditorium on 4th February, 2023. The event was held in a packed auditorium in the presence of school principals, dignitaries, students, parents and members of IBPC. The ceremony began with the lighting of the traditional lamp by the Indian Ambassador-designate Dr Adarsh Swaika along with Kaiser Shakir, Sunit Arora, Dr Kamlesh, Soly and KP Suresh.

The Ambassador-designate captivated the attendees with his motivational speech. While wishing the children the best in their life, he called on them to have a clear goal in life. He also highlighted the importance of India-Kuwait's bilateral ties.

Sunit Arora, director of the event, gave an overview of the 'Meritorious Awards' and its histo-



KUWAIT: IBPC officials and Indian school principals pose for a group photo with Ambassador-designate Dr Adarsh Swaika.

ry. These awards show the commitment of IBPC towards education and knowledge by inspiring and recognizing Indian school students in grades 10 and 12. Dr Kamlesh, co-director, outlined the details on the selection criteria. Kaiser Shakir, Vice chairman of IBPC gave a welcome speech and inspired the students by giving tips for their future endeavors. He also briefed about the IBPC's forthcoming activities.

The whole program was hosted by eight chosen students from Indian schools, who were trained by IBPC to make it a children-centric event. The selec-

tion criteria of the awardees were based on Indian CBSE board standards. 95 percent and above for 12th and 97 percent and above for 10th were the qualifying percentages. There were 99 students who qualified this year for these awards. There were four gold medalists and eight silver medalists who also got cash prizes this year.

Indian Education School (Bhavans) won the 10th grade trophy while Indian Community School bagged the 12th grade trophy. Soly Mathew, secretary of the IBPC Executive Committee, proposed a vote of thanks.

## Local

# Population rebalancing committee teams monitor implementation

**KUWAIT:** Teams of the population rebalancing committee have increased efforts regarding the implementation of the decisions of the first committee meeting held last week headed by Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled, as they distributed these teams around government departments to ensure that these recommendations are being followed in hope that they achieve the goal of reducing expatriates to 30 percent of the population.

"The recommendations call on government agencies to stop any appointments of expatriates on the allowance system and to immediately start laying off those appointed on this system, with the exception of workers in service businesses such as janitors, messengers and drivers. Government agencies responded they are continuing to lay off expatriate employees on the allowance

item and there will be no new appointments of expatriates, as the Civil Service Commission rejects any job grades for expatriates when a government agency requests them," sources revealed to Kuwait Times.

"The recommendations also included asking government agencies directly to force the employment of at least 50 percent of Kuwaitis in private companies that implement government projects, otherwise these companies will be excluded from any future government tenders. These measures can replace expatriates with at least 50,000 Kuwaitis in less than three years," sources clarified.

"The supreme committee for demographics rebalancing will discuss a number of proposals related to reducing expatriates and controlling the labor market, including regulating the work of

expatriate taxi drivers and only granting these licenses to retired Kuwaitis, bedoons and children of Kuwaiti and Gulf women," sources revealed.

"This could make around 5,000 expatriate workers leave the country due to decreased demand in the labor market. It also applies to hawkers such as mobile ice cream cart vendors, whose numbers amount to around 6,000 workers and whose permits may not be renewed by the Public Authority of Manpower," sources explained.

"The committee will support an earlier proposal calling on the interior ministry, more specifically the traffic police, to prevent any vehicle than 10 years old - 15 years for others - from the streets according to quality specifications, as this can help reduce traffic jams and regulate the number of expatriate workers," sources added.

ophthalmology and surgery and will discuss the latest medical developments in this specialty. "The aim of this conference is to develop and exchange experiences between Kuwaiti ophthalmologists and their colleagues in different countries, as the conference will discuss the latest findings in scientific research in all eye specialties," he explained.

"There are contributions from elite doctors from regional and international countries, where modern methods of treatment will be discussed, as well as some complex surgeries in cornea and

retina specialties. Moreover, the conference will witness 10 training workshops on some operations," Dr Jassar said, calling on all ophthalmologists to register and participate in this conference because of its benefit in advancing specialization as well as discussing the most important developments. Dr Jassar indicated a meeting will be held between the Gulf Associations for Ophthalmology to coordinate some common goals, as well as coordinate exchange training programs for doctors to benefit from diverse experiences.

## MoH to launch 22nd conference for ophthalmologists

**KUWAIT:** Ophthalmologist consultant Dr Faisal Al-Jassar announced the launch of the 22nd conference in Kuwait under the sponsorship of Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi from February 9 at the Waldorf Astoria hotel at The Avenues. Dr Jassar said that the conference includes all specialties of

## Top dream job in Kuwait is being an 'influencer'

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Not so long ago, being a doctor or engineer was the dream job for many in the Middle East. Recently, the US financial services company 'Remitly' analyzed and published a list of the most popular dream jobs around the world using Google search data, and according to their results, the top dream job in Kuwait is being an "influencer". In the last five years, influencers have turned into a wide industry, attracting a lot of young people who want to fulfill their aspirations of instant fame and financial gain by providing content to followers through social media platforms.

Speaking to Kuwait Times, Professor Fatema Al-Aradi said the reason behind the increase in social media influencers is the absence of positive people. "Positive content is missing; that is why you see a big increase in influencers who are only interested in views by breaking the values and morals of society," she said. She warned parents of using their children for fame and financial purposes on social media platforms, especially teenage girls between the ages of 12 and 13.

## CFAB honors Al-Humaidhi

**KUWAIT:** UK-based association "Children and Families Across Borders" (CFAB) has honored Dalal Al-Humaidhi, wife of Kuwait's former ambassador to the UK Khaled Abdulaziz Al-Duwaisan, for her great service in supporting charitable work throughout the years. "She acted as a point of contact between the management of the association and foreign diplomatic corporations accredited in London. She also played a distinguished role as a cultural mediator to reflect the presence of the CFAB's activities in more than 130 countries," the society said during a ceremony held in London in honor of Al-Humaidhi.

The ceremony, which coincides with the 65th anniversary of the founding of the CFAB, saw the participation of a large number of people, including the royal patron of the society, Princess Alexandra, in addition to former officials and representatives of

a number of well-known charitable organizations. The CFAB works with children and families to understand their situation and ensure children's interests are protected.

It achieves that role in cooperation with various competent authorities such as the police, the judiciary and other agencies concerned with social services. It is worth noting that the CFAB is officially funded by the UK Department of Education to operate the country's only free national hot line, which provides advice to professionals managing international child protection cases. Carolyn Housman, CFAB's CEO, commended the role played by Al-Humaidhi in supporting the organization and serving as a CFAB ambassador for over ten years.

Al-Humaidhi, who also supervised the annual charity exhibition held by the CFAB over the past 30 years, expressed her pride and gratitude for the award. "The CFAB is the only British organization providing international child protection social services as it works with local authorities in the UK to help professionals navigate social care systems abroad," Al-Humaidhi said.



Small to medium business owners partaking in the event.



Security personnel at the expo.



## Crown Prince congratulates Al-Shatti on world record

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday received First Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister, and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, accompanied by Captain Engineer Youssef Al-Shatti, who achieved a new world record as fastest swimmer to cross a creek in men's category. His Highness the Crown Prince congratulated Al-Shatti on this achievement, wishing him success and further progress. —KUNA

### News in brief

#### Kuwait Cabinet urged to promote 57 KFF officers

**KUWAIT:** Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah called on the Cabinet to promote 57 Kuwait Fire Force (KFF) officers from colonels to brigadiers in order for an Amiri decree to be issued for their promotion, according to the rules and regulations. This promotion comes because of the interior minister's keenness for firefighters at the KFF to obtain all their deserved rights stipulated in the law. It also comes to show support and encouragement to qualified Kuwaiti staff who exert efforts to protect lives and belongings and achieve social security in Kuwait.

#### Disability affairs director organizes field campaign

**KUWAIT:** Director of the Public Authority for Disability Affairs Dr Bibi Al-Amiri concluded her field campaign of buildings of the authority in Hawally, as she checked on the administration and departments and people in charge of them on Monday. She stressed to authorities in the departments the importance of facilitating transactions, following the open-door policy to receive complaints and work to resolve them as soon as possible, in addition to not delaying transactions and providing the best services to visitors. Dr Amiri was accompanied by Deputy Director General of the Authority Dr Hanadi Al-Ateeqi, Director of Information Systems Hanadi Al-Mubailish and the Director of Public Relations and Information Dhuha Fayez.

#### GCC Chief, Hong Kong Chief Executive discuss relations

**RIYADH:** Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi met on Monday with Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region John Lee Ka-chiu at the Secretariat General Headquarters in Riyadh. During the meeting, both sides discussed bilateral ties and ways to enhance them, and the latest regional and international developments.

#### Saudi warns of supply cuts due to sanctions

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia has warned that sanctions, embargoes and low investments could lead to a shortage of energy supplies. The remarks by Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman came as he inaugurated talks involving the US-based International Association for Energy Economics (IAEE) held in the Saudi capital. "All of those so-called sanctions, embargoes, lack of investments, they will convolute into one thing and one thing only, a lack of energy supplies of all kinds when they are most needed," the minister said. Calling for a swift transformation in the global energy market, Saudi-based King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center chief Fahad Al-Ajlan highlighted the talks as a viable opportunity to bring common aspirations to fruition. The talks primarily focus on existential challenges facing the global energy market, in addition to push forward efforts to reach carbon neutrality, added the Saudi official.



the fact that influencers exist," he said.

Abdulsalam said the phenomenon of influencers should be viewed in a positive light and benefit from their positive impacts, while addressing some of the negatives and punishing those who use this "career" to attack the privacy of individuals and blackmail them.

Teenager Hatan Fatafta said that although the career of being an influencer sounds lame, a person can build a huge fan base and find their true personality that attracts people and brands to them, noting that a real influencer is passionate and confident in what they do and how they present their ideas and make them effective.

"Not everyone can be an influencer; they have to have exceptional skills in connecting with people and being able to create interactive content. The role of the influencer increases in this particular time, as a person's world has become directly linked to social media and is a large part of their daily life," she added.



Dalal Al-Humaidhi and Carolyn Housman pose for a photo after receiving the award.

## KIA receives 45th cohort of training, qualification program

KUWAIT: The Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) Ghanem Suleiman Al-Ghenaiman, received the forty-fifth cohort of the training and qualification program for new graduates on February 2nd, 2023 at the new headquarters of the Kuwait Investment Authority.

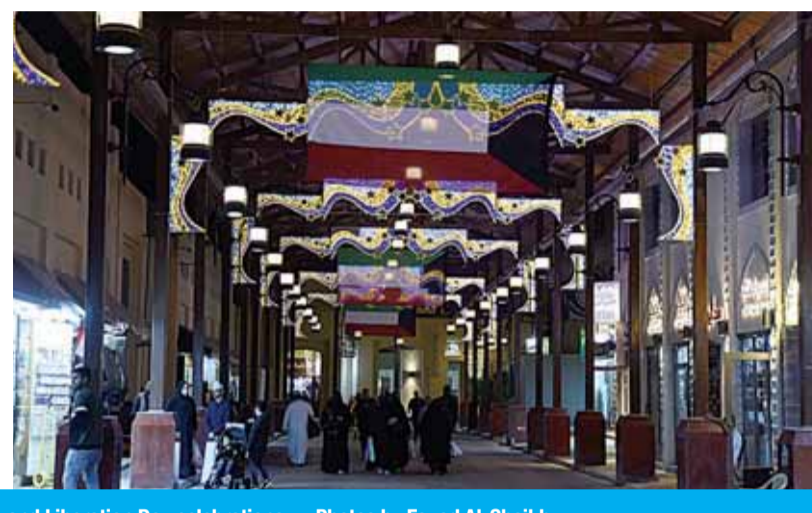
In a speech addressed to the trainees, Al-Ghenaiman expressed the importance of this program and its benefits, especially during the phase of external training, which includes practical training with some of the world's most prestigious financial institutions. He considered this program as the beginning of their practical life, which is completely different from that of their studies at the University. The KIA program is considered one of the most successful training programs in Kuwait.

Al-Ghenaiman stated that the nature of the subjects taught in the program reflects the needs of Kuwait and global financial markets, as well as utilizes the latest global investment tools. The Acting Director of the Training Department at the Kuwait Investment Authority, Hashem Saif Al-Saif, said that the training program, which commenced on February 5th, 2023, follows a comprehensive process and intensive review of CFA Level I courses.

Al-Saif stated that 20 were accepted into the program out of 68 applicants who were interviewed. Al-Saif added that the program will be for 13 months and was divided into 3 stages as follows: The first stage: includes specialized programs in the fields of investment, economy and financial products conducted by international financial institutions and specialized training entities. The second stage: includes overseas on-the-job training with reputable international financial institutions in the field of investment outside Kuwait. The third and final stage: includes on-the-job training within the Kuwait Investment Authority's departments.

Al-Saif indicated that the training program aims to qualify Kuwaitis to work in the financial and investment sector, and that KIA's program was the earliest in the State of Kuwait. The first batch of the program was in 1995, and nearly 740 trainees graduated from this program. The Kuwait Investment Authority has been in the forefront in developing its citizens by investing in high caliber citizens who could benefit from Kuwait Investment Authority's relationships with various international financial institutions.

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Souq Mubarakia is bedecked with lights and flags ahead of the National Day and Liberation Day celebrations. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

# Takween completes residential project for displaced Syrians



Photo shows the residential building.

KUWAIT: As part of its effort to improve the living conditions of displaced Syrians, the Takween Humanitarian Society has completed the construction of a residential building which will be given to displaced families in Idlib, Syria. Head of the administrative council at the society, Abdullah Al-Khaldi said "The aim of this residential architecture project



IDLIB: Mohammed, the father of Syrian Maya Merhi, sits next to his disabled toddler, inside the family tent at an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Syria's rebel-held northwestern Idlib province. —AFP

is to assist displaced Syrians and transfer them from the life of random camps to housing units that preserve their dignity and privacy."

"The association has handed over 12 apartments to families who lived in camps without the availability of basic life necessities. We felt the impact of this blessed project on the souls of the benefi-

ary families, who deeply appreciated and expressed their gratitude for donors and Kuwait," he added. "Such beneficial symbiotic gifts are the embodiment of the highest meanings of brotherhood among the people of Islam. I hope that Allah accepts the donors' blessings who are helping families in need," he added.



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## Health minister receives Gustave Rossy committee

KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi received a committee from French hospital Gustave Rossy which specializes in treatment of cancer illnesses, during their visit to the country that completes the drawing of a cooperative operational plan within the field of cancer treatment and scientific research.

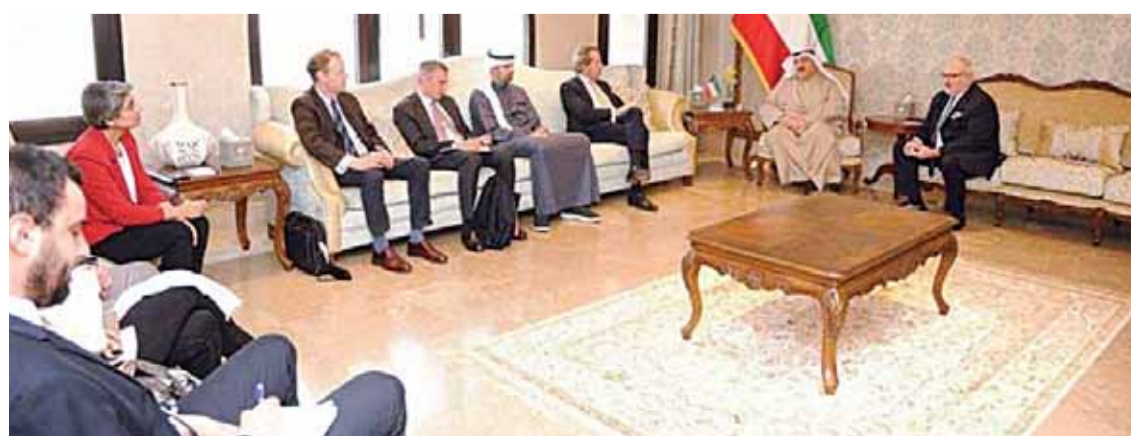
"The ministry is keen to cooperate with specialized international health institutions in a way that serves the interest of patients and the general interest of the country, as well as to enhance the implementation of the ministry's strategy in order to provide the best health quality standards, exchange experiences with international institutions and benefit from their successful experiences," Dr Al-Awadhi said.

The two sides discussed practical steps to start bilateral cooperation, which will open the door to include multiple programs in the field of cancer treatment, scientific research, exchange of experi-



ences, transfer of knowledge, training of health personnel, exchange of visits between specialists, and the opening of various channels of cooperation between the two sides in the next stage in order to support professional practices in the interest of patients and in the public interest of the country.

The meeting also included discussing aspects of bilateral cooperation to facilitate treatment and medical follow-up inside Kuwait, for Kuwaiti patients who had previously received treatment in France, without having to travel to get treatments, during periodic reviews inside Kuwait.





SARMADA: This aerial view shows residents helped by bulldozers, searching for victims and survivors in the rubble of collapsed buildings, following an earthquake in the town of Sarmada in the countryside of the northwestern Syrian Idlib province, early on February 6, 2023. — AFP

# World powers rush to offer Turkey, Syria aid over quake

**PARIS:** International offers to help Turkey and Syria with rescue efforts poured in on Monday after a massive earthquake killed around 1,800 people and wreaked devastation.

### European Union

The European Union has mobilised search and rescue teams for Turkey after the stricken country requested EU assistance. Ten urban search and rescue teams from various member states will support first responders on the ground, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and EU crisis management commissioner Janez Lenarcic said. The EU's Copernicus satellite system has also been activated to provide emergency mapping services, it added. The EU is also ready to support those affected in Syria, it said.

### UNHCR

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi voiced "solidarity" with those affected in both countries, saying the UN agency was "ready to help provide urgent relief to the survivors through our field teams wherever possible".

### India

India said it would immediately send rescue and medical teams as well as relief equipment to Turkey. Two National Disaster Response Force teams comprising 100

personnel with dog squads and equipment were ready to be flown to the affected area, the foreign ministry said. Teams of trained doctors and paramedics with medicines were also being readied. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "anguished" and "deeply pained" by the deaths in Turkey-with whom India has frosty relations-and Syria.

### Germany

Germany-home to about three million people of Turkish origin-will "mobilise all the assistance we can activate", Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said, after speaking with the Turkish ambassador to Berlin. Germany's Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) "can set up camps to provide shelter as well as water treatment units", she said. The THW agency is also preparing generators, tents and blankets. A foreign ministry spokeswoman said the German government would hold a crisis meeting later Monday with the relevant ministries to organise an aid package. Berlin will also increase its assistance to charities such as Malteser International providing humanitarian aid in northwest Syria by one million euros (\$1.1 million), she said.

### Russia

President Vladimir Putin sent messages to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, conveying Russia's condolences and offering

aid. "We hope for a speedy recovery for all the injured and are ready to provide the assistance needed to overcome the impact of this natural disaster," Putin told Assad.

### Ukraine

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that his war-torn country was "ready to provide the necessary assistance to overcome the consequences of the disaster." The message was reiterated by Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, who said Ukraine was "deeply saddened by the loss of life and damage" wreaked by the earthquake.

### Greece

Kyriakos Mitsotakis, prime minister of Turkey's historic rival Greece, whose relations with Ankara have suffered from a spate of border and cultural disputes, pledged to make "every force available" to aid its neighbour. Mitsotakis said Ankara had already approved the dispatch of a Greek emergency rescue unit, and Athens was ready to send "additional equipment, medical supplies, blankets, tents" depending on further Turkish requests.

### NATO

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg voiced "full solidarity" with ally Turkey, saying he was in touch with

Turkey's top leadership and "NATO allies are mobilising support now".

### Sweden

Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson of Sweden, whose bid to join NATO is meeting Turkish resistance, tweeted: "Saddened about the loss of lives in Türkiye and Syria following the major earthquake. Our thoughts go to the victims and their loved ones." He sent his "deepest condolences" to President Erdogan. "We stand ready to offer our support."

### France

President Emmanuel Macron said France stood ready to provide emergency aid to Turkey and Syria. "Our thoughts are with the bereaved families," he tweeted.

### Britain

"The UK stands ready to help in whatever way we can," British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak tweeted saying his thoughts were with the people of Turkey and Syria. Britain was sending 76 search-and-rescue specialists to Turkey, a minister added.

### Iran

Iran is ready to provide "immediate relief aid to these two friendly nations", President Ebrahim Raisi said, offering condolences on the "heartbreaking incident". — AFP

## Syria hospital treats quake survivors

**DARKUSH:** At a hospital in Syria, Osama Abdel Hamid was holding back tears as he recalled on Monday the powerful earthquake that toppled his home and killed his neighbours, along with hundreds of his compatriots.

"We were fast asleep when we felt a huge earthquake," Abdel Hamid told AFP at Al-Rahma hospital in the northwestern Idlib province, where he was being treated for a head injury. The 7.8-magnitude pre-dawn quake, whose epicentre was near the Turkish city of Gaziantep, wiped out entire sections of cities in Turkey and war-ravaged Syria. Officials have put the combined death toll at more than 1,900.

When it shook the Abdel Hamid family's home in the village of Azmarin, near Syria's border with Turkey, "I woke up my wife and children and we ran towards the exit door," the man said. "We opened the door, and suddenly the entire building collapsed."

Within moments, Abdel Hamid found himself under the rubble of the four-storey building. All of his neighbours died, but the family made it out alive. "The walls collapsed over us, but my son was able to get out," Abdel Hamid said. "He started screaming and people gathered around, knowing there were survivors, and they pulled us out from under the rubble." They were taken to the hospital in Darkush, a town several kilometres (miles) to the south along the Turkish border. The facility soon had to take in patients far beyond its capacity and received at least 30 dead bodies.

An AFP photographer saw multiple ambulances arriving at Al-Rahma one after the other, carrying casualties including many children. "The situation is bad," said Majid Ibrahim, general surgeon at the hospital, where by the late morning some 150 people injured in the quake had arrived. "A lot of people are still under the debris of the buildings," he told AFP. "We need urgent help for the area, especially medical help."

### Many 'still trapped'

At least 810 people were killed across the war-torn country, the Syrian government and rescue workers said. The health ministry, said at least 430 people were killed and 1,315 injured in government-controlled areas.

The White Helmets rescue group said at least 380 were killed and more than 1,000 injured in rebel-held areas. It had cautioned earlier on Monday "the toll may increase as many families are still trapped."



DIYARBAKIR: People search for survivors through the rubble on Feb 6, 2023 after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the country's southeast. — AFP

## 'So scared': Fear of aftershocks in debris-strewn Turkey

**DIYARBAKIR:** Tulin Akkaya had just started to gather her thoughts after being woken by the biggest earthquake to strike Turkey in nearly a century when a second massive jolt sent her scrambling for safety on the street.

Buildings lay in ruins around her southeastern city of Diyarbakir-home to many of the millions who have fled war and poverty in neighbouring Syria. The same crescent of devastation stretched across major cities running along the two countries' border in the wake of the 7.8-magnitude pre-dawn quake.

Officials have put the combined death toll at more than 1,500. It was certain to grow and Akkaya was trying to piece together the remains of her life when a second jolt shook her house and sent her rushing out of her apartment.

"I am so scared. I felt (the aftershock) so strongly because I live on the top floor," the 30-something housewife said. "We rushed outside in panic. It was almost the same as the morning's earthquake. I can't go

back to my apartment now, I don't know what will happen next."

### 'Apocalypse'

The aftershock was registered at a magnitude of 7.5 — a size that scientists say strikes only around 20 times around the world a year. That two earthquakes of that strength hit the same remote and largely undeveloped area in rapid succession underscores the scale of the challenge facing rescuers and recovery workers in both Turkey and Syria.

Officials counted more than 50 aftershocks within the first 10 hours of the initial disaster. They warned that more would rumble on for many more days. The relentless shaking sent damaged buildings crumbling in both Diyarbakir and nearby cities such as Kahramanmaraş.

The second big blow came just as survivors had started to wonder back into their apartments to pick up belongings that could help them survive the cold night ahead. Most of the region has lost access to gas and power. The weather service was promising rain and sleet across southeastern Turkey for much of the remaining week.

"Since I live in an earthquake zone, I am used to being shaken," said Kahramanmaraş-based reporter Melisa Salman. "But that was the first time we have ever experienced anything like that," the 23-year-old told AFP. "We thought it was the apocalypse." —AFP



JANDAIRIS: A Syrian man weeps as he carries his son who was killed in an earthquake in the town of Jandar, in the countryside of Syria's northwestern city of Afrin in the rebel-held part of Aleppo province. — AFP

International

# Mother, children die after faulty dryer set house ablaze in France

80 firefighters were called to the scene, fire was extinguished after several hours

**CHARLY-SUR-MARNE:** A mother and her seven children aged two to 14 died on Monday after a faulty dryer set their house ablaze in eastern France, authorities said. The raging fire, the deadliest such blaze involving children in France in a decade, broke out shortly after midnight in the family home in the town of Charly-sur-Marne, some 80 kilometres (50 miles) east of Paris in the Champagne region.

The mother and her children suffocated from black smoke that filled their home as they were trapped in the attic, local prosecutor Julien Morino-Ros told AFP. The origin of the fire appeared to have been a malfunctioning clothes dryer on the ground floor of the house, he said.

Neighbours called the fire department to report the blaze just before 1:00 am (0000 GMT). The woman's husband, father to three of the children, was seriously burned and transferred to a hospital, they said. His life was saved by a firefighter who lives nearby and who intervened before his colleagues arrived.

The children included five girls and two boys. Four of them were from the mother's previous relationship. The father appears to have attempted to put out the fire and told his wife and the children to seek refuge from the flames in their converted attic on the second floor. But that move turned out to be a trap, the prosecutor said.

While more and more black smoke rose through the staircase, firefighters were having trouble getting ladders to the top windows of the house which is nestled in a narrow street in the centre of the village of 2,600 inhabitants.

The house's electric window shutters were blocked because of a power outage triggered by the faulty appliance, further hampering the rescue effort, he said. The eight victims died of smoke poisoning, and their bodies were not charred by fire, the prosecutor said. "I hope with all my heart that they didn't feel or see anything," said Sylvie Corre, wife of the house's owner.

"We were there, on the street, all night and we saw the horror," she told AFP by telephone. The father of the family, in his 40s, works for the Corre family who own a small champagne making business, she said, calling him an "excellent employee". His wife, also in her 40s, was a stay-home mother. Corre said the house met all safety norms. "Obviously there will be a technical investigation, and anything is possible," she said.

The prosecutor said there was no early indication of any safety issues with the house despite it being "a bit old". A total of 80 firefighters were called to the scene, and the fire was extinguished after several hours, local authorities said. Residents in a neighbouring house, that was damaged by the fire, were evacuated from their home, and firefighters blocked off the street.

The tragedy was the worst such incident in France since 2013, when five children between two and nine died asphyxiated in an accidental fire, also in northern France. In the most recent similar tragedy, 10 people including four children died in the night from December 15 to 16, 2022, in a seven-storey building in a working-class district of Vaulx-en-Velin under renovation near the southeastern French city of Lyon. — AFP



CHARLY-SUR-MARNE: A gendarmerie vehicle is parked in front of the house after a fire broke out in the house of a blended family of nine members in Charly-sur-Marne, northern France on February 6, 2023. — AFP

## Lavrov in Iraq to discuss sanctions over Ukraine

**BAGHDAD:** Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and his Iraqi counterpart on Monday discussed unpaid bills owed to Russian oil companies because of US sanctions over the Ukraine conflict. Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein told a Baghdad news conference that he would discuss the issue during a visit to Washington on Wednesday.

"The sanctions should not be imposed on Iraq because its cooperation continues with Russian companies," Hussein told reporters. Since the Ukraine war began nearly a year ago, the United States and the European Union have imposed sanctions on Russian officials, banks and financial institutions, raising fears in third countries about any transactions involving Russia.

Hussein said Russian oil and gas companies operating in Iraq were still awaiting some payments, without specifying how much was due. Standing alongside Lavrov, he said: "We have discussed how to manage these defaults in light of the sanctions imposed on Russia and the protection of



BAGHDAD: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov (L) meets with Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani in Baghdad on February 6, 2023. — AFP

Iraq banks and its central bank."

He said there would be a meeting "in the coming months" of a joint committee on bilateral relations with Russia to discuss the issue. Lavrov meanwhile criticised the Western measures, describing them as "illegal". "Under the current conditions of illegal restrictions imposed by the Americans and their proxies, it is very important to protect legal economic relations from illegal Western pressure,"

Lavrov said. "This is what many countries in the region are doing, switching instead of the dollar to payments in the currencies of other reliable countries, in particular for oil deliveries," he added.

Hussein reiterated Baghdad's support for a ceasefire and negotiations to end the war in Ukraine. "We support a ceasefire between both parties so negotiations to end this truly global crisis can begin," he said. — AFP

## Tunisia launches probe into 2013 political killings

**TUNIS:** Tunisia's justice ministry said Monday it had set up a special commission to examine files relating to the investigation and prosecution over the 2013 killings of two prominent left-wing opponents.

The murders of Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi, coming just two years after the Arab Spring uprisings that began in the North African country, sparked a major political crisis. Ten years later, the murder of the two, who opposed the policies of the then dominant Islamist-inspired party Ennahdha, remains shrouded in mystery. An official statement said that Justice Minister Leila Jaffal had decided "in support of the justice process and to reveal the truth, on the formation of a special commission to follow up on the case of the assassination of the two martyrs".

She also authorised "a thorough judicial and administrative inspection"

into files relating to the killings. Belaid, a 48-year-old lawyer, was gunned down outside his Tunis home exactly 10 years ago on February 6, 2013.

The Islamic State jihadist group said it killed him, and also claimed the murder six months later in July of Brahmi. Brahmi's killing forced Ennahdha to cede power to a government of technocrats, just after the adoption of a new constitution.

The following February, the authorities said that Belaid's alleged killer, Kamel Gadhgadhi, had himself been killed. Relatives and representatives of Belaid and Brahmi have regularly accused political parties and some judges and lawyers of obstructing those seeking the truth behind the killings. Relatives of Belaid accuse Ennahdha of being at least "indulgent" towards the often violent discourse that erupted in the country after the murders. Ennahdha denies this, saying that after the killings it designated the long-tolerated jihadist Ansar al-Sharia movement a "terrorist" organisation.

In June last year, President Kais Saied dismissed dozens of magistrates, some of whom he believed to have put obstructed the investigations into the two killings. — AFP

## HORROR AT DAWN...

Continued from Page 1

The head of Syria's National Earthquake Centre, Raed Ahmed, called it "the biggest earthquake recorded in the history of the center". At least 1,000 people died in rebel and government-controlled parts of Syria, state media and medical sources said, while Turkish officials reported another 1,651 fatalities. The initial quake was followed by dozens of aftershocks, including a 7.5-magnitude tremor that jolted the region in the middle of search and rescue work on Monday afternoon.

Shocked survivors in Turkey rushed out into the snow-covered streets in their pyjamas, watching rescuers dig through the debris of damaged homes with their hands. "Seven members of my family are under the debris," Muhittin Orakci, a stunned survivor in Turkey's mostly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, told AFP. "My sister and her three children are there. And also her husband, her father-in-law and her mother-in-law."

The rescue was being hampered by a winter blizzard that covered major roads in ice and snow. Officials said the quake made three major airports in the area inoperable, further complicating deliveries of vital aid. Turkey's last 7.8-magnitude tremor was in 1939, when 33,000 died in the eastern Erzincan province.

Monday's first quake struck at 4:17am (0117 GMT) at a depth of about 18 km near the Turkish city of Gaziantep, which is home to around two million people, the US Geological Survey said. Denmark's geological institute said tremors from the main quake reached the east coast of Greenland about eight minutes after the tremor struck Turkey.

Osama Abdel Hamid, a quake survivor in Syria, said

his family was sleeping when the shaking began. "I woke up my wife and my children and we ran towards the door," he said. "We opened it and suddenly all the building collapsed." A spokesman for Syria's civil defense said teams were scrambling to rescue trapped people. "Many buildings in different cities and villages in northwestern Syria collapsed... Even now, many families are under the rubble," said Ismail Alabdallah.

The United States, the European Union and Russia all immediately sent condolences and offers of help. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky offered to provide "the necessary assistance" to Turkey, whose combat drones are helping Kyiv fight the Russian invasion. Images on Turkish television showed rescuers digging through rubble across city centers and residential neighborhoods of almost all the big cities running along the border with Syria.

Some of the heaviest devastation occurred near the quake's epicenter between Kahramanmaraş and Gaziantep, where entire city blocks lay in ruins under the gathering snow. A famous mosque dating back to the 13th century partially collapsed in the province of Maltaya, where a 14-storey building with 28 apartments that housed 92 people also collapsed.

In other cities, social media posts showed a 2,200-year-old hilltop castle built by Roman armies in Gaziantep lying in ruins, its walls partially turned to rubble. "We hear voices here - and over there, too," one rescuer was overheard as saying on NTV television in front of a flattened building in the city of Diyarbakir. "There may be 200 people under the rubble."

The Syrian health ministry reported damage across the provinces of Aleppo, Latakia, Hama and Tartus, where Russia is leasing a naval facility. AFP correspondents in northern Syria said terrified residents ran out of their homes after the ground shook. Even before the tragedy, buildings in Aleppo - Syria's pre-war commercial hub - often collapsed due to the dilapidated infrastructure, which has suffered from lack of war-time oversight. — Agencies

cells and then storing it in a battery to be distributed to satellite systems," she explained.

Dr Jassar pointed out the safety of the Attitude Determination And Control System (ADCS), which is responsible for ensuring the stability and guidance of the satellite during the orbit phase, has been successfully verified, and that work is ongoing daily by the technical team to verify the safety of all other systems in order to ensure they are working well.

"Soon, after completing all tests of the Kuwait Sat-1 satellite systems, the camera will be operated to take images of Kuwait, which will be sent to the ground station at the College of Science at Kuwait University to be used for environmental and other applications by researchers and students," she added.

## Zionists kill 5 Palestinians in...

Continued from Page 1

An AFP photographer saw bullet holes covering the metal door of a wooden hut in the camp, while blood soaked into the floor inside.

Young Palestinians set tyres ablaze to block a road leading into Jericho, while shops and schools were shut as residents observed a general strike after the raid. The Palestinian health ministry said one person remained in critical condition after being shot in the head by Zionist forces. The ministry identified the five men killed and said they were aged between 21 and 28. Violence is rare in Jericho, a popular destination for tourists who are drawn to the ancient city's religious and cultural sites.

## Adani shares dive again amid...

Continued from Page 1

The party says that Gautam Adani's close ties with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is also from Gujarat state, allowed him to win contracts unfairly and to avoid proper oversight. "Don't you think there is something wrong here? We want to ask Modi's government: who gave banks the approval to provide a loan to Adani?" Khushboo Sharma from the youth wing of Congress told AFP at a protest in Delhi. "The shares that have fallen, the loss that has been caused to the general public, who will pay for it?"

Analysts say Indian mutual funds and retail investors have minimal exposure to Adani shares, but institutional investors are more at risk. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday defended Indian regulators, saying they were "very competent". Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday said that Adani had also won business in Indian states not run by Modi's governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "Any project under Prime Minister Modi goes through the open tender process (of) global tendering," Sitharaman told broadcaster Times Now.

The company has rejected the claims made by

An AFP correspondent last week reported hours-long queues as cars backed up at the entrances to Jericho. Jericho governor Jihad Abu al-Assal said the situation amounted to a "siege" which was "incurring huge costs" to local businesses, agriculture and the tourism industry. Wael Oweidat, who claimed his son was one of the two shooting suspects, said "even if they (Palestinian gunmen) did it, this should not lead to this crime."

He said Palestinians were justified to oppose the Zionist occupation. "You take my land, my honor and my house, you kill my sons and my daughters and women, and you want me to sit still?" the 50-year-old told AFP. Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh called Monday's deadly raid a "major crime" and a "flagrant violation of international law". Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh described those killed as "heroes" who "fought until they were martyred defending their land and their holy sites". "The successive killings by the enemy in the West Bank will be disastrous for them," he said in a statement. — AFP



KOLKATA: An activist of India's Congress party carries an effigy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indian tycoon Gautam Adani during a rally to protest against the union government's financial policies on Feb 6, 2023. — AFP

Hindenburg and last week Adani, 60, insisted that the "fundamentals of our company are very strong, our balance sheet is healthy and assets robust". His personal wealth has more than halved, seeing him fall from number three in the Forbes real-time list of the richest people in the world to 18th as of Monday, with a fortune of \$60 billion, down from \$127 billion. India's securities regulator SEBI said Saturday that it was "committed to market integrity" and without naming Adani said it always properly examines all "specific entity related matters". — AFP

## Kuwait Sat-1 in final launch and...

Continued from Page 1

"The technical team of the first Kuwaiti satellite is communicating with the satellite in an excellent way by sending and receiving signals from the earth station at the College of Science at Kuwait University. They are working 24/7 to ensure the safety of all systems, including the electric power system (EPS), which is responsible for generating power from solar

## International

# Scholar, lawmakers, journalist among Hong Kongers on trial

## City's most prominent activists face up to life in prison if convicted

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong's largest national security trial opened Monday with dozens of pro-democracy figures accused of trying to topple the government in a case critics say reflects the criminalisation of dissent in the Chinese territory.

The 47 defendants, who include some of the city's most prominent activists, face up to life in prison if convicted. Sixteen have pleaded not guilty to charges of "conspiracy to commit subversion" over an unofficial primary election. The other 31 have pleaded guilty and will be sentenced after the trial.

A rare, small protest erupted before the court convened, despite the large police presence. One man was seen raising his fist in solidarity. The defendants maintain they are being persecuted for routine politics, while rights groups and observers say the trial illustrates how the legal system is being used to crush what remains of the opposition.

Most of the group have already spent nearly two years behind bars. They now face proceedings expected to last more than four months, overseen by judges handpicked by the government. The case is the largest to date under the national security law, which China imposed on Hong Kong after huge democracy protests in 2019 brought tear gas and police brawls onto the streets of the Asian financial hub.

Wielded against students, unionists and journalists, the law has transformed the once-outspoken city. More than 100 people had queued outside the court, some overnight, hoping to see the trial begin on Monday.

Chan Po-ying, a veteran campaigner and wife of defendant "Long Hair" Leung Kwok-hung, joined supporters carrying a banner that read "Crackdown is shameless" and "Immediately release all political prisoners". "This is political persecution," she said outside the court. Inside, Leung repeated his not-guilty plea, adding: "Resisting tyranny is not a crime."

### 'Retaliation'

Those on trial represent a cross-section of Hong Kong's opposition-including activists Joshua Wong and Lester Shum, professor Benny Tai and former lawmakers Claudia Mo and Au Nok-hin. Most — 34 out of 47 — have been denied bail, while the few released from custody must abide by strict conditions, including speech restrictions.

Families of the accused have called these measures "social death". The group was jointly charged in March 2021 after organising an unofficial primary a year earlier. Their stated aim was to win a majority in the city's legislature, which would allow them to push the protesters' demands and potentially force the resignation of Hong Kong's leader.

According to prosecutors, this was tantamount to trying to bring down the government. "This case involves a group of activists who conspired together and with others to plan, organise and participate in seriously interfering in, disrupting or undermining (the government)... with a view to subverting the State power," the prosecution said in its opening statement.

More than 610,000 people—about one-seventh of the city's voting population—cast ballots in the primary. Shortly afterwards, Beijing brought in a new political system that strictly vetted who could stand for office. The case has attracted international criticism, and diplomats from 12 countries including the United States, Britain, Australia and France were seen at the court Monday.

"This is a retaliation against all the Hong Kongers who supported the pro-democratic camp," Eric Lai, a fellow of Georgetown University's Center for Asian Law, told AFP of the trial. "Beijing will go all out—even weaponising the laws and court—to make sure democratic politics

Parts of Santa Juana appeared as disaster zones: buildings in smoldering ruins, shells of vehicles baked into the scarred earth, all enveloped in a smokey, orange-tinted sky. Some of the areas burned in these fires are poor and isolated, and beset with violent clashes between Mapuche Indigenous people on one hand and the government, timber companies and private land owners on the other.

### 'We die right here'

Miguel Angel Henriquez, a 58-year-old farmer in Santa Juana, said he and his wife deliberated too long over whether to escape the approaching flames and are lucky to be alive. "We waited until the end, but the fire cut us off on all sides," he said.

They went back in the direction from which they had started and ran into firefighters, neighbors and police. "As the fire approached I told them, 'either we get out of here now or we die right here.' We hid behind the firetruck."

Henriquez recalls seeing a neighbor brave the flames to try to rescue some of his animals. "He did not come out. I yelled at him to come out of the fire, but he didn't listen." The home of Carmen Cuevas, 49, escaped all damage, so she went out in a pickup truck to distribute water and other relief supplies to hard-hit neighbors.

"This hurts all of us. It is a shame to see all of this



**HONG KONG:** Foreign diplomats queue outside a court in Hong Kong on February 6, 2023 as they wait to attend the trial of 47 of Hong Kong's most prominent pro-democracy figures which begins in the largest prosecution under a national security law that has crushed dissent in the city. —AFP

in Hong Kong cannot go beyond the lines it drew."

The trial is being heard in an open court but without a jury, a departure from the city's common law tradition. "It is as if the national security law is now the new constitution for Hong Kong and the judges are playing their role in making sure that happens," said Dennis Kwok,

Hong Kong's former legal sector legislator.

Weeks before the hearing began, Hong Kong's Chief Justice Andrew Cheung defended the courts against accusations of politicisation. "Whilst inevitably the court's decision may sometimes have a political impact, this does not mean the court has made a political decision," Cheung said. —AFP

## Chileans who survived forest fire fear flames will return

**SANTA JUANA:** Maria Ines Hernandez described forest fires ravaging central Chile with the death so far of 24 people as hell on Earth. The 55-year-old social worker in the town of Santa Juana in the hard-hit Bobio farming region said many houses in the area were reduced to ashes.

"It is a miracle that some of the houses were spared," Hernandez told AFP. "Now we are afraid that the fire will return... Where will we find refuge? Where? How?" Santa Juana is considered ground zero in the fires that have been burning for five days now. Ten of the fatalities happened in the town, five of them from just one family.

It is home to about 13,000 people, including in adjacent farming estates set amid rolling hills. "It is rough land, with difficult access," mayor Ana Alborno said Saturday. "Most of the homes were lost because we got no help. With help from the air we could have saved most of the houses, but this was not the case," said Hernandez.



**PUREN:** Chilean President Gabriel Boric greeting locals during his visit to Puren, Araucania region, Chile on February 5, 2023, in the framework of forest fires affecting the zone. —AFP

reduced to ash," she said. Other towns were also heavily damaged in the fires, such as Puren in the Araucania region. The stories of total loss come one after another.

A Mapuche man named Jose Ankalo said 70 percent of his village in an ancestral area called Wallmapu was destroyed, including land he inherited from his great-great-grandfather. "This is such a huge tragedy. I don't know if people can comprehend what is happening," he tweeted. —AFP

## Ghana braces as Sahel war spills into Gulf of Guinea

**BAWKU:** Standing near the dried river bed that marks Ghana's northern border, Alima can see her hamlet, lying in Burkina Faso less than two kilometres (1.2 miles) away. Even though her home is just a short walk away, she says she will never go back there to live.

One night last year, jihadist gunmen arrived in the settlement and killed two watchmen. Alima and her sons hid with other women and children, while the men fled briefly across the river into Ghana. The next day families packed up and crossed the border.

Their arrival reinforced what Ghana's government already knew: Ghana along with Gulf of Guinea neighbours Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast was fast becoming the new frontline in the Sahel jihadist war ravaging their northern neighbour. "We are staying here for now," Alima said, looking over the border. "There is no security over there."

Togo, Benin and Ivory Coast have already been struck by gunmen from across their northern borders—most recently in Benin, whose government has reported more 20 armed incursions since 2021. Togo has suffered at least five attacks in that time, though not all were confirmed by jihadists.

So far Ghana has escaped a direct attack, but it is already tackling the economic and social fallout from the conflict to its north. Like its neighbours, Ghana struggles with porous borders, a weaker state

presence in the north, chronic smuggling and intercommunal tensions that can be a breeding ground for jihadism, say local leaders, officials and experts.

Ghana's government heeded the threat early, experts and officials say, opting for a comprehensive strategy of beefed-up military presence and community outreach to ease tensions and support local populations.

A French troop withdrawal from Mali in the face of mounting hostility and disputes with the ruling junta has refocused Western partners to aid Gulf of Guinea nations battle the war's southward spillover.

British, US and French officials met with Gulf of Guinea governments in Accra in November to discuss increased cooperation, but with an eye on avoiding past multinational mistakes. President Nana Akufo-Addo has pushed for "home-grown" local cooperation with neighbouring countries though the Accra Initiative on joint military operations and intelligence sharing.

But officials and local residents in northern Ghana acknowledge the growing threat from militant groups operating just a few kilometres away. "The threat is real, we are very close to the border," Stephen Yakubu, Ghana's Upper East Regional Minister, a presidential appointee, told AFP.

### Burkina burning

The Sahel insurgency spread from Mali in 2012 to neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso in 2015. Two million people have been displaced and thousands killed in Burkina Faso alone. Last year Burkina troops carried out two coups in part over frustration with the war on jihadists, but turmoil in Ouagadougou only added to instability.

Security in Burkina has deteriorated



**BAWKU:** Traditional ruler Bawku Naba Asigri Abugrago Azoka II (C) and his sub chiefs are seen at the Zug-raan palace in Bawku, northern Ghana, on December 7, 2022. Ghana along with Gulf of Guinea neighbours Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast are fast becoming the new frontline in the Sahel jihadist war ravaging their northern neighbour. —AFP

rapidly in recent months, including more attacks towards eastern regions, which share borders with Togo, Benin and Ghana. Ghana's national security minister Albert Kan Dappah told a summit in December the spread was expected.

Military operations in the Sahel had prompted the Al-Qaeda-linked Support Group for Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) to shift south. In northern Ghana's border area of Bawku, residents are fearful. With easy access to Burkina, Mali, Togo and Niger nearby, they say their frontier is exposed.

Bawku is a trading hub for agricultural

produce and livestock with Burkina towns like Bittou, just a 45-minute drive away and the site of a December attack which killed six people. Violence has already curtailed cross-border commerce, said Bawku municipal chief Amadu Hamza.

"Only a few risk their lives to go," he told AFP. Regional minister Yakubu said the army is establishing small, forward bases along the border and the immigration service was boosting its frontier presence. Ghanaian authorities last year captured two suspected jihadists sheltering in Ghana after being wounded over the border. One was arrested at a hotel and the other in a hospital. —AFP

"They can communicate with doctors and visitors, and while their condition is getting worse it is not at a crisis yet." As well as food, the two women have refused intravenous drips containing glucose and sodium.

They were charged with lese majeste over two separate protests in Bangkok in early 2022 — one at the UN building and one at a shopping mall, according to Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR). Both were granted bail but gave it up in solidarity with other political detainees who were refused it.

Sunai Phasuk, a researcher with Human Rights Watch, said the women's lives were "hanging by

a thread". "It is heart-wrenching to see two young women having to risk it all to demand free speech in Thailand, as well as respect for basic fair trial standards for political detainees such presumption of innocence and right to bail," Sunai told AFP.

Reform of lese majeste legislation—known in Thailand as 112 after its section in the penal code—was among the demands of a major protest movement that took to the streets of Bangkok in 2020. Some 224 people have been accused or formally charged with lese majeste since 2020, according to TLHR. Thailand is currently gearing up for a general election expected in May. —AFP

## Thai protesters weak after three weeks on hunger strike

**BANGKOK:** Two Thai protesters held under the kingdom's tough royal insult laws are growing extremely weak after nearly three weeks on hunger strike, a hospital statement said Monday. Tantawan Tuatulanon and Orawan Phupong have refused food and most liquids for the past 20

days to urge political parties to support the abolition of Thailand's lese majeste laws, as well as other justice reforms.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his close family are protected by some of the world's strictest royal defamation laws, with each charge carrying a possible 15-year jail term, but rights groups say they are misused to suppress public debate.

Tantawan, 21, and Orawan, 23, were still conscious but weak, Thammasat University Hospital said in a statement posted on Facebook early on Monday. "Key organs such as the kidneys are starting to work more slowly," Paruhat Tor-udom, the hospital director, told reporters on Monday.

# KD 357.7 million net profit for KFH shareholders for 2022: Al-Marzouq

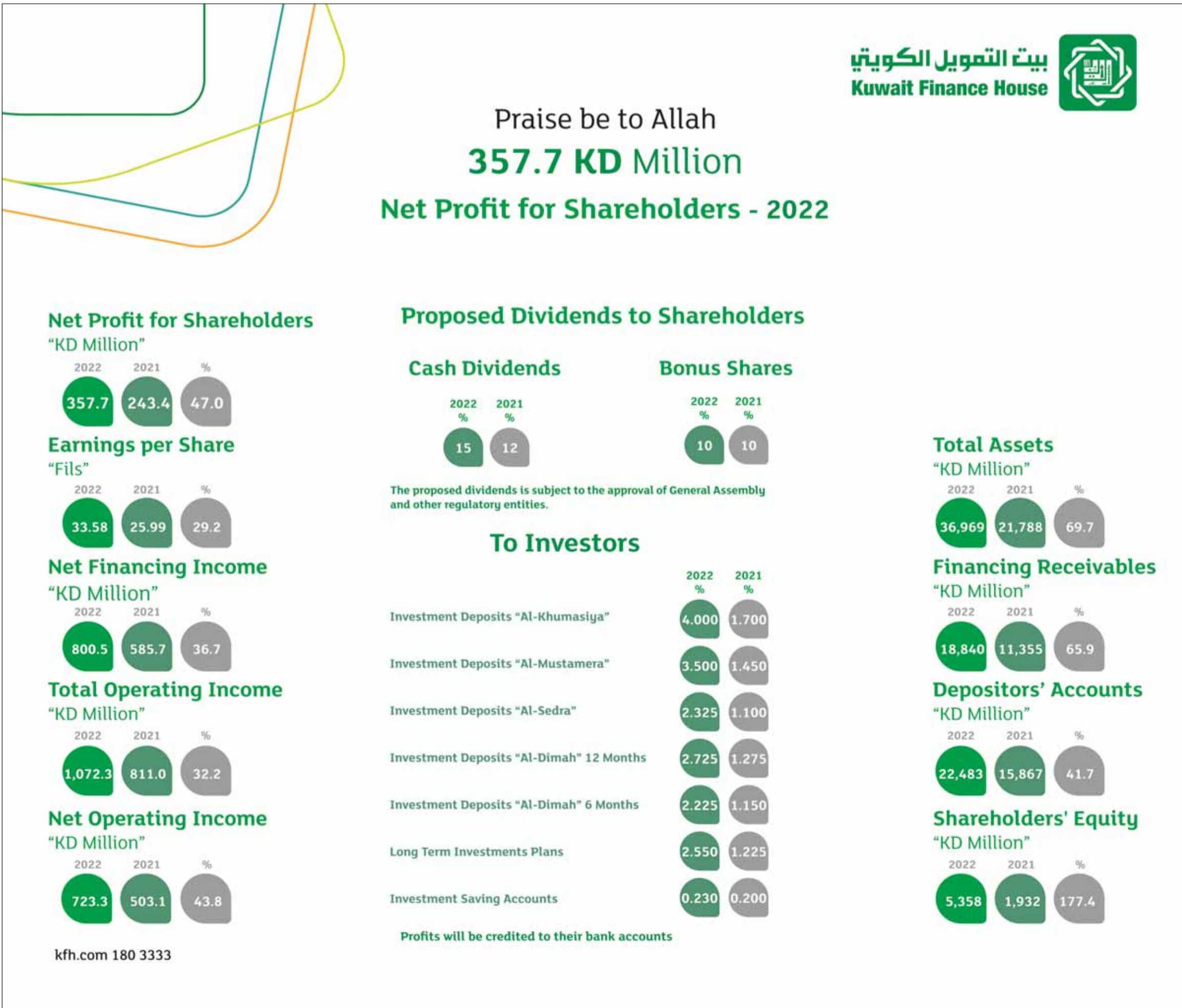
15% cash dividends and 10% bonus shares proposed

Depositors' accounts reached KD 22.5 billion, an increase of KD 6.6 billion or 41.7 percent compared to 2021. Shareholders' equity reached KD 5.4 billion, an increase of 177.4 percent compared to 2021. In addition, the capital adequacy ratio reached 17.66 percent which is above the minimum requirement. This percentage confirms the solid financial position of KFH.

Al-Marzouq pointed out that KFH maintains its distinction in providing financial solutions according to the highest quality standards, while moving forward in adopting the latest financial technology (FinTech) innovations, employing artificial intelligence in banking transactions and increasing investment in technology to solidify KFH's leading position and bring customer experience to new levels. He added that KFH is the first bank in Kuwait to apply artificial intelligence technology in its operations, and the first bank to provide personal financing request service using a digital signature through KFHonline app. Also, KFH was among the first institutions in Kuwait to introduce the first digital signature.

Al-Marzouq expressed his pride that KFH has a track record of social initiatives and various contributions, most notably: signing MoU with Kuwait Municipality for the design and reconstruction of damaged areas of Al-Mubarakia market at an estimated cost of around KD 8 million. In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, KFH has executed an initiative to cover the payments on behalf of people with defaulted debts. The amount paid exceeded KD 20 million, benefitting nearly 10,000 debtors. KFH also supported Kuwait Red Crescent Society in its relief and social initiatives inside and outside Kuwait. The total value of contributions during 2022 reached about KD 4.5 million.

Al-Rushood said that during the year 2022, KFH strengthened its focus on continuing to develop talents and invest in knowledge, pointing to the launch of KFH Digital Academy, which aims to build the digital capabilities of employees according to global standards. He also indicated that the idea of the academy is consistent with KFH's digital transformation plan and builds qualified human capabilities with the aim of serving KFH's strategic goals.



Business

# China’s rising oil demand is no dead-cat bounce: Kuwait

## Demand increase in China is ‘sustainable,’ says head of KPC

**BENGALURU:** Oil consumption in China, the world’s biggest importer, is rising strongly following the ending of coronavirus lockdowns, according to OPEC member Kuwait, reports Bloomberg.

“There is pent up demand that accumulated over the pandemic,” Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah, chief executive officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corp, told Bloomberg TV in Bengaluru, India. “Now, with the opening up, we’re seeing an increase in demand that is sustainable. This is not a dead-cat bounce.”



Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah

Energy traders are watching China closely, saying the pace of its recovery will be the single-biggest factor determining price moves this year. Sheikh Nawaf’s comments are more optimistic than those he made in early December. Then, he told Bloomberg he was “really nervous” about oil demand and that Kuwait’s customers in Asia were reluctant to increase imports for this year.

Brent has dipped almost 7 percent since the end of December to just over \$80 a barrel, mainly because data out of China has suggested the economic rebound is patchy. Still, Goldman Sachs Group Inc and Morgan Stanley are among analysts forecasting it will

climb above \$100 in the second half of the year.

Kuwait is the fourth-biggest crude producer in the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries. It exports about 2 million barrels a day, or 2 percent of global supply, and China is its biggest buyer.



**Oil traders say China recovery is most factor for oil price**

KPC, Kuwait’s national energy company, plans capital spending of around \$80 billion over the next five years, the CEO said. That will help ensure Kuwait’s daily production capacity – now around 2.9 million barrels – reaches 3 million “very soon,” he said.

The company aims to get to 4 million barrels a day by 2035 and is considering setting up a trading arm, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah said. If so, KPC would follow regional rivals such as Saudi Aramco, Qatar Energy and Adnoc of the United Arab Emirates, each of which has started or ramped up operations to buy and sell energy products in the last few years.

Kuwait aims to raise exports of refined products



including diesel and jet fuel to Europe this year. Those extra volumes will go a small way to helping the continent deal with any shortages that arise from Sunday’s ban on almost all refined fuels from Russia, part of a strategy to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine. “We are essentially bringing in a wall of distillates, diesel fuel oil to those markets, specifically into Europe, to fill up the supply gaps we are seeing,” Sheikh Nawaf Al-Sabah said.

Many of the extra flows will come from Kuwait’s massive, 615,000 barrel-a-day Al-Zour refinery. The first of three lines, or trains as they’re known in the industry, is now operating. The second should start producing fuels in the coming weeks and the last one in the second quarter, the CEO said.

He was speaking from the India Energy Week forum, part of the country’s G20 presidency. – Bloomberg



**LIVERPOOL:** Healthcare workers hold placards at a picket line outside the Aintree University Hospital in Liverpool, north-west England as the UK faced the biggest round of health service strikes. — AFP

## UK faces biggest round of health service strikes

**LONDON:** Nurses and ambulance staff stepped up their demands for better pay Monday to combat the UK’s cost of living crisis by launching their biggest round of health service strikes. The stoppages-part of a wave of industrial action across the UK economy-saw nurses and paramedics go on strike on the same day for the first time on Monday. Striking staff outside St Thomas’ Hospital in central London waved placards and chanted “Safer staffing saves lives” and “Claps don’t pay the bills”, a reference to the daily national applause they received from the public during the coronavirus pandemic. The healthcare workers say their wages have failed to keep up with inflation over the past decade, leaving them unable to pay their bills amid spiralling fuel, food and housing costs.

They warn that qualified nurses are quitting in droves due to the financial pressures resulting in understaffing that endangers patient care. “We’re run off our feet 24/7, breaking our backs doing the jobs of three people,” said trainee nursing associate Victoria Busk, who works on a trauma ward at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, central England.

“I love my job, I love the work I do, making a difference to patients. But I can’t imagine doing this until I’m in my 60s,” she said. Last week, half a million people including teachers, transport workers and Border Force staff at UK air and seaports also stopped work over pay. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) union has said Monday’s strike affects nurses in around a third of hospital trusts in England and most of Wales.

### ‘Work for peanuts’

The ambulance staff strike only affects England, however, after paramedics in Wales called off their planned action following an improved pay offer. “Every time you go on a shift, it’s dangerous due to low staffing,” said Angela Unufe on a picket line outside the Queen’s Medical Centre in Nottingham, also in central England. The former nurse with the state-funded National Health Service now works as a ward manager at a private mental health clinic. “It’s got to a situation where as managers we have to fill in for nurses who are not on shift, because we can’t get the nurses because there are no nurses there, as no one wants to work for peanuts,” she said.

Health minister Maria Caulfield, who is also a nurse, said she sympathized with striking health service staff but argued that big pay hikes could not be afforded. “I’m an RCN member myself, so I sit in both camps, if you like. Absolutely, I have a lot of sympathy,” she told GB News. “But we also have a responsibility to the taxpayer... we just can’t afford inflation-busting pay rises that the unions are currently demanding.”

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has called for pay rises to be “reasonable” and “affordable”, warning that big pay awards will jeopardise attempts to tame inflation. Health Secretary Steve Barclay had urged unions to call off Monday’s action. “The Governor of the Bank of England warned if we try to beat inflation with high pay rises, it will only get worse and people would not be better off,” he said. — AFP

## Pension reform hits French parliament as new strike looms

**PARIS:** The French parliament was on Monday to start debating a contested pension reform championed by President Emmanuel Macron a day ahead of new strikes and mass demonstrations against the plan. The reform is the flagship domestic policy of Macron’s second and final term in office, with the president determined to implement it in the face of fierce opposition from the political left and unions, but also the wider public.

He faces a dual challenge from the street and in parliament, where his ruling party lost its overall majority in elections last year even though it remains the largest faction. His government under Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne wants to pass the legislation with the help of the right, and without recourse to the 49.3 article of the constitution.

This article allows the adoption of a text without a vote, unless a vote of confidence is called, in a move that would risk stoking more protests. Left-wing opponents of the administration have already filed thousands of amendments ahead of the parliamentary debate beginning on Monday afternoon.

### ‘Huge mobilization’

Walkouts and marches are planned for both Tuesday and Saturday, although unions for rail operator SNCF said they would not call for a strike at the weekend, a holiday getaway date in some regions, and just protests. Trains and the Paris metro are again expected to see “severe disruptions” Tuesday according to operators, and around one in five flights at Orly airport south of the capital are expected to be cancelled. Last week’s demonstrations brought out 1.3 million people nationwide, according to a police count, while unions claimed more than 2.5 million attendees. Either way, it marked the largest protest in France since 2010. “It’s out in the country that this will be settled, either by a revolt or by enduring disgust” with the government, said Francois Ruffin, an MP for hard-left France Unbowed.

“The government is no longer trying to convince people, but just to win, win by resignation and exhaustion” among opponents, he added. With pressure growing, Borne on Sunday offered a key concession to win support from the conservative Republicans party in parliament. While the reform will set a new legal minimum retirement age of 64 for most workers-up from 62 — Borne said people who started work aged between 20 and 21 will be covered by an exemption allowing them to leave earlier, at 63. Calling the offer a “band aid”, the head of the CFDT union Laurent Berger said that the move “isn’t the response to the huge, geographically and professionally diverse mobi-

lization” that has swept France. But Republicans chief Eric Ciotti told the Parisien newspaper that he would back the reform, potentially securing a majority for the government.

### Keep seniors working

After an attempted 2019 pensions reform that was stymied by the coronavirus crisis, the changes mark another step by reformist Macron in aligning France with its EU neighbors—most of which already have higher retirement ages than the proposed 64 years.

He and his ministers aim to get the pensions system out of deficit by 2030 by finding around 18 billion euros (\$19.5 billion) of annual savings—mostly from getting people to work for longer and abolishing some special retirement schemes. But while Borne and others have insisted theirs is a fair reform, critics say that women will on average have to wait still longer for retirement than men, as many have interruptions in their careers from childbearing and care responsibilities. Opponents also say the reform fails to adequately account for people in physically strenuous jobs like builders and doesn’t deal with companies’ reluctance to hire and retain older workers. Borne said the government would pile pressure on companies to end the practice of letting go of older employees, which leaves many struggling to find work in their final years before pension age. “Too often, companies stop training and recruiting older people,” Borne told the JDD weekly on Sunday.—AFP



**PARIS, France:** In this file photo taken on January 19, 2023, Demonstrators gather in Place de la Republique during a rally in Paris, as workers go on strike over the French President’s plan to raise the legal retirement age from 62 to 64. — AFP

## Australian company saves bankrupt UK car battery firm

**SYDNEY:** Australian company Recharge Industries is to take over Britishvolt, a bankrupt startup planning a gigafactory for electric vehicle batteries in the UK, administrators overseeing a rescue deal said Monday. Financial group EY said in a statement that it had chosen Recharge as preferred bidder for Britishvolt, which collapsed last month, and expects the purchase to be completed this week.

EY said it had entered into agreement with Recharge and its US parent Scale Facilitation Partners for the takeover. “This follows a process conducted by EY that involved the consideration of multiple approaches from interested parties and numerous offers received,” the statement added.

David Collard, chief executive of Scale Facilitation and founder of Recharge Industries, said the deal would allow them to build the UK’s first gigafactory.

“We’re confident our proposal will deliver a strong outcome for all involved,” he added in a separate statement. Recharge is in the process also of establishing a large-scale lithium-ion battery cell production and research capability in Australia. “Using world leading artificial intelligence and multinational research partnerships, we are finding ways to make batteries better, safer, and longer lasting.”

Britishvolt, which was championed by former prime minister Boris Johnson to help drive a greener economy, failed to adequately finance a multi-billion-pound facility in Blyth, northeast England. This despite the promise of government financial support and in the wake of funding by metals giant Glencore and British luxury car firm Aston Martin.

A majority of the 300 Britishvolt staff lost their jobs in the collapse. The company had hoped to produce 300,000 electric vehicle batteries a year on a site employing about 3,000 staff. — AFP

## German factory orders rebound in December

**BERLIN:** German industrial orders rebounded strongly in December, official data showed on Monday, the latest sign Europe’s top economy is proving resilient in the face of shocks from the Ukraine war. New orders, which provide a foretaste of industrial output, rose 3.2 percent compared to the previous month, federal statistics agency Destatis said.

It represents a turnaround from November, when orders fell sharply to their weakest level since mid-2020, as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine took its toll. Responding to the latest figures, the economy ministry said that demand in the manufacturing sector had “stabilized” at the end of 2022.—AFP

## Business

# LEAP23 announces \$9bn investments to support technology and startups

## Event to enhance Saudi Arabia's position as largest digital market in MENA

**RIYADH:** Leap23 opened a four-day run in Riyadh on Monday by announcing more than \$9 billion in investments to support future technologies, digital entrepreneurship, tech startups, and enhance the Saudi Arabia's position as the largest digital market in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

The investments were revealed by Eng Abdullah bin Amer Alswaha, the Minister of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), during a keynote address at the event which runs at Riyadh Front Exhibition & Conference Centre until Thursday, February 9.

### LEAP23 Investments

Alswaha confirmed the investments included

Microsoft's \$2.1 billion in a global super-scaler cloud in the kingdom, Oracle investing \$1.5 billion to expand its MENA business by launching new cloud areas in the kingdom, Huawei's \$400 million in cloud infrastructure for its services in the kingdom, and the launch of a Zoom cloud area in the kingdom in partnership with Aramco.

An additional \$4.5 billion has been invested in global and local assets across multiple sectors, added Alswaha. Alswaha emphasized that the huge investment packages come with the full support of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. The investments are part of the Crown Prince's empowerment of the technology sector, which is one of Saudi's most promising sectors amid unprecedented growth in the kingdom's

digital economy, internet of things, biological and health tech, quantitative science, space, satellites, fintech and open sources.

Other major announcements on the first day included Meta launching the opening of the first Metaverse Academy in MENA, WEO Technology and Camel Lab launching Hektar, a multi-content social media app; and MENA Communication and STC launching Beem - a new application for instant messaging, high-quality voice and video calls, and business features.

Taking place alongside Leap and starting Tuesday February 7, the inaugural DeepFest - in partnership with the Saudi Data & AI Authority (SDAIA) - will gather drivers of the global artificial intelligence eco-system to unveil life-changing,



multi-sector initiatives in a thought-leadership conference and sector-specific tracks, trainings, live-demos, startup pitches and an exhibition featuring companies transforming the world we live and work in. — Gulf Business

## Full recovery of Chinese economy will boost global economy

By Zhang Jianwei

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Kuwait

In 2022, the world underwent both major changes unseen in a century and the once-in-a-century pandemic. The geopolitical situation was turbulent, and the downside risks of the world economy were increasing. Facing the complex international environment and the arduous task of promoting domestic reform while keeping stability, the Chinese government adhered to the general working guideline of making progress while maintaining stability, and coordinated the work of epidemic control and economic development in an effective way. As a result, the national economy continued to develop despite downward pressure. The Chinese economy in 2022 was featured with the following highlights.

Overall economic development was stable and healthy. Faced with the severe economic condition both at home and abroad, the Chinese government promptly issued a package of policies and follow-up policies to stabilize the economy. In the second quarter, the goal of positive economic growth and an early decline in the unemployment rate was achieved. In the third quarter, the economy rebounded significantly. Although the economic operations fluctuated in the fourth quarter, it maintained a recovery momentum. China's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 was 121.0207 trillion yuan (about \$18 trillion), an increase of 3 percent over last year at constant prices. Against the backdrop of a complex and severe external environment and the repeated impact of the COVID-19 epidemic at home, it was not easy to achieve such growth.

Prices were generally stable. In sharp contrast to the global spike in consumer price, especially with some countries' inflation growing to a multi-decade high, China's consumer prices in 2022 saw a mild growth of 2 percent, lower than the expected annual rate of 3 percent.

Employment levels were generally stable. Despite downward pressure on the Chinese economy, a total of 12.06 million new urban jobs were created in 2022, exceeding the annual target of 11 million.

Food security has been effectively guaranteed. The Chinese government has made great efforts to ensure agricultural production and energy supply. The annual grain output in 2022 reached 686.55 billion kilograms, an increase of 3.7 billion kilograms from the previous year, and has remained stable at more than 0.65 trillion kilograms for eight consecutive years.

The development of foreign trade was better than expected. Although affected by multiple factors, China's scale of foreign trade in 2022 hit a record high again with the total value of import and export of goods reaching 42.1 trillion yuan (about \$6.3 trillion). This marked an increase of 7.7 percent, as China maintained the status of the world's largest cargo country for six consecutive years. The trade structure has been continuously optimized. The import and export of private enterprises increased by 12.9 percent, the export of labor-intensive products and machinery and electronic products increased by 8.9 percent and 7.0 percent respectively, the export of new energy vehicles and other products increased rapidly. Trade in services grew steadily, with the total value of imports and exports of services reaching 598 trillion yuan (about \$900 billion), an increase of 12.9 percent. The import and export of travel services and knowledge-intensive services increased by 8.4 percent and 7.8 percent respectively. The use of foreign capital continued to grow. China's actual use of foreign capital in 2022 was 1.2 trillion yuan (about \$180 billion), an increase of 6.3 percent on a comparable basis. This proves once again that China is still a popular destination for foreign investment. The quality of foreign investment continued to improve. Foreign investment in the manufacturing sector increased by 46.1 percent, accounting for 26.3 percent of all investment, an increase of 7.8 percent. Foreign investment in the high-tech industry increased by 28.3 percent, accounting for 36.1 percent, an increase of 7.1 percent. Investment from major sources maintained growth. Among them, investment from South Korea, Germany and the United Kingdom increased by 64.2 percent, 52.9 percent, and 40.7 percent respectively, and investment from Hong Kong SAR increased by 1.7 percent.

Outward investment developed steadily. The annual non-financial outward foreign direct investment was 785.94 billion yuan (about \$117.3 billion), an increase of 7.2 percent. Among them, investment in countries and regions along the routes of the Belt and Road increased by 7.7 percent, accounting for 17.9 percent. In terms of industry, investment in the manufacturing sector increased by 22.4 percent, accounting for 18.5 percent; investment in the wholesale and retail industry increased by 24.6 percent; investment in the construction industry increased by 19.8 percent; investment and cooperation in green, digital and other fields have become the sectors of new growth.

People's lives continued to improve. The Chinese people became more affluent in 2022, with per capita disposable income reaching 36,883 yuan (about \$5,505), increased by 5 percent.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of China's "reform and opening up" policy, as well as the 10th anniversary of the proposal of the Belt and Road Initiative. At the beginning of 2023, the Chinese economy is showing a good start. Fueled by the optimization of COVID-19 prevention and control measures, Chinese consumers increased their spending significantly during the Spring Festival holiday, not only on goods like duty-free commodities, jewelry and health-related products, but also on services such as travel and entertainment.

A total of 308 million domestic trips were made during the week, almost 90 percent of the pre-pandemic figure in 2019. Outbound flight bookings rose 6.7 times over the level in 2022, highlighting the strong recovery in tourism market. As Industry experts said, China's consumer market, which plays a fundamental role in bolstering the country's economic growth, is expected to gain momentum this year, and the consumption boom during the weeklong Chinese Lunar New Year holiday showcased the enormous vitality and strong resilience of the nation's economy.

In 2023, China will continue to try to make progress while maintaining stability, and follow a proactive fiscal policy and a prudent monetary policy. We will strive to maintain proper economic growth, and keep prices and jobs stable. More focus will be placed on expanding domestic demand, keeping supply chains stable, supporting the private sector, reforming the State-owned enterprises, attracting foreign investment, and preventing economic and financial risks. The International Monetary Fund projects that the growth of the Chinese economy will accelerate to 5.2 percent in 2023. With the accelerated recovery of consumer demand and the effects of the economic policies from the central government, China, whose social vitality and economic potential has been further unleashed, will continue to be the engine and stabilizer that promotes the recovery of the world economy.

*NOTE: The report is issued by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China to the State of Kuwait*



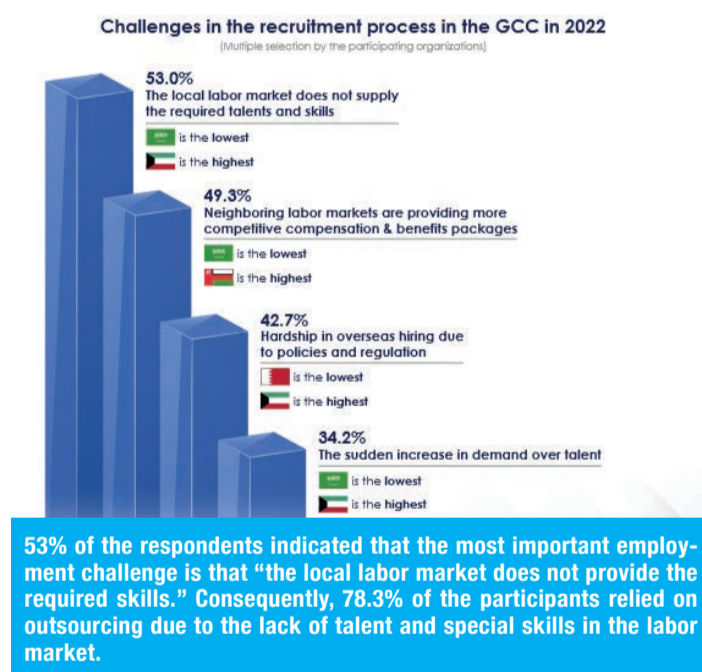
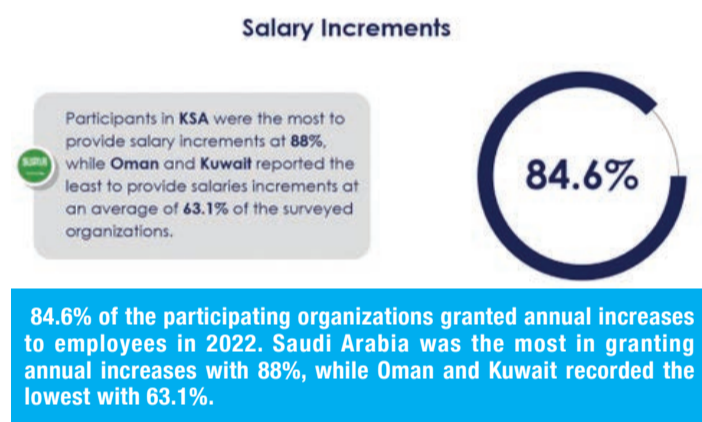
Zhang Jianwei

## Procapita releases its first annual report for GCC countries for 2022

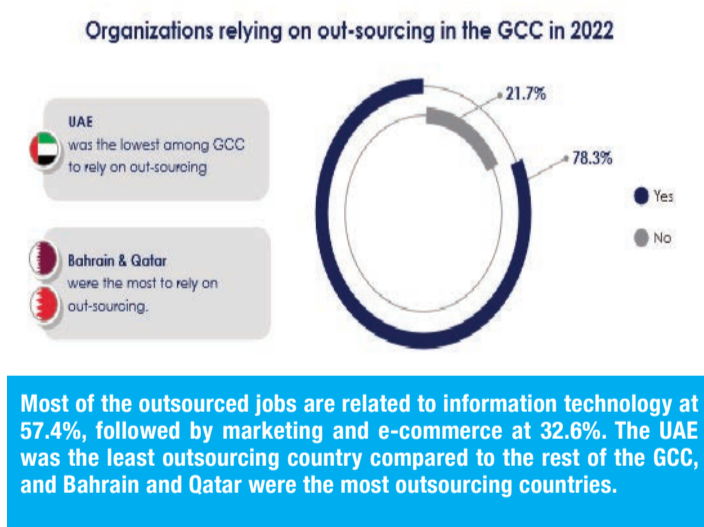
**KUWAIT:** Procapita Management Consulting has released its first annual report for the GCC countries for the year 2022, which covers the entire region for the first time. Procapita launched the annual survey with the participation of business leaders and human resources experts in various sectors in the GCC countries. More than 750 organizations in many sectors participated in the survey.



Mohammad Abu Al-Rob



39.6% of companies are expected to either increase salaries or bonuses, while 40.5% of them intend to increase salaries and bonuses, and Kuwait recorded the lowest percentage compared to its peers.



## Indonesia economic growth rises to nine-year high

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia's economic growth accelerated to a nine-year high in 2022 despite global uncertainty and a final-quarter slowdown, official data showed Monday, owing to soaring commodity prices and easing COVID-19 curbs. Indonesia was badly affected by the coronavirus pandemic, with its exports and tourism-reliant economy taking a massive hit in 2020 as GDP shrunk by 2.07 percent-its first recession since the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

But Southeast Asia's largest economy

has bounced back since then, posting economic growth last year of 5.31 percent, Statistics Indonesia said Monday, the highest level since 2013.

"The figures show that Indonesia's economy grew solidly in 2022," statistics agency head Margo Yuwono said. He said growth was propelled by high export prices and the lifting of travel restrictions, with dropped quarantine requirements in March spurring business and spiking tourist arrivals.

"The reopening of almost all international airports has boosted people's economic activity," Yuwono said. The country welcomed more than 740,000 visitors in the first half of the year, an increase of more than 900 percent on-year.

The annual rise came despite slowing growth in the final quarter of the year after

demand when companies scrambled to meet demand as people went online for work, school and entertainment. But "market conditions continue to erode with an uncertain future," said Dell Technologies vice chairman Jeff Clarke in a memo released Monday.

"The steps we've taken to stay ahead of downturn impacts-which enabled several strong quarters in a row-are no longer enough," he added. Dell, based at Round Rock in Texas, had 133,000 employees at the start of last year with nearly a third of them in the United States.

On Monday, Clarke said the company now has to make "additional decisions to prepare for the road ahead."

He warned of coming changes for the firm's global sales and services segments, adding that "unfortunately, with changes

a strong July-September. The economy expanded 5.01 percent on-year in October-December, down from 5.72 percent in the previous three months. But it still maintained its annual rise from pandemic lows after expanding 3.69 percent in 2021 as coronavirus cases started to decline and export prices for key commodities like palm oil, coal and nickel rose significantly.

The country's economic growth is expected to slow slightly this year despite the recovery, according to economists. "Further weakness is likely as weak global demand, high inflation and elevated interest rates drag on activity," said Gareth Leather, senior Asia economist at Capital Economics.

"We expect growth to slow further over the coming quarters." — AFP

like this, some members of our team will be leaving the company."

"There is no tougher decision, but one we had to make for our long-term health and success," he added. Dell's revenue fell six percent in the third quarter of its 2023 fiscal year, according to results released in late November.

Product sales, such as of desktops, laptops and workstations, which represent the bulk of the group's business activity, fell by 10 percent. The group's executives pointed to the decline in demand for personal computers as people in the United States and around the world contend with high inflation and rising interest rates. But the company has navigated economic downturns before and "emerged stronger" from them, Clarke stressed in the memo. — AFP

They also come after a major hiring spree at the height of the coronavirus pan-

## Business

## Kuwait-Italy bilateral trade sees quantum leap: Envoy

## Baldocci hopes to boost flight frequency from Kuwait to Rome and Milan

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Carlo Baldocci told Kuwait Times in an exclusive interview that the export volume to Kuwait in the fashion sector increased by almost 50 percent in 2022 compared to 2021. Fashion exports constitute 7 percent of the total volume of Italian exports to Kuwait. He pointed out that in the first 10 months of 2022, exports to Kuwait in the fashion sector amounted to around €120 million, while it was around €85 million in the same period in 2021.

"Fashion trade between Kuwait and Italy is growing, as it is one of the traditional sectors between us for many years. We feel there is room for further expansion for Italian companies to expand in the Kuwaiti market," Baldocci said. "Due to the strong presence of Italian fashion in the country, many Kuwaitis and residents fly to Italy every week to visit, experiment and shop our fashion trends. In the last

year, we had around 25,000 visitors to Italy from Kuwait. Therefore, we hope to increase weekly direct flights from Kuwait to Rome and Milan to more than one flight daily," he added.

## Developing other business relations

Baldocci pointed out the very good political and cultural relations between both countries helped in the development of business relations in different sectors, clarifying that in 2022, Italy was the top country in the European Union as a trade partner with Kuwait. "By the end of this year, we are expecting to exceed more than €2.2 billion in Italian exports to Kuwait, while currently, exports reached €1.8 billion, which is more than a 110 percent increase compared to 2021," he said.

"In addition, it is important to notice the positive trend of Kuwaiti exports, which increased to more than €300 million in 2022 compared to 2021. Currently, all other exporting sectors from Italy to Kuwait are booming, starting from machinery, electrical and engineering.

biggest gas supplier, as prices skyrocketed to record levels.

According to its own calculations, the Norwegian state registered more than 1.0 trillion kroner in unexpected oil and gas revenues last year. Oslo is set to post a record budget surplus this year of 1.13 trillion kroner, which will further boost the country's sovereign wealth fund, the biggest in the world.

These exceptional gains, in a country already among the richest in the world, have sparked calls both in Norway and abroad for a redistribution of the windfall. "Our enormous profits are the enormous losses of others," Norwegian economists Kalle Moene and Ottar Maestad wrote in a column in November.

"We have become a kind of involuntary and passive war profiteer." "The additional revenue of at least 1.0 trillion kroner that Norway has pocketed because of the war do not, from a moral point of view, belong to us," they said. Like these economists, others have called for the money to go into a future international fund aimed at helping the victims of the conflict around the world and, when the time comes, for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

## Nansen plan

Norway's prime minister has meanwhile dismissed the allegations of war profiteering. "It's a notion that I flatly refuse," Store said last week in an interview with AFP. "Norway has for 50 years been an explorer, at some risk, and seller of energy resources, oil and gas," he said. "Norway does not fix those prices." The Scandinavian country's aid to Kyiv had until now appeared modest. Oslo donated 10.7 billion kroner to civilian and military aid in 2022.

As a share of gross domestic product, that puts Norway in 15th place in a ranking by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. The aid plan proposed on Monday has been dubbed "Fridtjof Nansen", after Norway's famed 19th-century polar explorer and diplomat. Nansen was instrumental in organizing humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union during the devastating famine of the early 1920s. That and his other humanitarian efforts earned him the 1922 Nobel Peace Prize. — AFP

## 'Passive war profiteer'

The Norwegian government was harshly criticized last year for reducing its 2023 development aid budget-to 0.75 percent of gross national income, lower than the usual one-percent target-at a time when the country's gas revenue was soaring due to the war in Ukraine. In 2022, Norway overtook Russia as Europe's



OSLO: Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store (center), sits next to Norwegian Finance Minister Trygve Magnus Slagsvold Vedum (second left), Geir Pollestad (left), Rigmor Aasrud (second right), and Irene Djala (for the party Patient Focus in Finnmark) during a presentation of the government's plans of a \$7.3 billion aid package to Ukraine and additional aid to other countries affected, in Oslo on February 6, 2023. — AFP

## West's oil sanctions aim to tighten screws on Russia

WASHINGTON: The West's latest wave of sanctions on Russian energy exports seeks to hit Moscow harder than its previous moves over the Ukraine war. An EU-wide ban on Russia oil products-like diesel, gasoline and jet fuel-came into effect Sunday alongside a Group of Seven (G7) price cap on the same items. That expanded on an EU embargo on seaborne oil deliveries introduced two months ago-when it also established with G7 partners a \$60-dollar-per-barrel cap for exports around the world. There are two price cap levels, \$100 per barrel for more expensive fuel like diesel and \$45 on lower-quality products such as fuel oil. Key energy producer Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine almost one year ago, on February 24, 2022, sparking international condemnation and economic retaliation.

## More profound impact

"The caps and ban on Russian petroleum products are likely to have a more profound impact than the similar measures that targeted crude oil in December," said PVM Energy analyst Stephen Brennock.

"Unlike with its crude exports, there are no readily available markets to accommodate its surplus fuel supplies." Prior to the conflict, the 27-nation European Union was the main buyer of Russian diesel, consuming almost 700,000 barrels per day (bpd) or half of its imports of that product.

Despite a sharp drop over the last year, more than

one quarter of EU diesel imports still originated in Russia in first few weeks the year, according to S&P Global data. That amounted to an average of 450,000 bpd. Moscow will be forced to find new markets for its oil products to preserve revenues that help finance its ongoing war in Ukraine. The most obvious candidates are Asian superpowers China and India. "China and India ... have become the biggest buyers of Russian crude in recent months. Yet the same ravenous appetite for crude will not apply to its refined oil products," Brennock said.

"Both countries are net exporters of products and have plenty of excess refining capacity-so there is scant need for them to be importing more." Moscow's only other option might be to refine less fuel-but this would likely lead to a drop in oil production.

## G7 pressure

The G7 industrialized countries and Australia reached agreement Friday on price caps for Russian petroleum products. The policy aimed "to prevent Russia from profiting from its war of aggression against Ukraine" and support stability in energy markets, the G7 said a statement. Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch added that Russian diesel was already selling below the price cap, with Baltic Sea shipments costing only \$90 per barrel last week. Moscow last week banned the sale of Russian crude to nations using the G7 cap and warned that the measures would destabilize world markets. But oil prices were broadly unmoved on Monday. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen estimates that the oil price cap costs Moscow 160 million euros (\$170 million) per day. However, since the start of the war, Russia has earned 194 billion euros from exports of oil and petroleum products, according to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) think-tank.—AFP



Carlo Baldocci

We are the seventh top exporting country to Kuwait," Baldocci added.

## Oil and gas sector

Last week, Kuwait saw a visit of 26 Italian companies in the field of oil, gas and power, and Ambassador Baldocci discussed their expectations and goals. "We had very important meetings with public and major private sector companies, while we had a general overview of future business plans in Kuwait, which translated to a significant B2B (business to business) session with local companies. We believe there are many projects that Italian companies can add more value to local Kuwaiti companies to be more successful. We have an interesting list of activities that

are going on now in the oil and gas sector and there are projects for the future," he said. "We are exploring possibilities of cooperating in providing more forms of collaboration in the oil and gas sector, not to mention creating links in terms of training staff in the same field by Italian experts. Renewables is also a very promising sector of collaboration," he added.

## Food security

The Italian ambassador also discussed cooperation in food security. "There were several interlocutors with the Kuwaiti side and we all agreed this is the best time to have an opportunity to start preparations for all different aspects of the food security chain. There are a lot of potentials, because it is not only the food industry when we talk about food security; it is also the capacity of bringing possibilities of enlarging the capacity of producing and processing food in the country and to make Kuwait a food hub in the region," he concluded.



BENGALURU: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center), Karnataka's Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot (left) and Karnataka's Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai (right) take part in the inauguration of 'India Energy Week 2023' under India's G20 Presidency, in Bengaluru on February 6, 2023. — AFP

## India opens largest helicopter factory in new defense push

NEW DELHI: India unveiled on Monday its largest helicopter factory, which can turn out at least 1,000 aircraft a year, as part of a defense self-reliance push to counter China's growing assertiveness.

New Delhi also announced a double-digit increase in its annual defense budget last week with an eye on its geopolitical rival, with which it shares a disputed northern border. India is one of the largest arms importers in the world and, even with its recent push towards local defense production, still relies heavily on hardware from Moscow, its largest and oldest military supplier.

The new helicopter facility fulfils "our government's pledge to gradually reduce India's dependence on foreign countries for its defense needs", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after the inauguration.

## Stock markets slide on US rate hike fears

NEW YORK: Stock markets mostly slid and the dollar firmed Monday after a forecast-busting US jobs report fanned expectations of more Federal Reserve interest rate hikes to cool sky-high inflation. Adding to the downbeat mood were geopolitical concerns after the United States shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon that had floated across the country for days.

Equity market rallies enjoyed through January have largely stopped as investors contemplate an extended period of high borrowing costs aimed at bringing inflation down from multi-decade highs. London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, however, struck an all-time high Friday, with analysts saying bad news, such as expectations of UK recession throughout this year, was priced in. The British capital's top index has benefitted also from some strong company earnings, including record profits from energy giant Shell, and renewed investment from abroad amid pound weakness. But it was down almost one percent near midday on Monday. "Having hit a new all-time high..., the FTSE 100 opened the new trading week with a hangover," noted Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell. "Throwing cold water over the party were stronger than expected jobs figures in the US, something closely monitored by the Federal Reserve when making interest rate decisions." Eurozone stock markets fared worse, as did leading indices in Asia. A softer tone from the Fed regarding its monetary tightening campaign had allowed market participants to entertain the possibility of a pause to rate hikes, or even a cut, later in the year. But that optimism was dealt a heavy blow Friday by data showing more than half a million new jobs were created in the United States last month, nearly double the December figure and far more than the 188,000 expected.

Government figures also showed unemployment fell to the lowest level since 1969. The reading showed the world's biggest economy remained strong despite almost a year of rate hikes and soaring prices, indicating the Fed still had plenty of work to do to rein in inflation. "We are concerned that on the back of this kind of jobs report, it definitely holds the Fed to a higher-for-longer path," said Lisa Erickson at US Bank Wealth Management. All three main indices sank Friday on Wall Street, with the Nasdaq down more than one percent as tech firms took a hit after disappointing earnings from giants Amazon, Apple and Google parent Alphabet. —AFP

"I am happy that hundreds of different weapons and defense systems-from modern assault rifles to tanks, aircraft carriers, helicopters and transport aircraft—are now being made in India," he said. What was trumpeted as Asia's largest helicopter factory would initially produce Indian-designed and developed Light Utility Helicopters and then expand to build other multi-rotor helicopters.

The factory in southern Karnataka state was inaugurated only months after New Delhi unveiled its locally made attack helicopters, designed for use in high-altitude areas such as the Himalayas. India also introduced its first locally made aircraft carrier in September 2022, a significant step in its efforts to counter Beijing's growing presence in the Indian Ocean region. Asia's third-largest economy also became only one of six countries with nuclear strike capabilities on land, sea and air after it tested a ballistic missile from its first indigenous nuclear-powered submarine.

India has fought wars and has long-standing border disputes with both its nuclear-armed neighbors, arch-rival Pakistan and China. Twenty Indian troops were killed in a border clash with China in 2020. — AFP

## EU close to response to US green subsidy scheme: France

PARIS: The European Union was close to finalising its response to the United States' multi-billion-dollar climate subsidy program that has sparked tensions with the bloc, the French economy minister said Monday. The minister, Bruno Le Maire, and his German counterpart, Robert Habeck, are travelling to Washington on Monday for talks on European concerns about the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday unveiled proposals to relax state aid rules, but said there would not immediately be any new EU funding. The plans will be debated at a meeting of EU heads of state and government on Thursday and Friday in Brussels, with the final decision expected in March.

"We are about to have a European IRA, it will be decided in the European Council in the coming days," Le Maire told broadcaster France Inter. "Europe will have finally started a strategic shift towards stronger intervention to defend our industry," Le Maire said, picking out sectors such as hydrogen, wind and solar.

The IRA funnels \$370 billion in subsidies into America's energy transition-including tax cuts for US-made electric cars and batteries. While the United States wants to reduce dependence on Chinese imports, Europe is worried about unfair competition and the collateral damage if companies relocate outside the EU. "We don't want to get into a worldwide subsidy race, that would be terrible," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Friday.

Le Maire and Habeck will meet with Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Tuesday. The United States was driving ahead with "cost reduction in the development of climate-friendly technologies", Habeck said in a statement ahead of the trip. "That is good, but it is important that this is friendly, fair competition," Habeck said. Le Maire on Saturday also called for "transparency" between the United States and Europe over the controversial granting of green subsidies and tax breaks in an interview with AFP. —AFP

## Lifestyle | Features

# BEYONCE BREAKS ALL-TIME GRAMMY RECORD, STYLES WINS BEST ALBUM

Pop queen Beyonce on Sunday reigned supreme at the Grammys, breaking the all-time record for wins with her 32nd prize and fourth of the night - but the Album of the Year prize that's long eluded her slipped from her fingers once again, going instead to Brit Harry Styles. All of the top contenders including Adele, Taylor Swift and Lizzo went home with an award - but it was surprise after surprise in the top four categories. Beyonce entered the ceremony with the most chances at Grammy gold with nine, following the release of "Renaissance," her rich, sprawling ode to club music.



Samara Joy poses with the Best New Artist and Best Jazz Vocal Album Awards for "Linger Awhile" in the press room during the 65th GRAMMY Awards at Crypto.com Arena on February 05, 2023 in Los Angeles, California.

She clinched the all-time Grammy record by winning the prize for Best Dance/Electronic Music Album for her smash "Renaissance," thus surpassing the late classical conductor Georg Solti, who had 31 awards. "I'm trying not to be too emotional. And I'm trying to just receive this night," Queen Bey said, wearing a shimmering, curve-hugging gown, her hair in mermaid waves as her peers witnessed the history-making moment. But while her album was considered a likely candidate for best album, it was Styles who snagged that prestigious award. "On nights like tonight, it's obviously so important for us to remember that there is no such thing as bests in music," said Styles.

His win over Queen Bey was sure to draw obvious comparisons to 2017, when Adele swept the top prizes at the glitzy music biz gala, shutting out Beyonce's cul-

ture-shaking "Lemonade." The Grammys' winningest artist still remains on the outside looking in at the top prizes: Beyonce has never won Album or Record of the Year, which this time around went to Lizzo for "About Damn Time." She only scored Song of the Year once, for 2008's "Single Ladies." This year, folk, rock and blues singer Bonnie Raitt scooped up that honor. Beyonce was nevertheless the top winner on Sunday with her four gramophones.

#### Carlile, Lamar with three wins each

Both folk rocker Brandi Carlile and rapper Kendrick Lamar ended the night with three awards each. Adele, one of the night's heavyweights, took home just one award in the pop categories, while Taylor Swift was shut out once again from Song of the Year, a songwriting award. Swift did however win the Best Music Video prize for her short film based on the 10-minute version of her song "All Too Well."

Puerto Rican reggaeton megastar Bad Bunny kicked off the show by bringing the audience to its feet with the first performance, before taking home the prize for Best Musica Urbana Album. Bad Bunny, indisputably the world's biggest commercial artist, nabbed the prize for his major drop "Un Verano Sin Ti," which was also an Album of the Year contender. "Thank you to all the Latinos across the entire world," he said in Spanish. "We will keep elevating this genre to the next level."

Actor Viola Davis became the latest showbiz heavyweight to earn a coveted EGOT - winner of an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony - by taking the Grammy for best audio book, narration and storytelling for her memoir "Finding Me." Samara Joy wins for Best New Artist. The star-studded 65th annual gala, hosted once again by comedian Trevor Noah, also featured performances from Styles, Lizzo and Mary J. Blige, as well as an exuberant tribute to hip-hop music featuring a constellation of stars.

After several Grammy years with clear Best New Artist favorites - winners like Olivia Rodrigo, Megan Thee Stallion and Billie Eilish - American jazz singer Samara Joy scooped up the prize over an eclectic field. The category has grown increasingly reflective of the internet age's impact on popular music; many of the nominees - including Brazil's Anitta, Eurovision rockers Maneskin and rapper Latto - have all found viral fame on TikTok. "I can't even believe - I've been watching you all on TV for, like, so long," the Bronx-born artist told the audience, after earlier taking home the prize for Best Jazz Vocal Album. —AFP



Beyonce accepts Best Dance/Electronic Music Album for "Renaissance" onstage during the 65th GRAMMY Awards at Crypto.com Arena on February 05, 2023 in Los Angeles, California.

## Beyonce: Music's golden girl

The Beyonce paradox lives on: the same night she further burnished her GOAT - greatest of all time - status, the legendary artist also lengthened her streak as the Recording Academy's most snubbed nominee. Although she made history on Sunday, becoming the winningest artist in Grammys history, she missed out again on the Album of the Year award, to the shock of everyone and the fury of fans on social media. This time, it went to British pop phenom Harry Styles, six years after she lost the award to Adele. She has also never won Record of the Year, despite having the most nods ever for the category, with eight.

#### Queen Bey

Born Beyonce Giselle Knowles in Houston, Texas, the now 41-year-old has been in the upper echelons of pop music since her teenage years. She initially rose to fame as part of the girl group Destiny's Child - whose smash hits included "Survivor" - and "Say My Name" - before embarking on a wildly successful solo career. From setting the standard for the overnight album drop to delivering her earth-shattering "Homecoming" show at Coachella in 2018, Beyonce has long bucked the industry's conventional wisdom, and is simultaneously one of music's most private and most-watched stars.

Her paradigm-shifting 2016 album "Lemonade," which emphasized Black

womanhood against the backdrop of America's heritage of slavery and culture of oppression, remains one of the most venerated musical projects in recent memory. Then she dropped the critically acclaimed song "Black Parade" in June 2020, amid nationwide protests ignited by the murder of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd, at the hands of a white police officer. "She's arguably the most culturally important artist in the world," Merck Mercuriadis, the music publishing mogul who was once Beyonce's manager, told AFP at a pre-Grammy gala. Beyond her music, she is a fashion icon - she actually was named just that by the Council of Fashion Designers of America in 2016 - with her own athleisure line Ivy Park. She has also appeared in a handful of films including "Dreamgirls". According to Forbes, her net worth as of last year was \$450 million.

Despite losing the Album and Record of the Year Grammys for what feels like the umpteenth time, the outpouring of love from her peers on Sunday made clear it was still Beyonce's night. "You never know with this, you know, this stuff," a sheepish Styles told journalists backstage, when asked if he had also expected a Beyonce triumph for top album. "I don't think you can look at any of the nominees and not feel like they deserve it." —AFP

### Grammys 2023

Winners in the main categories

#### Album of the year

"Harry's House"  
Harry Styles

#### Record of the year

"About Damn Time"  
Lizzo

#### Song of the year

"Just Like That"  
Bonnie Raitt

#### Best new artist

Samara Joy

#### Best pop vocal album

"Harry's House"  
Harry Styles

#### Best pop solo performance

"Easy on Me"  
Adele

#### Best pop duo/group performance

"Unholy"  
Sam Smith and Kim Petras

#### Best rock song

"Broken Horses"  
Brandi Carlile

#### Best rock performance

"Broken Horses"  
Brandi Carlile

#### Best alternative music album

"Wet Leg"  
Wet Leg

#### Best rap album

"Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers"  
Kendrick Lamar

#### Best Progressive R&B Album

"Gemini Rights"  
Steve Lacy

#### Best rock album

"Patient Number 9"  
Ozzy Osbourne

#### Best country album

"A Beautiful Time"  
Willie Nelson

#### Best music video

"All Too Well: The Short Film"  
Taylor Swift

Source: Grammy.com

AFP



Lizzo accepts the Record Of the Year award for "About Damn Time" onstage during the 65th GRAMMY Awards at Crypto.com Arena on February 05, 2023 in Los Angeles, California.



Harry Styles poses with the Best Pop Vocal Album Award for "Harry's House" and Album of the Year Award for "Harry's House" in the press room during the 65th GRAMMY Awards at Crypto.com Arena on February 05, 2023 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos



Rapper Kendrick Lamar (L) accepts the award for Best Rap Album for "Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers." from rapper Cardi B.

## Three key moments on Grammys night

#### Fifty years of hip-hop

In probably the most electric moment of the night, a parade of stars from the world of hip-hop-from Grandmaster Flash and Run DMC to Method Man, Queen Latifah, Missy Elliott and LL Cool J-got the audience up on their feet to mark the upcoming 50th anniversary of the genre, seen as born in the Bronx in 1973. The rapid-fire medley of hits across the decades-Nelly offered a few bars of "Hot in Herre," Lil Uzi Vert closed the tribute with a bit of his "Just Wanna Rock"-had Jay-Z cheering from his seat. The Recording Academy has long been criticized for failing to honor hip-hop artists in the main Grammy categories, and for being behind the times in terms of acknowledging hip-hop's overall influence in music. The all-star performance certainly went some distance in putting the genre front and center, at last.

#### Touching in memoriam

The Grammys annual tribute to those the music industry has lost was even more emotional than usual, with Quavo of the hip-hop act Migos honoring his nephew Takeoff, who was murdered late last year in a shooting at the age of 28. "Days ain't the same without you / I don't know if I'm the same without you," sang Quavo. "I

wish I had a time machine / Just so you can take a ride with me / I miss just how you smile at me / Unc and Phew until infinity." Kacey Musgraves opened the set paying homage to Loretta Lynn, the iconic country singer who died at 90, by covering Lynn's iconic "Coal Miner's Daughter." And Mick Fleetwood was joined by Bonnie Raitt and Sheryl Crow in a touching performance of "Songbird" by Christine McVie, the late Fleetwood Mac artist who

penned many of the beloved band's most famous songs.

#### Special award for Iranian song

In the night's most political moment, First Lady Jill Biden came to Los Angeles to present a special Grammy for Best Song for Social Change. That award went to 25-year-old Iranian pop singer Shervin Hajipour for his "Baraye" - an anthem for the protests that have rocked Iran since the

September 16 death in custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old ethnic Kurd arrested for an alleged breach of strict dress rules for women. Hajipour was detained after his song went viral and later freed on bail. He is not allowed to leave Iran. Biden called "Baraye" a "powerful and poetic call for freedom and women's rights." — AFP



Rappers Missy Elliott and Method Man perform onstage during the 65th Annual Grammy Awards.



Singer-songwriter Kacey Musgraves performs a tribute to Loretta Lynn, the iconic country singer.



Musician Bonnie Raitt holds the awards for Best Americana Performance, Best American Roots Song, and Song of the Year for Just Like That.



LIZZO



ADELE



TAYLOR SWIFT

## GRAMMYS RED CARPET: BOLD COLORS, BASIC BLACK, BLING



DOJA CAT

—AFP photos

**M**usic's brightest stars on Sunday brought their fashion A-game to the Grammys red carpet, strutting their stuff in bold colors, slinky styles, major bling and barely-there gowns. While the Oscars are known for embracing a certain brand of Hollywood glamour, the Grammys are in your face: some of the most iconic fashion looks have emerged on music's biggest night, like Jennifer Lopez's plunging green Versace gown in 2000. Here's a look at what the A-listers wore to the Grammys:

### Rainbow effect

If you want to get noticed on the red carpet, a pop of color does the trick. Lizzo - who won Record of the Year honors for "About Damn Time" - served up major fashion drama in a voluminous orange Dolce and Gabbana cape with huge floral blooms, over a sleek corseted gown in the same vibrant hue with peach eye shadow, fingerless mesh gloves and nail art to match. Taylor Swift, who won the Grammy for best music video for "All Too Well," stunned in a two-piece bejeweled bluish-purple Roberto Cavalli number - a long-sleeved crop top and long skirt - in keeping with her album title "Midnights." Adele, who won for Best Pop Solo Performance, wowed in a full-length Louis Vuitton burgundy gown with sculptural shoulder ruffles and a plunging neckline, her hair cascading in soft waves. At the gala, she was seated with Lizzo - a major power duo.

Super-producer Pharrell Williams rocked up in a quilted red leather ensemble-with a (faux?) fur coat over the top and uber-cool blinged out sunglasses. And pop dreamboat Harry Styles - who won Album of the Year honors and the award for Best Pop Vocal Album - obviously couldn't choose which color to go with, so he wore them all. The British singer

donned a glittering Harlequin-patterned sleeveless jumpsuit in every hue of the rainbow encrusted with Swarovski crystals, leaving his chest bare to show off his body ink. Country folk rocker Brandi Carlile donned a sparkly black Versace suit with a long coat and a pop of color-a fuchsia blouse that was more readily visible during her performance of her Grammy-winning song "Broken Horses."

ing and a long train. And Doja Cat, who wowed fashionistas at Paris fashion week with her exuberant looks and wild makeup, showed up in another Versace dress - hers was a one-shoulder latex frock that hugged her curves, finished with long gloves.

### Simply flawless

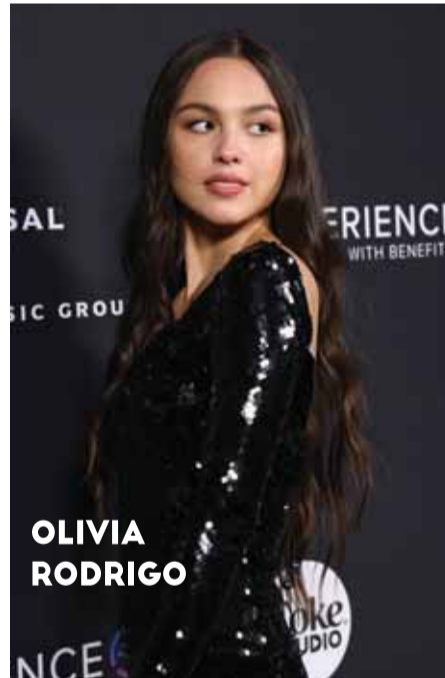
As the new all-time Grammy winners with 32 statuettes, Beyonce is in a class



PHARRELL WILLIAMS

### Bold in black

Of course, some stars went for basic, but attractive, black. Olivia Rodrigo, last year's Grammy winner for Best New Artist, adopted the naked dress trend seen on several recent showbiz red carpets in a sheer floor-length black gown. Brazilian superstar Anitta, up for Best New Artist honors this year, also understood the assignment - she slayed in a strapless Versace gown with see-through detail-



OLIVIA RODRIGO

by herself, and that applies to her fashion as well. The 41-year-old superstar arrived at the gala more than an hour late - due to traffic, host Trevor Noah said - in a strapless Gucci corset gown with a silver skirt cut up to her hip and rippling out in shimmering ruffles to finish in a train. Elbow-length gloves finished off the look for the new reigning queen of the Grammys. — AFP

### 'Assassin's Creed' gets first ever video game score Grammy

**"A**ssassin's Creed" composer Stephanie Economou won the first ever Grammy honoring video game scores at Sunday's gala in Los Angeles. Industry players had lobbied for years for a prize celebrating the work behind video game soundtracks, an acknowledgment of the major impact gaming and its music have on pop culture. In her acceptance speech, Economou - who composed the music for "Assassin's Creed Valhalla: Dawn Of Ragnarok" - praised those who had urged the Recording Academy to finally include the category. Backstage, she said the win felt "incredible." "I did not have high hopes for this category because ... I am generally very green in the video game music space and up against such giants and veterans," she said. For the inaugural award, the other nominees were the composers behind "Aliens: Fireteam Elite," "Call Of Duty: Vanguard," "Marvel's Guardians Of The Galaxy" and "Old World."

Economou noted that she was the only woman nominated in the category, saying: "I hope it sets precedent and I hope it's not just one woman in the category each year from here on out." Before this year, video games were included in the Score Soundtrack for Visual Media category, which also featured music for film and television. The global gaming industry may have hit close to \$200 billion in 2022, according to a projection from the Global Games Market Report, and a recent Deloitte survey taken across the United States, Britain, Germany, Brazil and Japan said that video games are the top entertainment source for Gen Z.

Many young gamers cite music as integral to the experience, with one third of respondents saying they looked up game music online afterwards, and 29 percent saying they often discovered new music while gaming. "A lot of them cannot separate the music from a game - and that's a really exciting opportunity for any composer coming in," the Los Angeles-based Economou told AFP prior to Sunday's show. The new category "is an important step for people to recognize that video games have been in the zeitgeist for so long now." — AFP



"Assassin's Creed" composer Stephanie Economou celebrates winning the Grammy's first-ever award for best video game soundtrack. —AFP

### Grammy win boosts crisis-hit South Africa

**S**outh Africa's latest Grammy win provided a ray of light for the crisis-plagued country Monday, with the president hailing the victorious musical trio for putting the nation back "on the world stage". Popular DJ-producer Zakes Bantwini, flautist Wouter Kellerman and songstress Nomcebo Zikode won the best global music performance award for their Zulu song 'Bayethe' at a Sunday ceremony in Los Angeles. "We applaud you for your brilliant contribution in placing South Africa on the world stage once again," Ramaphosa wrote on Twitter.

'Bayethe', which means 'hail' in the local Zulu language, combines traditional African beats, Zulu lyrics and the flute. The victory provided a brief distraction for South Africans who are otherwise facing record power cuts, high unemployment and rampant crime. South Africa's arts and culture ministry applauded the group in a statement,

saying the country was "proud of the great work" they produced "without compromising national identity". A continental powerhouse in the music arena, South Africa already boasted numerous Grammy winners, including famous male acapella groups Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Soweto Gospel Choir, and singer Miriam Makeba.

Radical leftist opposition Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) party tweeted that the latest victory reaffirmed "the depth in talent" in the country's music industry, "which is globally recognised and appreciated". The award ceremony was hosted by comedian Trevor Noah, who is also from South Africa. "Thank you for taking our culture and heritage to the world and for inspiring us that 'our dreams are valid'," the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party wrote in a statement. — AFP

## Sports

# France get their Six Nations title defense off to a winning start

## France squeeze past Italy in another Six Nations thriller

ROME: France got their Six Nations title defense off to a winning start after squeezing past Italy 29-24 in Rome on Sunday. Thibaud Flament, Thomas Ramos, debutant Elhan Dumortier and Matthieu Jalibert scored tries at the Stadio Olimpico to give France a tight bonus point victory which pulls them level on five points with Ireland and Scotland. The French, however, were a long way short of the side that won the Grand Slam last year, giving away 18 penalties and almost handing the game to an Italy side revitalised by their Autumn victory over Australia. "There is nothing to jump around about after this victory," said France captain Antoine Dupont. "We were too indisciplined, we gave away too many penalties. We know very well that at this level this is not acceptable and that we will have to rectify that quickly." Italy acquitted themselves well, with Ange Capuozzo's score before half-time, a penalty try and 12 points from Tommaso Allan ensuring the hosts put up a decent fight.

Les Bleus looked set for an easy victory after scoring three of their four tries within the first 26 minutes but the World Cup favorites did not have it all their own way. "What I do hope that comes out of this is that the team gets recognition for what they've done," said Italy coach Kieran Crowley. "They had an off day because our boys played bloody well. We lost because we didn't execute as well as we could have in the first 20 minutes, it's as simple as that."

Italy needed to keep things tight early on but that was the precise opposite of what they did. Stephen Varney's badly timed box kick was charged down by big second row Flament, who had the presence of mind to bring the ball under control before it hit the deck and strolled in under the posts for a try that Ramos



ROME: France's lock Thibaud Flament (top) grabs the ball during the Six Nations international rugby union match between Italy and France on February 5, 2023.— AFP

converted. Allan pulled points back for the hosts with a penalty but Italy almost handed France another try seconds later when Juan Ignacio Brex gave the ball away in his own 22, Charles Ollivon just failing to get the ball down.

However France were 12-3 ahead in the 19th minute, a lengthy TMO review eventually giving Ramos the try

after officials ruled Damian Penaud's challenge for the ball with Capuozzo legal. Allan kicked another penalty to half the hosts' deficit but France had a wonderful third try soon after, Romain Ntamack clipping a perfect kick over to the left flank where Lyon wing Dumortier, playing his first Test, burst in to dot down for a converted score.—AFP

ately set about the Zimbabwe attack with the run rate early on standing at five per over.

Brathwaite clattered his way to 182 and looked odds-on to score the second double-century of his Test career when he was trapped leg before by spinner Wellington Masakadza. For once the captain misread the length and tried to sweep a full-length delivery on off stump, ending an innings which spanned 312 balls and included 18 fours. It was a welcome return to form for Brathwaite, who made only 19 and three against Australia in his last Test, two months ago in Adelaide. It was small reward for the Zimbabwe bowlers who had toiled 114 overs before making the breakthrough.

And they were rewarded with a second wicket before lunch when Kyle Mayers was bowled through the gate by leg-spinner Brandon Mavuta for 20. The inexperienced Zimbabwe team, which includes five making their Test debuts, missed several catches which would have improved their position even further. Chanderpaul, son of former West Indies skipper Shivnarine, pressed on from his overnight 101 to reach 161 not out at the interval, like Brathwaite, picking up the tempo from a sluggish first two days. — AFP

## Brathwaite, Chanderpaul set a new Windies record

BULAWAYO: Kraigg Brathwaite and Tagenarine Chanderpaul set a new West Indies record of 336 for the first wicket on Monday as the tourists reached 374-2 by lunch on day three of the first Test against Zimbabwe. The stand surpassed the 298-run partnership shared by Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes against England in Antigua 33 years ago.

It is the ninth highest opening partnership in Test history, a long way short of the overall record of 415 added by South Africa's Graeme Smith and Neil McKenzie against Bangladesh in Chattogram in 2008. Both batsmen began the day at the Queens Sports Club with hundreds under their belts as West Indies resumed on 221 without loss after two rain-hit days. The scoring rate had been under two and half until that point but Brathwaite, 116 not out overnight, immedi-



RIJEKA: Austria's Lucas Miedler (left) looks on as teammate Alexander Erler serves against Croatia's Ivan Dodig and Nikola Pietrangeli during the Davis Cup Final qualifying match doubles tennis match between Croatia and Austria on February 5, 2023. — AFP

## Croatia book Davis Cup Finals; Finland, S Korea celebrate

PARIS: Two-time champions Croatia reached the Davis Cup Finals on Sunday where they were joined by unheralded South Korea and Finland. Croatia, the champions in 2005 and 2018, were 2-0 up on Austria in their qualifier in Rijeka overnight. Lucas Miedler and Alexander Erler then upset doubles specialists Nikola Pietrangeli and Ivan Dodig 6-3, 7-6 (13/11) to keep Austria in the tie.

However, world number 23 Borna Coric won his second singles rubber, seeing off former US Open champion Dominic Thiem 7-6 (7/3), 6-2 as Croatia joined the 16-nation group stage of the finals in September. "I was pretty nervous," said Coric. "But I came out on court and I was playing great tennis today." In arguably the performance of the qualifying round, South Korea overturned a 2-0 deficit to beat Belgium 3-2 in Seoul.

Hong Seong-chan, ranked 237 in the world, clinched the deciding point with a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) win over Zizou Bergs, ranked 122 places higher. "The players made history as a team. It's a dream to advance to the finals for two consecutive years," said South Korea captain Park Seung-kyu. Nam Ji-sung and Song Ming-kyu started the South Korean fightback with a 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5) doubles win against Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen. Kwon Soon-woo then stunned David Goffin 3-6, 6-1, 6-3 on the back of 11 aces to level the tie.

### 'Lost opportunities'

"We had opportunities in every match but time after time we didn't succeed," said Belgium captain Johan van Herck. Finland made the finals stage for the first time with a 3-1 win over 2016 champions Argentina in Espoo. Emil Ruusuvuori won all three rubbers he played. On Sunday, he teamed with Harri Heliövaara for a 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-4 win over Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni.

The 23-year-old then fittingly secured the winning point by seeing off Facundo Bagnis 7-5, 6-1. "It's an incredible feeling to play this kind of tennis in front of the home crowd," said world number 43 Ruusuvuori. Three-time winners Czech Republic beat Portugal with impressive 21-year-old Jiri Lehecka sealing victory with his second singles success of the weekend, a 6-4, 6-1 triumph over veteran Joao Sousa in Maia. The Netherlands defeated Slovakia in Groningen with Tallon Griekspoor and Tim van Rijthoven seeing off Alex Molcan and Lukas Klein 6-3, 6-3.

Chile downed Kazakhstan 3-1 at home to also make the last 16. On Saturday, 37-year-old Stan Wawrinka, making his first appearance in the Davis Cup since 2015, won the deciding rubber as Switzerland defeated Germany. Also making it through were 10-time winners France, Serbia, Britain, Sweden and the United States. The weekend's 12 winners all go through to the group finals in September where they will be joined by 2022 champions Canada, runners-up Australia and wild cards Spain and Italy. The top eight then progress to the Davis Cup Finals knockout week in Malaga in November. Meanwhile, in the World Group One play-offs, world number three Stefanos Tsitsipas, the highest-ranked player in action this weekend, helped Greece to victory over Ecuador. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Brignone tops super-G

MERIBEL: Mikaela Shiffrin was perfectly poised to bag her seventh world gold medal after finishing sixth in the opening super-G of the women's alpine combined in Meribel on Monday. Shiffrin was 0.96 seconds off the lead time set by Italy's Federica Brignone, who will be gunning for a podium finish to follow up on her Olympic bronze in the same discipline. Having won five slaloms this season in her charge on Ingemar Stenmark's record for overall World Cup victories, Shiffrin will be confident going into the technical second run, scheduled for 1330 GMT on the same Roc de Fer piste. Joint second fastest in the super-G, raced in sunny, cold conditions, was Switzerland's Lara Gut-Behrami, who announced her arrival to the elite ski circuit as a precocious teenager when the worlds were last held in France, in Val d'Isere in 2009. Norway's Ragnhild Mowinckel matched Gut-Behrami's time, at 0.71sec, while another Italian, Elena Curtoni, was fourth (+0.78), just ahead of Austrian Ramona Siebenhofer and Shiffrin.

#### HK to host first golf event

HONG KONG: Hong Kong (HK) will next month host its first international golf tournament in more than three years, organisers said on Monday, following a relaxation in COVID entry rules. Hong Kong Golf Club at Fanling will stage the \$1 million World City Championship on March 23-26. It will be the seventh leg of the Asian Tour this year, the regional tour said. The southern Chinese city's last international golf tournament was the Hong Kong Open in January 2020. Soon after that, Hong Kong imposed a series of strict rules to thwart the coronavirus. Most restrictions have since been removed. "We're all excited to be able to return to Hong Kong and the iconic Hong Kong Golf Club, one of the world's most historic golfing establishments and a perennial favourite among Asian Tour members," said Cho Minn Thant, the tour's commissioner and chief executive.

#### Parks wins WTA title

LYON: Alycia Parks stunned world number five Caroline Garcia to win her maiden WTA title in Lyon on Sunday, crediting her breakthrough on eating the same food every day. The 22-year-old American, who came into the week at 79 in the rankings, claimed a 7-6 (9/7), 7-5 win over her French opponent after more than two hours on court. "The key to a successful week for me was keeping the same routine," said Parks after the final. "I wake up around the same time every morning, and eat the same breakfast, same dinner. Basically just doing the same routine, try to make it a habit if it's working." Hometown star Garcia had been seeking a 12th career title but eventually wilted under a barrage of power hitting by Parks who unleashed 15 aces in her total of 28 winners. "It feels amazing to hold my first WTA tour-level championship trophy," Parks said. "Words can't explain. Just last year, I was in an ITF Challenger \$60,000 final, and now I have won a WTA 250."

#### LIV rebels set for legal case

LONDON: The latest battle in golf's civil war will take place off the course this week as an arbitration panel meets in London to decide whether the LIV Golf rebels are able to continue playing on the DP World Tour. A total of 13 players are seeking clarity on their ability to participate in future events. The case arose when players requested releases from the DP World Tour in order to play the inaugural LIV Golf event in Hemel Hempstead last June. Those requests were denied but the players competed in LIV's lift-off event regardless. The DP World Tour retaliated with £100,000 (\$121,000) fines and bans from the Scottish Open. But an appeal from Ian Poulter, Adrian Otaegui and Justin Harding saw the punishments suspended pending a substantive appeal. That allowed LIV players to continue playing on the DP World Tour, with Otaegui winning the Andalucia Masters in October. They have since been joined by Lee Westwood, Sam Horsfield, Richard Bland, Shaun Norris, Laurie Canter, Wade Ormsby, Patrick Reed, Bernd Wiesberger, Graeme McDowell and Martin Kaymer.

#### Gavins wins 2nd Tour title

RAS AL-KHAIMAH: Daniel Gavins claimed his second European Tour title on Sunday with a one-shot victory at the Ras Al Khaimah Championship despite twice finding water on the final hole. The 31-year-old held a two-shot lead as he headed to the 18th tee but then had to perform a damage limitation operation after two wayward approaches. However, with nearest challenger Alexander Bjork finishing his round with a bogey up ahead, Gavins had a double-bogey putt from around 30 feet to set the new target at 17 under par. He duly holed it despite two dropped shots to add the UAE title to his 2021 victory at the Handa World Invitational. "I feel speechless, to be honest. I just want to quickly thank my mum and dad - I forgot to thank them last time when I won," said Gavins after a closing round of 69. "They've been great for me and they've supported me throughout my career, so massive thanks to those two, and especially my girlfriend as well." — From AFP



Poland's Iga Swiatek

## Swiatek dominates unchanged top 20

PARIS: Iga Swiatek continued to dominate the WTA rankings on Monday, still over 4,000 points clear of Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka in an unchanged top 20. Swiatek, who has been No1 since April 4 last year, has not competed since losing to 10th-ranked Elena Rybakina in the last 16 of the Australian Open. The 21-year-old Pole is due on court again in Qatar next week. Caroline Garcia missed the chance to leapfrog Jessica Pegula into fourth spot when she lost to Alycia Parks in the final in Lyon on Sunday. The American Parks is the one of two notable rises in the top 100, climbing 28 places to 51st. The other is Chinese player Zhu Lin, whose victory in the final in Thailand lifts her 13 places to 41st.

WTA rankings (players representing Russia and Belarus are banned from competing under the name or flag of their countries): (1) Iga Swiatek (POL) 10485 pts; (2) Aryna Sabalenka 6100 (3); Ons Jabeur (TUN) 5210; (4) Jessica Pegula (USA) 5000; (5) Caroline Garcia (FRA) 4795; (6) Coco Gauff (USA) 3992; (7) Maria Sakkari (GRE) 3811; (8) Daria Kasatkina 3380; (9) Belinda Bencic (SUI) 2905; (10) Elena Rybakina (KAZ) 2815; (11) Veronika Kudermetova 2740; (12) Jelena Ostapenko (LAT) 2340; (13) Petra Kvitova (CZE) 2281; (14) Beatriz Haddad Maia (BRA) 2195; (15) Simona Halep (ROM) 2141; (16) Victoria Azarenka 2138; (17) Ekaterina Alexandrova 2030; (18) Anett Kontaveit (EST) 1909; (19) Liudmila Samsonova 1905; (20) Karolina Pliskova (CZE) 1880.

#### Zverev slips 2 places

Meanwhile, Alexander Zverev slipped two places to 16th in the new ATP rankings released on Monday while Novak Djokovic edged closer to Steffi Graf's all-time record for most weeks at number one. The 25-year-old Zverev was ranked second at the end of August but is still on the comeback trail after tearing ankle ligaments during last year's French Open which kept him out of action for the remainder of the year.

He was a second round loser at the Australian Open after which he revealed that he had had type 1 diabetes since he was three. Last week, Zverev was told he would face no disciplinary action from the ATP after an independent investigation found "insufficient evidence" to substantiate allegations of domestic abuse. He beat Stan Wawrinka in the Davis Cup on Friday but could not prevent his Germany team losing to Switzerland. Frances Tiafoe and Pablo Carreno Busta both move up a place to 14th and 15th respectively. Djokovic, who sat out Serbia's Davis Cup win over Norway, will spend his 375th week at the top of the pile.

Graf holds the record with 377 weeks as world number one in the women's game. ATP rankings (players representing Russia and Belarus are banned from competing under the name or flag of their countries): (1) Novak Djokovic (SRB) 7070 pts; (2) Carlos Alcaraz (ESP) 6730; (3) Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE) 6195; (4) Casper Ruud (NOR) 5765; (5) Andrey Rublev 4200; (6) Rafael Nadal (ESP) 3815; (7) Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN) 3715; (8) Taylor Fritz (USA) 3410; (9) Holger Rune (DEN) 3046; (10) Hubert Hurkacz (POL) 2995; (11) Cameron Norrie (GBR) 2760; (12) Daniil Medvedev 2750; (13) Karen Khachanov 2515; (14) Frances Tiafoe (USA) 2305 (+1); (15) Pablo Carreno Busta (ESP) 2285 (+1); (16) Alexander Zverev (GER) 2275 (-2); (17) Jannik Sinner (ITA) 2195; (18) Lorenzo Musetti (ITA) 1900; (19) Tommy Paul (USA) 1835; (20) Nick Kyrgios (AUS) 1825.— AFP

## Sports

# Martinez shoots Inter to Milan derby glory; AC Milan crumble

## Napoli maintain huge lead

**MILAN:** Lautaro Martinez shot Inter Milan to a 1-0 derby triumph over crumbling champions AC Milan on Sunday but his team stayed 13 points behind Serie A leaders Napoli who strolled to a 3-0 win at Spezia. Argentina forward Martinez headed home his 12th league goal of the season in the 34th minute at the San Siro to make sure that Inter remained in second place and plunge their local rivals even deeper into crisis.

Martinez has been given the Inter captaincy as Milan Skriniar wants to leave for Paris Saint-Germain as a free agent in the summer and "wearing the armband makes me very proud," he told DAZN. "Ever since coming to Inter, I have tried to give my best, and this is a special game. We did it again."

A third straight league defeat leaves Milan in sixth and in a downward spiral that threatens to completely ruin a season which less than a month ago looked to be going more or less according to plan. Stefano Pioli's side have earned just five points from their six league matches since the World Cup and have also been knocked out of the Italian Cup and beaten by Inter in the Super Cup. Milan have to take on Tottenham Hotspur in their first Champions League last-16 tie since 2014 in less than 10 days.

Having already been thumped twice by Chelsea this season their chances of advancing in Europe also look slim. They didn't have a single shot on target in an underwhelming derby which was largely dominated by Inter, the nominal hosts on Sunday night, having changed formation and dropped Rafael Leao in order to stop conceding goals. "We have been very solid at the back in recent weeks but we didn't want to play defensive football. That was our mistake," said Pioli. "If we'd tried to play our true football

we'd have only been in more difficulty."

Martinez could easily have had more than just the one goal which took his calendar year tally in all competitions to seven as he forced two smart saves from Ciprian Tatarusanu and headed a Milan Skriniar cross just wide before he opened the scoring. He also had a late goal ruled offside by the tiniest margin, his forehead just beyond the defenders before he poked under Tatarusanu, but it made no difference to a curiously comfortable derby win.

### Osimhen strikes twice

Victor Osimhen and Khvicha Kvaratskhelia were again the stars of the show for Napoli as they came through at Spezia to briefly extend their advantage to 16 points. Wing wizard Kvaratskhelia put Napoli ahead from the penalty spot two minutes after the break on the Italian Riviera before Osimhen netted twice, taking his league tally to 16.

Nigeria forward Osimhen pounced on a defensive error to double Napoli's lead in the 68th minute and five minutes later rolled home an easy finish after Mattia Caldara passed straight to Kvaratskhelia on the edge of his own area. "All the victories are important, we need to keep the momentum and try to win all games," said Osimhen to Sky in Italy. "It is not going to be easy of course, Serie A is a very competitive league and we have to be on top of our game. We go back, we prepare for the next game, that is the most important thing."

Osimhen ended the day on top of the world after beginning it by going into the stands at the Stadio Picco to apologize to a woman fan who he hit with an off-target pre-match practice shot. The 23-year-old hugged the woman and posed for selfies before going on to continue Napoli's



**MILAN:** Inter Milan's Argentine forward Lautaro Martinez works around AC Milan's Danish defender Simon Kjær (left) during the Italian Serie A football match between Inter and AC Milan on February 5, 2023. —AFP

unstoppable looking title charge. "I think she was looking at her phone, the ball hit her in the face and I felt so sorry, as I didn't mean to do that," added Osimhen. "I had to

show my appreciation and say sorry for that." Spezia stay 17th, five points above Verona who are just inside the relegation zone and host Lazio on Monday. —AFP



## Kimi Antonelli retains Giti-Powered Formula Championship lead

**KUWAIT:** The debut Formula Regional Middle East Championship Certified by FIA (FRMEC) at 8000-seat Kuwait Motor Town was a festival of exciting events. Dino Beganovic, Taylor Barnard and Sami Meguetounif emerged as the winners of the three races held in the Kuwait Motor Town. Yet, just as he did after the opening round at Dubai Autodrome, Andrea Kimi Antonelli came away as the series leader, despite not yet having won a race.

The new \$162 million Kuwait Motor Town facility welcomed all teams and drivers, providing a fascinating circuit. However, 19-year-old Swede Dino Beganovic would not have predicted that he would take the lead in the opening race in Kuwait just after the first few corners, having started ninth on the grid.

Once in front, he wasn't about to give up his advantage and, following a red flag due to a first-corner pile-up, he stayed ahead of Mercedes F1 protege and Mumbai Falcons Racing team-mate, Andrea Kimi Antonelli, all the way to the finish. Taylor Barnard finished third, but a penalty for the Briton for being adjudged to be one of the

drivers at fault for the first-lap accident promoted PHM Racing teammate Dufek to the final podium.

Race 2 continued with more unpredictable drama. From the reversed grid, Rafael Villagomez was the initial leader, but lost it to Nikhil Bohra who then had a turn in front in between the early safety-car interludes. But finally, it was the unstoppable Swiss, Dufek, who came through with an apparent victory. However, it was Barnard who remarkably climbed from 14th on the grid to slip past the R-ace GP car of Indian-American Bohra to complete a PHM 1-2. Barnard claimed his victory from Bohra and Rafael Camara, while this time, Antonelli was sidelined with broken suspension and Beganovic finished outside the points after a pit stop for a new front wing. France's Sami Meguetounif led all the way from pole position in the final race - reward at last for the Hyderabad Blackbirds with MP Motorsport team. The 18-year-old initially led teammate Joshua Durksen, before Antonelli came charging through into second. Antonelli closed the gap to the leader, but had to make do with Rookie Cup honors once again as Meguetounif stayed firm in front. Beganovic finished fifth, which means he is second in the championship, just 12 points adrift of Antonelli, with Barnard in third and 19 points off the summit.

Round 3 races 7 to 9 at the Kuwait Motor Town are scheduled to be held from January 31 2023 to February 01 2023. Giti is excited to support the debut Formula Regional Middle East Championship in Kuwait. These dynamic races put the Giti tires to the test and come out high performing



in the hot and sandy roads in Kuwait and elsewhere in the GCC where the temperature touches 50+ in summer, ringing true with a comment from Giti Tire's Executive Director, International Sales & Marketing, Chris Bloor, about how the Formula Regional Middle East Championship "really rounds up the focus on results and performance both on the track and in drivers' daily neighborhoods".

### About Giti Tire

Giti Tire is one of the largest tire companies in the world in terms of both volume and revenue. The global tire manufacturer has a broad brand portfolio including Giti, GT Radial, Runway and Dextero and offers a complete product range including tires for passenger cars, SUVs, vans, light trucks (PCR) and for heavy trucks and buses (TBR) to cater to the needs and demands of various global markets in the Middle East, Africa, Europe, United States, Canada, Latin America and Asia.

Giti Tire is focused on building sustainable partnerships with distributors, retailers, truck and bus fleets, vehicle manufacturers and other leading industry companies and organizations to provide high-quality products with excellent service. Founded in 1993 and headquartered in Singapore, the company has grown to over 30,000 global employees with more than 70,000 Points of sales in more than 130 countries. In Kuwait, Giti tires are distributed and retailed by AlMaim Tires, the leading automotive products company in the country.

## Knicks and Raptors rally for NBA wins

**LOS ANGELES:** The New York Knicks climbed out of a 21-point hole to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 108-97 on Sunday as the Toronto Raptors authored another NBA comeback win and the depleted Denver Nuggets fell. Evan Fournier scored nine of his 17 points in the fourth quarter for the Knicks as New York's reserves played a key role in the team's biggest comeback win of the season.

Julius Randle led the Knicks with 24 points and Jalen Brunson added 21, but with ailing RJ Barrett a late scratch the bench contributed 37 points and the Knicks bounced back from a crushing overtime loss to the Clippers on Saturday. Sixer big man Joel Embiid was his usual dominant self, his 31 points including 18 from the free-throw line.

Philadelphia led by 21 in the first quarter, but the Knicks had cut that deficit to two points at halftime and after briefly taking the lead were down by three going into the fourth. New York surged in the final period. Their 10-0 run capped by Fournier's three-pointer put them up by four and they wouldn't trail again. It was an eye-catching performance for France's Fournier, who was bumped to the bench this season and has been at the center of trade speculation with the deadline looming next week.

Although the 76ers' second unit struggled, coach Doc Rivers said that wasn't the reason for the defeat. "We were just not emotionally strong tonight - mentally," Rivers said. "I thought they were the mentally tougher team and they deserved to win." The Raptors also staged an impressive comeback, erasing a 15-point third-quarter deficit to beat the Grizzlies 106-103 in Memphis. Pascal Siakam scored 19 points and drained a pair of clutch free throws that capped the scoring with 9.1 seconds remaining.

Memphis' Jaren Jackson Jr missed a potential game-tying pointer with 5.2 seconds left and the Grizzlies, whose star Ja Morant was sidelined with a sore right wrist, dropped their third straight. In his absence, Desmond Bane led Memphis with 26 points and Jackson added 18. But they had no answer when 21-year-old Raptors forward Scottie Barnes came alive in the fourth quarter. Barnes scored 13 of his 16 points in the final frame - including a slashing go-ahead basket with 20.7 seconds to play.

In Minneapolis, the Minnesota Timberwolves had little trouble on the way to a 128-98 victory over the Western Conference-leading Nuggets, who were without reigning two-time Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic and three other regular starters on the second night of a back-to-back. Anthony Edwards led the Timberwolves with 20 points. D'Angelo Russell scored 18 and French center Rudy Gobert and reserve Jaylen Nowell scored 16 apiece in the wire-to-wire win. —AFP



**NEW YORK:** James Harden #1 of the Philadelphia 76ers passes under pressure from Evan Fournier #13 and Isaiah Hartenstein #55 of the New York Knicks in the fourth quarter at Madison Square Garden on February 05, 2023. —AFP

## City charged by Premier League over 'breaches'

**LONDON:** Manchester City have been referred to an independent commission by the Premier League over alleged breaches of its financial rules, the English top flight announced on Monday. The alleged breaches span a period from the 2009/10 season to the 2017/18 campaign. City were banned from UEFA competitions in February 2020 for two years by European football's governing body for "serious financial fair-play breaches" but the sanction was overturned by the Court of Arbitration for Sport in July of the same year. The defending Premier League champions are alleged to have breached league rules requiring provision "in utmost good faith" of "accurate financial information that gives a true and fair view of the club's financial position". The Premier League said the accurate financial information required related to "revenue (including sponsorship revenue), its related parties and its operating costs". The second set of breaches listed refers to alleged breaking of rules "requiring a member club to include full details of manager remuneration in its relevant contracts with its manager" related to seasons 2009/10 to 2012/13 inclusive.

The club's manager between December 2009 and May 2013 was current Italy boss Roberto Mancini. The second set of alleged breaches also refers to requirements for a club to "include full details of player remuneration within the relevant contracts". The third section deals with alleged breaches of Premier League rules requiring clubs to comply with UEFA Financial Fair Play regulations while the fourth set of alleged breaches relates to the Premier League's profitability and sustainability rules.

### Cooperation

Finally, the club are alleged to have breached league rules requiring member clubs to cooperate with and assist the Premier League with its investigations, from December 2018 to date. The Premier League said in a statement said the commission would be "independent of the Premier League and member clubs". "The proceedings before the commission will... be confidential and heard in private", it said, adding that there would be no further comment "until further notice".

Last season City won their sixth Premier League title since the 2008 takeover by Sheikh Mansour's Abu Dhabi United Group - extending their dominance of English football-but have yet to win the Champions League. Pep Guardiola's men are second in the table this season, five points behind leaders Arsenal after a 1-0 defeat at Tottenham on Sunday. City, crowned club of the year at the 2022 Ballon d'Or ceremony, in November reported record club revenues of £613 million (\$737 million) and a profit of £41.7 million for the 2021/22 season. —AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

#### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010

Adan Hospital  
Ibn Sina Hospital  
Al-Razi Hospital  
Physiotherapy Hospital

23940620  
24840300  
24846000  
24874330/9

#### Clinics

Kaizen center  
Rawda

25716707  
22517733

Adaliya  
Khaldiya  
Kaifan  
Shamiya  
Shuwaikh  
Abdullah Salem  
Nuzha  
Industrial Shuwaikh  
Qadsiya

22517144  
24848075  
24849807  
24848913  
24814507  
22549134  
22526804  
24814764  
22515088

Dasmah  
Bneid Al-Gar  
Shaab  
Qibla  
Ayoun Al-Qibla  
Mirqab  
Sharq  
Salmiya

22532265  
22531908  
22518752  
22459381  
22451082  
22456536  
22465401  
25746401

### Change of Name

I, Abbas S/o Kutubuddin Gabu Holder of Indian Passport No. L1163061, here by declare that I have changed my name from Abbas to ABBAS GABU as per my Government Documents (Aadhar Card). So now I would be known & recognized by my new name only, ABBAS GABU, Address: 158, Chandni Chowk Ratlam (M.P.) (C #2848) - 6-02-2023

## Arabi lift Crown Prince Cup



KUWAIT: (Left) HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hands the Crown Prince Cup to Al-Arabi Sports Club Chairman Abdulaziz Ashour after the team beat Salmiya SC at Jaber International Stadium on Feb 6, 2023. (Right) Al-Arabi players celebrate with the cup. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Holders Al-Arabi Club won the 30th edition of the Crown Prince Cup for the 9th time in their history by defeating Salmiya 4-1 on penalties in the final of the 2022-2023 season at Jaber International

Stadium, after the match ended in a 2-2 draw. Salmiya opened the scoring in the 27th minute by a Carlos Rivas goal and maintained the lead due to the heroics of goalkeeper Ahmad Aadi. But he could not keep out

Arabi's equalizer in the 88th minute by Jumaa Aboud.

Salmiya went ahead again in extra time in the 100th minute through Fahad Marzouq, but Arabi equalized through Al-Senussi Al-Hadi six minutes later. The match

then went into penalty shootouts, which Arabi won 4-1 to equal the number of times they have won the cup with Qadisiya and Kuwait SC. Salmiya have won the cup twice and Kazma once.

## Kane ruins Man City's title bid

LONDON: Pep Guardiola admitted Manchester City's Premier League title defense had suffered a major blow after Harry Kane's record-breaking goal gave Tottenham a 1-0 win over the champions on Sunday. Guardiola's side would have moved within two points of leaders Arsenal with a victory in north London, but Kane's first-half strike - which made him Tottenham's all-time leading scorer on 267 goals - left the Gunners firmly in control of the title race.

Second-placed City are five points behind Arsenal, who have a game in hand and host Guardiola's men on February 15. That will be a must-win clash for City if they are to have any hope of overhauling Mikel Arteta's team, who had slipped up themselves on Saturday when struggling Everton snatched a shock 1-0 win against the Gunners. Asked how frustrating it was to miss the chance to close the gap on Arsenal, Guardiola said: "Yes, of course, Arsenal have dropped few, few points so far and of course there was an opportunity.

"It was important to be close to Arsenal and leave the fifth place in the table, that Tottenham is right now, far away. "We are not in the position to think about being champions." Tottenham's plush new stadium has been a house of horrors for City since it opened in 2019. They have lost on all five of their visits and are yet to score a single goal there. After dominating possession in the early stages, City faded badly after Kane's history-making goal.

With Kevin De Bruyne left on the bench for the first hour and Phil Foden absent from the squad due to illness, City lacked the creative quality to supply Erling Haaland with the kind of chance that Kane buried. Haaland, well marshalled by Cristian Romero before the Tottenham defender's late red card, failed to have a single attempt on goal for the first time since his move from Borussia Dortmund last season. It was a worrying sight for Guardiola, who faced criticism for leaving out Belgium playmaker De

Bruyne for what he called "tactical" reasons.

### 'We are not the same'

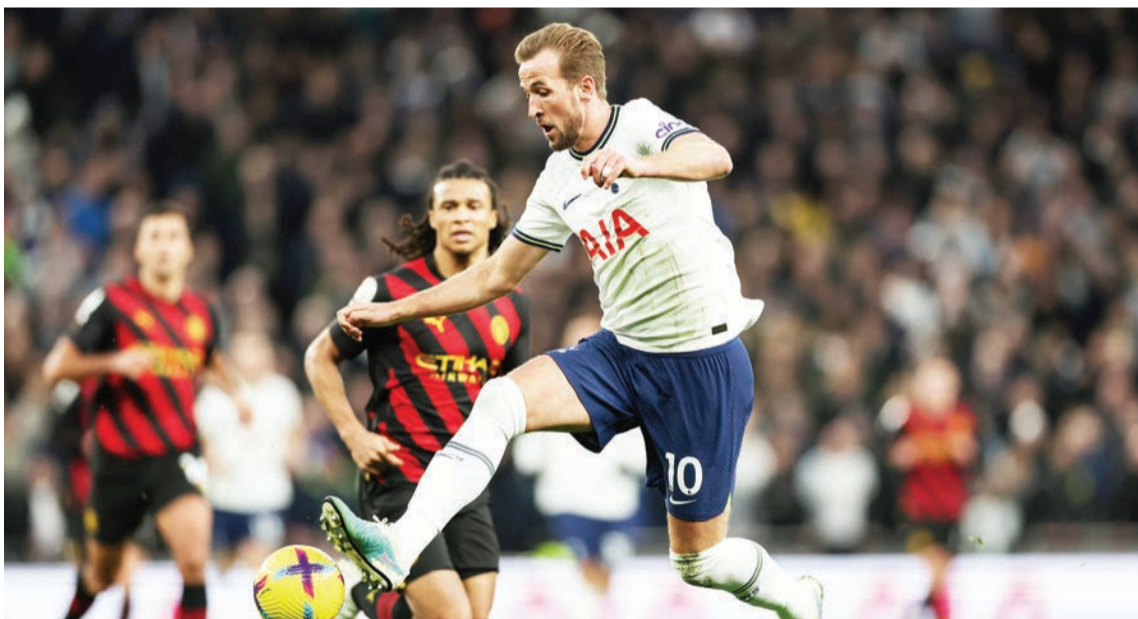
With Joao Cancelo surprisingly allowed to join Bayern Munich on loan last week, Guardiola once again used teenager Rico Lewis at left-back. Lewis has vast potential but his lack of experience in the role perfected by Cancelo as a defender with the licence to roam into midfield was apparent as Tottenham bypassed him with ease. City's third successive away defeat also raised questions about Guardiola's faith in the underwhelming Jack Grealish and centre-backs Manuel Akanji and Nathan Ake - neither able to replicate the formidable presence provided by Ruben Dias and Aymeric Laporte, who were both among the unused substitutes.

Guardiola conceded his team's latest inconsistent display was part of a worrying pattern City have been unable to stem throughout a campaign that threatens to fizzle out. "Of course I have a lot of gratitude for these players. Always I try to do my best, I don't want to drop much but I knew it," he said. "I said many times I knew we are not the same after winning a lot. Me included, I am the first to talk about that. "It doesn't matter what happened in the past or the success we had. No, we have to try to do it again. Now we are sad, tomorrow we will reflect."

After winning four titles in the last five seasons, City look more vulnerable than at any time in Guardiola's reign. With their long-time rivals Liverpool languishing in 10th place, a changing of the guard in the Premier League could be looming. Quizzed on his ability to battle with City and Liverpool for the major prizes when he was hired as Manchester United boss, Erik ten Hag suggested a shift in the balance of power was possible. "I admire them both. They play fantastic football. Eras come to an end," Ten Hag said. Guardiola will hope Ten Hag's bold prediction is not about to come true.

### Relegation fight

Leeds boss Jesse Marsch admitted time is running out for him to avoid the "stress" of a relegation battle after a 1-0 defeat to Nottingham Forest on Sunday. Marsch's men have not won in the league since November and sit outside the drop zone only



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane controls the ball during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, on February 5, 2023. — AFP

on goal difference. Brennan Johnson's stunning strike earned Forest victory as they moved six points clear of the bottom three in 13th. Not for the first time in recent weeks, Leeds dominated the majority of the game after falling behind early on.

But they could not find a way past the inspired Keylor Navas on his Forest debut. "It is my responsibility and I understand their frustration and I accept it," said Marsch of calls for him to go by some section of the Leeds support. "I have to find a way to turn a lot of the good things that are happening into results or we find ourselves in a stressful situation."

The arrival of Navas on loan from Paris Saint-Germain, alongside Jonjo Shelvey, Felipe and Andre Ayew this week took Forest's total of new signings this season to a remarkable 30. However, it is a player born and raised in Nottingham that is edging the two-time European champions towards survival

on their first season back in the top flight since 1998/99. Johnson scored twice in the 2-0 win over Leicester in Forest's previous Premier League game at the City Ground. The Welsh international crashed home a volley from outside the box for the decisive goal after just 14 minutes.

Navas then took centre stage as the former Real Madrid goalkeeper stood tall to deny Luke Ayling and Wilfried Gnonto an equaliser, while Luis Sinisterra also blazed a glorious chance over for the visitors. "You don't need me to tell you about his experience and about the success he has had in his career," said Forest manager Steve Cooper. "Brilliant in the first half, outstanding and composed. The obvious talking points are the saves, and rightly so, he deserves all the credit for that, but I loved his composure and game management and decision making. I really enjoyed that part of his performance." — AFP

## 10-man Bayern go top despite Neuer row

WOLFSBURG: A stunning solo goal from Bayern Munich teenager Jamal Musiala sealed a controversial 4-2 away win at Wolfsburg on Sunday, sending the visitors back to the top of the table. The win, Bayern's first league victory in 2023, was marred by a late VAR decision to chalk off a Wolfsburg goal, which would have made the score 4-3 with seven minutes plus stoppage time remaining.

Bayern went into the game just hours after sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic said he was "disappointed" with injured captain Manuel Neuer for putting "his personal interests above" the club. Neuer,

who is currently out injured with a broken leg from a skiing accident in December, criticised the club's decision to fire long-time goalkeeping coach Toni Tapalovic, saying he felt "as if my heart had been ripped out".

Speaking with German tabloid Bild, Salihamidzic said: "I understand Manuel is affected personally, but as captain I would have expected a different attitude from him." On the pitch, Bayern played the majority of the second half with 10 men after midfielder Joshua Kimmich picked up a second yellow card. Bayern struck in the ninth minute through France forward Kingsley Coman, whose curling cross evaded a leaping Thomas Mueller but drifted past goalkeeper Koen Casteels and into the net. Coman added another just five minutes later, hammering a floating Joao Cancelo ball past a helpless Casteels.

Coman then won a free-kick just outside the Wolfsburg box and Mueller

headed in Kimmich's delivery to make it 3-0 with less than 20 minutes gone. The goal, Mueller's first since September, came on his 427th league appearance for Bayern, equalling Gerd Mueller's all-time record. Wolfsburg manager Niko Kovac, who won the league and cup double with Bayern, took off centre-back Maxence Lacroix for winger Jakub Kaminski after just 30 minutes.

The change had an almost immediate impact, with the Polish international scoring late in the first half to give the home side hope. Kimmich picked up a second yellow for a foul on Wolfsburg's Max Arnold 10 minutes into the second half, prompting Julian Nagelsmann to make three changes. Wolfsburg went on the attack immediately and should have had a second when Kaminski found an unmarked Ridle Baku in the box, but the midfielder headed the ball directly at Bayern 'keeper Yann Sommer. — AFP



WOLFSBURG: Bayern Munich's German midfielder Jamal Musiala (2nd right) shoots to score his team's third goal during the German first division Bundesliga football match between VfL Wolfsburg and FC Bayern Munich on February 5, 2023. — AFP