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### NOTICE TO OUR READERS

Happy National and Liberation Days to all our readers! Kuwait Times will not publish its print edition on February 26 and 27, 2023. Readers can stay informed with breaking news and information via [Kuwaittimes.com](http://Kuwaittimes.com) and our digital media channels on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok.



# Kuwait, US and UK forces hold 'Liberation 2023' military drill

Embassies, consulates light up; Saudi Hawks to celebrate National days with airshow



KUWAIT: Kuwait buildings are illuminated in the colors of the national flag as the country prepares to celebrate its 62nd National Day and the 32nd anniversary of the end of Gulf war with the liberation of Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: The joint military drill (the Liberation 2023) among Kuwait land forces, the US Spartan force and the Queen's Dragoon Guards (QDG) ended on Thursday. The drill began on February 19 in the northern military base of Adare'e. In a statement, Kuwait's General Staff of the Armed Forces said the drill is aimed at developing the joint planning, unifying concepts and achieving openness to raise combat readiness and the training level in order to enhance joint military cooperation between the Kuwaiti armed forces, and friendly American and British forces.

UK Ambassador Belinda Lewis and Charge' d'affaires of the US Embassy Jim Holtsnider as well as a number of senior officers of Kuwait's army were present. Also, the Royal Saudi Air Force Aerobatics Team 'Saudi Hawks' arrived in Kuwait on Thursday. The team prepares to perform airshows near Kuwait Towers on February 25-26 at 4:00 pm in celebration of Kuwait's national holidays.

In another development, Kuwait's embassies and consulates all over the globe lit up with celebrations marking the 62nd National day and 32nd Liberation day. The ambassadors all extended their congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and wished their country growing progress and prosperity, and everlasting stability and security.

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## MP proposes up to KD 700 monthly pay for Kuwaiti wives

By B Izzak, Agencies

KUWAIT: MP Majed Al-Mutairi proposed a monthly salary for stay-at-home wives that varies - depending on the person's academic degree. The proposal stipulates paying married non-working Kuwaiti women a monthly financial assistance of KD 700 for holders of a Master's degree (or higher), KD 600 for university Bachelor's degree or Diploma holders, KD 550 for high school degree holders and KD 500 for certificate holders of an intermediate school or below. In order to be entitled to receive the pay, the woman must still be married and must have no personal source of income, according to the proposal.

In another development, MP Obaid Al-Wasmi on Thursday sent a series of questions to Justice Minister Abdulaziz Al-Majed requesting details about allegations of violations that took place during the September 29 parliamentary election in which the opposition scored a landslide victory. Wasmi is not a member of the opposition and was a supporter of the Cabinet headed by former prime minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

In his questions, Wasmi demanded to know if state-run Kuwait TV announced the results of certain election centers in the third constituency even before counting of votes had started and what was the agency authorized to

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## Violence flares around Gaza

GAZA: Zionists and militants traded air strikes and rocket fire in and around Gaza on Thursday, a day after the deadliest Zionist army raid in the occupied West Bank in nearly 20 years. Eleven Palestinians, including a 16-year-old, were killed and more than 80 wounded by gunfire on Wednesday, the Palestinian health ministry said, when troops raided the flashpoint West Bank city of Nablus, drawing international appeals for calm.

The Zionist army said it was targeting suspected militants. Top Palestinian official Hussein Al Sheikh described the raid as a "massacre" and called for

"international protection for our people". Before dawn on Thursday Palestinian militants hit back, firing six rockets into Zionist entity. The army said it intercepted five of them and that the sixth struck an uninhabited area. Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the rockets after it called on "resistance forces" to respond to the "major crime" in Nablus.

The group said one of its commanders was killed in the West Bank raid. Two hours later, the Zionist military launched air strikes on multiple targets in Gaza, sending plumes of black smoke into the sky. The missiles targeted "a weapons factory" and a "military camp", both run by Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas, the army said in

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GAZA: Palestinian youths burn tires during a protest near the Gaza border east of Jabalia refugee camp, on February 23, 2023. — AFP

## EU bans TikTok on official devices

BRUSSELS: The European Commission on Thursday banned TikTok on official devices used by staff amid

concerns over data protection as the EU seeks to bolster its cybersecurity. TikTok, whose parent company ByteDance is Chinese, has faced increasing Western scrutiny in recent months over fears about how much access Beijing has to user data.

The new ban also means European Commission staff cannot use the video-sharing app on personal

devices including phones that have official EU communication apps installed. Employees must remove the app as soon as possible and should do so by March 15. EU spokeswoman Sonya Gospodinova said the corporate management board of the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, had made the decision for security reasons.

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## Powerful winter storms pound US

LOS ANGELES: Powerful winter storms lashed the United States on Wednesday, with heavy snow snarling travel across wide areas, even as unusual warmth was expected in others. Blizzards forecast to dump up to two feet (60 centimeters) of snow swept across a vast band of the country from the West Coast to the Great Lakes, grounding flights and knocking out power to tens of thousands.

Warnings of heavy snowfall were even issued for

usually sunny areas near Los Angeles, as well as for more typical winter weather spots in the far north. Forecasters with the National Weather Service said two rounds of snow would wallop parts of Minnesota in a "historic winter storm (that) will likely lead to impossible travel."

"Heavy snow will combine with northeast wind gusts of 35 to 45 mph (55 to 70 kph)... This will lead to significant blowing and drifting snow with white-out conditions in open areas. Some drifts may be several feet deep," a warning said. "If you must travel, keep an extra flashlight, food, and water in your vehicle in case of an emergency. Travel should be restricted to emergencies only."

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UTAH: A person sleds down a hill after heavy snow in Provo, Utah. Powerful winter storms lashed the United States, with heavy snow snarling travel across wide areas. — AFP



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# Kuwait flags and kites adorn sky



KUWAIT: Kuwait's national flags and kites in multiple colors adorned the country's sky on Thursday on the eve of National and Liberation days. Hundreds of people joined a kite-flying event which was organized by the Al-Farsi Kite Team of the Voluntary Work Center. The event also brought together several enthusiastic kite-flyers. —KUNA

# Al-Majed calls on law students to become public prosecutors

## Kuwait International Law Society concludes moot court competition



KUWAIT: Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Majed (right) and Vice President of the Kuwait International Law Society Fadia Al-Rifai pose for a picture.

KUWAIT: Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdulaziz Al-Majed affirmed in a statement to an Arabic newspaper on Wednesday his pride in the exemplary activities of law students, expressing his joy at seeing a group of creative young men and women. Addressing the closing ceremony of the 'Moot Court' competition of the Kuwait International Law Society on Thursday evening at the Institute of Judicial Studies theater, Al-Majed called on those who wish to work as a public prosecutors to apply within the prescribed time in accordance with rules and regulations stipulated in the employment notification. "We are happy to see them serve their country through the legal and legislative knowl-



(From left) Court of Appeals Counselor Omar Abdullah Al-Masood, Court of Cassation Deputy and Member of the Supreme Judicial Council Khaled Saleh Al-Muzaini and Court of Appeals Counselor Imad Mohammed Al-Habeeb are pictured during the event.

edge they have acquired," he said.

Vice President of the association Fadia Taleb Al-Rifai expressed her happiness at the conclusion of the tenth moot court competition held by the Kuwait International Law Society. She said the association was established in 2012 as the first professional and student club at Kuwait University with the aim of enhancing the legal skills needed for workers in administrative and legal fields such as how to plead, write the lawsuit statement, and others.

Al-Rifai said the tenth moot competition organized by the association is most important in Kuwait and the Gulf although it is only a diminutive of the International Court of Justice where a hypothetical case is chosen from realistic petitions

around the world based on wars, occupations, destruction of the environment, and others so that these ideas are collected and presented legally to the contestants by doctors of law such as Nasser Al-Rasheed, Sharaf Al-Sharaf, Sara Alwahaibi, and Latifa Almail.

Al-Rifai stated that this year, 30 teams of law students competed in Kuwait. The team of Muhammad Al-Fadl, Dima Al-Othman and Jana Al-Faris as plaintiffs reached the final and following an intense contest won the competition. Al-Rifai thanked Minister Al-Majed for gracing the occasion and supporting the youth and their initiatives which they really need since 'today's law students are expected to be the judges of tomorrow'.

## Registration for Hajj to close on February 28

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs announced on Thursday that the registration for Hajj on the ministry's website will be closed on Feb 28. Director of the Information Department at the Ministry, Dr Ahmed Al-Otaibi, said in a press statement that the Hajj and Umrah Office will prioritize those who have never performed Hajj when accepting applications.

Successful applicants will be randomly selected through an electronic



Dr Ahmed Al-Otaibi

will be given five days to register for a Hajj package with the company of their choice. If the applicant fails to meet the deadline, they will be replaced by another applicant from the waitlist. As of Wednesday, over 36,000 applicants have registered through the website, said Otaibi. — KUNA

lottery system and must meet the conditions specified by the ministry. Those who have been selected will be informed by the office through a text message and

## Health facilities to remain open during holidays

KUWAIT: Health facilities across the country will remain open to serve citizens and residents during the national holidays, the Ministry of Health announced in a press statement. Official spokesperson for the Ministry Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad said 29 primary care centers will be open 24/7 during the holidays. Thirteen centers will be open from 7 am till midnight.

Twenty dental clinics will serve patients over two shifts, he added. The



Dr Abdullah Al-Sanad

day shift will start at 7:30 am and end at 2 pm, while the night shift will start at 2 pm and end at 9 pm. The Amiri Hospital emergency dental clinic will operate 24/7. Sanad called on citizens and residents to adhere to guidance provided by health officials and follow all safety regulations. — KUNA

## Niger embassy congratulates Kuwait

By Tinni Ousseini  
Ambassador of the Republic of Niger

On behalf of President Mohamed Bazoum, the Government and the people of the Republic of Niger, I would like to extend to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah, Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the friendly people of Kuwait, my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 62nd Anniversary of National Day and the 32nd Anniversary of the Liberation Day of the state of Kuwait.

The Republic of Niger and the State of Kuwait have enjoyed excellent relationship based on friendship and mutual respect. It is my pleasure to recall that the Republic of Niger was part of the liberation struggle of Kuwait. I am more than confident these longstanding ties of cooperation will be reinforced in the future on different areas of bilateral as well as multilateral relations for the benefit of our two brotherly people. I wish the friendly people of Kuwait lasting peace, stability, prosperity and progress.



Tinni Ousseini

Local

# Kuwaiti youth hopeful of more govt support for innovation, creativity

## Investing in young Kuwaitis to boost domestic production, self-sufficiency

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is a country with a young population, with around 70 per cent of the population under the age of 35. On the occasion of Kuwait's national holidays, Kuwait Times spoke with young Kuwaitis to learn about their aspirations for the country.

Omar Al-Youssef, 30, told Kuwait Times: "As Kuwaitis, we are blessed with the grace of security and safety, but Kuwait needs evolving in terms of supporting its children. I hope the Kuwaiti government will support creative Kuwaiti youth and small business owners, give an opportunity to those with creative ideas and inventors and invest in their ideas and creativity."

Youssef explained that investing in young Kuwaitis will contribute to the country's development and boost local production, eventually leading to eco-

nomical self-sufficiency and full reliance on national labor. "Kuwait's future will be prosperous and promising with its youth and the new generation," he said.

Fatma Khalaf, 25, said youth in Kuwait are creative and hopeful for support from the government. "Kuwait's people are highly intelligent. The environment is filled with creative, hardworking and intelligent minds that are willing to take it upon themselves to use their creativity, time and efforts without prejudice to evolve our community, whether it's from an educational or cultural perspective, to the point where those efforts are made without profit," she said.

The restrictions sometimes placed on youth in Kuwait stifle their creativity and ambitions, she added, so government regulations should be slightly loosened to pave the way for a better future.

Ahmad Al-Rifai, 20, said Kuwait needs to put more emphasis on education, as



Jarah Al-Dhafiri



Omar Al-Youssef



Fatma Khalaf

Kuwaiti youth aspire to pursue higher education at prestigious universities. They're in constant search for secure employment opportunities with good salaries and benefits, he pointed out, and are keen on obtaining the experience and training required to enhance their career

prospects. They also aspire to start their own businesses and become entrepreneurs, he added.

Jarah Al-Dhafiri, 19, expressed his joy at what Kuwait is becoming, saying: "Recently, Kuwait has been working on developing the country by holding several

huge events and activities to celebrate the National and Liberation Days." Dhafiri said he hopes Kuwait's national holidays can bring together all Gulf countries and peoples. He hoped Kuwait organizes huge national celebrations where each Gulf country would be present.



Al-Qurain House — KUNA photos



The ruins of Al-Qurain House

## Al-Qurain Martyrs' Battle: Testament to loyalty and bravery

**KUWAIT:** The battle of Al-Qurain Martyrs has a great importance to Kuwait in which brave Kuwaitis gave the best example of sacrifice and loyalty to the homeland, in the face of the brutal Iraqi occupation forces. This epic reflected Kuwaitis' adherence to their homeland and absolute willingness to defend it at any costs.

The battle, which falls on February 24 every year and has its 32nd anniversary, witnessed the martyrdom of some Kuwaitis who sacrificed their souls for the sake of homeland. It began on February 24 at noon at Nader Nasser Al-Aidan's house where the defeated Iraqi regime forces besieged the house located in Al-Qurain area in an attempt to capture a group of Kuwaitis during the forces' withdrawal from Kuwait after the entry of the Kuwaiti forces supported by the international coalition to liberate the land of Kuwait.

Nineteen Kuwaitis decided to defend their homeland, although fire exchange lasted for hours. The Iraqi forces used heavy weapons and tanks in



that battle, while Kuwaiti defenders were having only light weapons. Eventually, some Kuwaitis were martyred in the battle. To immortalize the battle, and make it evidence of the steadfastness of the Kuwaitis in the face of oppression and brutal aggression, and their adherence to their homeland until the last breath, the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah ordered converting the

house in which the battle occurred into a museum to remain an edifice that tells the story of the Kuwaiti heroes' resistance in deterring the invaders.

The museum, which is affiliated to the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL), includes some departments like the name of the martyrs, and some materials and weapons used in the battle as well as others. —KUNA

## Kuwaiti charity begins campaign to aid refugees

**AMMAN:** Kuwait's Mercy International, part of the Association of Social Reform, commenced on Wednesday an aid campaign worth \$210,000 to meet the needs of impoverished Jordanians families as well as Palestinian and Syrian refugees.

Head of the Mercy International delegation Abdullah Al-Ajmi told KUNA that the campaign provided food baskets and necessities to the needy for a period of three weeks. The money for the campaign would also fund medical procedures and treatment expenses, he added. Al-Ajmi affirmed that Mercy International was eager to provide assistance to those in need in line with the Kuwaiti leadership's guidelines. —KUNA



Kuwaiti charity begins aid campaign for needy and refugees in Jordan.

## Digging for truffles in cemeteries illegal

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Municipality's Funeral Affairs Department places high value on the sanctity of graves and cemeteries and takes special care in maintaining them, said the Director of department Dr Faisal Al-Awadi in a statement.

The remarks came in response to a video circulating online where someone is seen digging for truffles on top of a grave in what appears to be a cemetery. Awadi referenced the video in a letter addressed to the Deputy Director General for Service Affairs. In the letter, he condemned the act and said it's considered a manipulation of graves, which is prohibited under Article 6 of the

cemetery regulation.

He stressed that photographing graves is a violation of the circular issued by the Director General of Kuwait Municipality, which strictly prohibits photographing in cemeteries using cameras of all kinds. Anyone found in violation could be punished by law. Awadi called on the relevant authorities to take legal measures regarding the video and strictly uphold the law protecting the sanctity of graves.



Dr Faisal Al-Awadi



## UN Resident Coordinator congratulates Kuwait

By Dr Assad Hafeez

United Nations Resident Coordinator and WHO Representative to the State of Kuwait

On behalf of myself and the entire United Nations Country Team in the State of Kuwait, I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime Minister, the government of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people on the joyous occasions of the 62nd anniversary of National Day and 32nd anniversary of Liberation Day.



This year's celebrations are particularly special, as they mark Kuwait's tremendous progress and achievements in advancing its national development agenda, as well as its commitment to promoting 'Health for All', progressive actions taken towards climate action and youth empowerment.

Kuwait's commitment to ensuring universal health coverage, equitable access to quality health-care services, equal rights to social justice and services and the well-being for everyone in the country is commendable. We are proud to work alongside the government and all stakeholders to support the country's aspirations to realize sustainable development for all and Kuwait Vision 2035 and leaving no one behind.

We commend the leadership of His Highness the Amir and the people of Kuwait for their unwavering commitment to humanitarian causes around the world. This is a clear testament to Kuwait's commitment to promoting global health and well-being, and is a source of inspiration to all of us. As we celebrate these historic milestones, let us reaffirm our shared pledge to building a better, healthier, and more prosperous and peaceful future for all.

The United Nations in the State of Kuwait renews its commitment to our continued collaboration and partnership to achieve our shared vision.

Congratulations once again on this auspicious occasion.

## Manpower wraps up 2023 student training program

**KUWAIT:** The Public Authority of Manpower held a ceremony to mark the end of its spring training program for 2023 at the attendance of the authority's director Marzouq Al-Otaibi. The training went on from Jan 1 until Jan 31.

Acting Deputy Director for National Labor Najat Al-Youssef said: "The student training project for this year aims to introduce students who are in their final stages of study to the nature of work in the private sector through field training with various companies in order to break the psychological barrier."

The program is designed to give the students an overview of the nature of work and the benefits, such as high salaries and fast promotions, given to Kuwaitis in the private sector, she added. The experience is meant to prepare them for working in the sector after graduation. The program was first launched in 2023 in continuation of the department's efforts to train students through a project that's been in place since 2005. The project is organized in cooperation with various private sector entities, including banks, investment firms and retail.

About 685 job-training opportunities were provided to 201 students through the program, with 137 students completing the training and 20 private sector companies participating. Participating companies were honored at the end of the ceremony.

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## Congratulatory message from the Pakistani envoy

By Malik Muhammad Farooq  
Ambassador of Pakistan to Kuwait

On behalf of the Government of Pakistan, the Pakistani community residing in Kuwait and on my personal behalf, I extend heartiest felicitations and greetings to the leadership of Kuwait, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and the people of Kuwait on this happy occasion of the National Day and Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait.



It is indeed a matter of great pride and satisfaction that our two friendly and fraternal countries enjoy excellent relations. This excellent bilateral relationship extends beyond historical, cultural and religious commonality to encompass political, economic and people-to-people linkages. Pakistan-Kuwait relations are historical and have deep roots, firmly based upon the commonalities of faith, culture, values, traditions and convergent interests. Besides sound political relations, we have strong and growing economic engagement and defense cooperation. It is our earnest desire to solidify the mutually beneficial relations in other sphere of interests.

This year Kuwait's national day celebrations coincide with the 60th year anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries and we desire to celebrate this year in a befitting manner with the coordination of the two embassies. Pakistan and Kuwait have stood by each other in tested times. I am confident that these existing amicable bilateral relations would continue to achieve new milestones. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate Pakistan's strong commitment and support to the brotherly State of Kuwait. In this spirit of friendship, I extend my best wishes for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the leadership and the people of Kuwait. Long-live Pakistan-Kuwait friendship.

# CBK special notes, coins mark Kuwaiti milestones



KUWAIT: CBK coins and banknotes commemorate symbols such as the National Assembly, the Boom and Kuwaiti pearl divers. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) has always been eager to mark the country's national occasions in a special way by minting commemorative coins and banknotes bearing creative inscriptions of national emblems and gold and silver engravings.

Since it was established, the CBK has issued a total of 40 gold and silver coins and commemorative pieces marking unforgettable occasions that would remain engraved in the national memory. Over the years, the releases have strengthened patriotic sentiments and feelings of belonging.

The National Day and the Liberation Day, which fall on Feb 25 and Feb 26 respectively, have had the lion's share of CBK's minted coins due to the occasion's paramount historical and national significance. CBK produced its first coin in 1976 to mark the 15th National Day. The coin had an image of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-

Sabah on its obverse side. Kuwaiti national symbols, including the Kuwait Wall, oilfields and a merchant ship, decorated the reverse side.

In 1981, CBK issued a couple of coins on the occasion of the 20th National Day - the first weighed 28.28 grams of silver and the second weighed 15.98 grams of 22 karat gold. A coin was later produced in 1986 to mark the 25th National Day. Made of 22 karat gold, it weighed 19.966 grams. An image of the National Assembly, the symbol of democracy in the country, decorated the obverse side. An image of the Boom, a traditional Kuwaiti ship, and another of pearl divers were inscribed on the reverse side.

Following the liberation of Kuwait from the Iraqi invasion, CBK minted a set of coins marking the Kuwaiti people's sacrifices and the country's liberation. In 1991, a national coin in both gold and silver was minted on the occasion of the first anniversary of the liber-



ation of Kuwait, with "Free Kuwait" inscriptions being on one side and some Quranic verses on the other side.

In 1996, the CBK introduced two new gold and silver pieces to commemorate the 35th National Day, followed by two more later in the same year to celebrate the fifth Liberation Day. More coins were minted in 2001 and 2006 to mark the country's national festivals. CBK also issued a heptagonal gold and

silver piece bearing engravings of Kuwait Towers to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the National Day. The CBK issued its last two national coins in 2021 to mark the 60th National Day and the 30th Liberation Day. CBK produced a couple of commemorative banknotes - the first in 1993 to mark the second anniversary of the country's liberation and the second in 2001 to commemorate the 10th Liberation Day. — KUNA



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## LuLu hypermarket launches 'Ahlan February' promotion

KUWAIT: As part of Kuwait's National and Liberation Day celebrations, LuLu Hypermarket launched the "Ahlan February" promotion, which is running from Feb 22-28. The event was inaugurated by Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Mahmoud Abdul Samad Bu Shahary at the LuLu Hypermarket Qurain outlet in the presence of the hypermarket's top management in Kuwait and a large gathering of shoppers and well-wishers.

The week-long festival, which celebrates the national holidays, offers a series of amazing discounts on all item categories, along with 62 amazing offers to mark each year of Kuwait's independence. The event also includes a free-trolley offer, with 600 lucky winners walking away with their trolley purchases absolutely free for six days from Feb 23-28. Visitors can also take advantage of special promotions for fresh produce from Kuwait, deals of the day, factory clearance prices for garments and footwear, brand of the week promotions and a digital shopping festival.

One of the main attractions of the promotion featured large cut-outs and images of iconic structures and build-

ings in Kuwait, as well as a special selfie counter for visitors to take pictures against the backdrop of these displays. The event also featured patriotic song performances by students from several Arabic schools in Kuwait.

A Kuwait art gallery exhibition, which was also held during the promotion period, saw the participation of more than 20 Arabic schools in Kuwait with students contesting in arts and craft competitions. The first, second and third place winners of the competitions, from each of the three categories - drawing junior, drawing senior, and craft - were awarded prizes and special LuLu Merit Certificates. All participants in the competitions also received certificates and consolation prizes.

Adding to the excitement of the event were special musical performances by a Kuwaiti band and the traditional sword dances by a folk-art troupe. Additionally, an Arabic food festival was also held on the sidelines of the promotion, and food sampling counters offered visitors a taste of traditional Kuwaiti food.

The event also featured a unique display of the Kuwait Water Towers monument, which was constructed using 14,000 plus Abraaj water bottles (330 ml). Three water tanks were set up, each more than four meters high, and the main sponsor of this display was Abraaj Water Co.

Also, during the inauguration, LuLu Hypermarket's top management and the governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate welcomed and congratulated Captain Yousef Al-Shatti of Kuwait Navy on his breaking the Guinness world record for the fastest swim across Kuwait Bay in the male category.



US, other govts urge calm for Nigeria election

## French court delays Chilean's appeal for murder of Japanese student

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BENGALURU: Governor of Bank of Japan, Haruhiko Kuroda, Japan's Finance Minister, Shunichi Suzuki and Vice Minister of Finance, International Affairs, Masato Kanda addresses a presser on G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting, on the sidelines of G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting under India's G20 Presidency in Bengaluru on February 23, 2023. —AFP

# G7 mulls new Russia sanctions

## UN General Assembly prepares Ukraine peace vote

**KYIV:** G7 ministers on Thursday discussed imposing fresh sanctions on Russia on the eve of the first anniversary of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, as the UN General Assembly prepared to vote on a motion calling for "lasting" peace.

The year-long conflict has devastated swathes of Ukraine, turned Russia into a pariah in the West and according to Western sources, has caused 150,000 casualties on each side. The approach of the first anniversary of Russian troops storming across the border on February 24, 2022 has seen Western leaders step up their show of unity with Kyiv, with the Spanish prime minister on Thursday the latest leader to visit the capital.

"This has been the most difficult year of my life and that of all Ukrainians," said Diana Chestakova, 23, who works for a publishing house and whose boyfriend has spent the last year away in the military. "I am sure that we will be victorious, but we don't know how long we will have to wait and how many victims there are still to come."

In Moscow, President Vladimir Putin promised to boost arms production as Russia marked the annual "Defender of the Fatherland Day" holiday. In India, group of Seven finance

ministers met in the city of Bengaluru to discuss further sanctions and more financial help for Ukraine.

A senior US official has said that the United States and its G7 allies planned to unveil "a big new package of sanctions" around the anniversary, including measures to crack down on the evasion of existing sanctions.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told the G7 meeting that the unprecedented Western sanctions imposed on Moscow over the last 12 months were hurting Russia badly.

### 'Negative effect'

"Our sanctions have had a very significant negative effect on Russia so far... Russia is now running a significant budget deficit," Yellen said. "It is finding it extremely difficult... to obtain the material it needs to replenish its munitions and to, for example, repair 9,000 tanks that have been destroyed because of the war," she added.

"We will stand with Ukraine and its people until peace returns to Europe," tweeted Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez after arriving in Kyiv by train and before meeting Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

In New York, the UN General Assembly was on Thursday to bring to a vote a motion backed by Kyiv and its allies calling for a "just and lasting peace". "Never in recent history has the line between good and evil been so clear. One country merely wants to live. The other wants to kill and destroy," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba told the world body.

The Kremlin's UN ambassador accused the West of being "ready to plunge the entire world into the abyss of war" to defeat Russia. On Thursday, Putin laid flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Moscow before meeting soldiers in Red Square under blue skies and brisk temperatures.

"We will pay priority attention to strengthening our defence capabilities," he said in a video address. Russia will equip troops with "new strike systems, reconnaissance and communication equipment, drones and artillery systems," he added, hailing Russian soldiers, who he said were fighting "heroically" in Ukraine and defending "our historical lands". Russia's "unbreakable unity is the key to our victory," he said.

### China-Russia ties

US President Joe Biden on Wednesday wrapped up a three-day visit to Europe to meet the leaders of NATO and east European countries. Biden and European leaders in Warsaw vowed to "reinforce our deterrence and defence posture across the entire Eastern flank from the Baltic to the Black Sea."

In Moscow, Russia strengthened ties with China as Putin met Beijing's top diplomat, Wang Yi, after Washington and NATO voiced concern that China could be preparing to supply Russia with weapons. Putin said cooperation between Russia and China was "very important to stabilise the international situation".

A readout published by Chinese state news agency Xinhua after the meeting quoted Wang saying China was willing to "deepen political trust" and "strengthen strategic coordination" with Russia.

China would "uphold an objective and fair position and play a constructive role in solving the crisis through political means", it said. Moscow said Wednesday that Beijing had presented its views on paths towards a "political settlement" in Ukraine following Wang's visit.

When the Kremlin launched its invasion of Ukraine, it was designed to be a rapid conquest leading to capitulation and the installation of a pro-Russian regime. Since then, Russia has been forced to give up ground but has kept up a barrage of drone and missile attacks, while the military and civilian toll has spiralled.

Earlier, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez arrived in Kyiv early on Thursday in a show of support ahead of the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "Returning to Kyiv today, one year since the start of the war," Sanchez tweeted with a video of him stepping off the train in the Ukrainian capital.

"We will stand with Ukraine and its people until peace returns to Europe," he wrote in Spanish and Ukrainian. Sanchez will meet with Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky later in the day on what is his second visit to Kyiv since the war began on February 24, 2022, his office said.

The visit comes shortly after US President Joe Biden made a surprise trip to Kyiv, his first since the invasion began, and a day later, Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni also arrived. —AFP

## 3 arrested over N Ireland police officer's shooting

**BELFAST:** Police in Northern Ireland said Thursday they had arrested three men over the shooting of an off-duty officer, after declaring "violent dissident republicans" the "prime focus" of their investigation. "This morning we have arrested three men, aged 38, 45 and 47" in connection with the attempted murder of the officer on Wednesday, Chief Constable Simon Byrne told a press conference.

The shooting, condemned by politicians as "outrageous and shameful", was carried out by two men in the town of Omagh in County Tyrone late Wednesday. Detective Chief Inspector John Caldwell, a high-profile officer who has led major investigations, was taken to hospital and is in a "critical but stable" condition after being shot multiple times at a sports complex just before 8:00pm (2000 GMT), police said.

Officers in Northern Ireland are subject to sporadic attacks that were once common in the region, which was plagued by decades of sectarian violence known as the Troubles before the signing of peace accords in 1998. Byrne called the attack "brazen and calculated", adding it had left colleagues "extremely distressed".

Caldwell had been coaching a youth football group, which included his son, and was putting balls into the back of his car when he was attacked, Byrne said. Youngsters waiting to be picked up from the practice fled for cover, with locals on the scene administering first aid, he added.

Tensions are currently running high in the province, with unionists loyal to the UK collapsing its power-sharing government to protest post-Brexit trading rules, which they say are distancing Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK.

"The investigation is at an early stage, we are keep-



OMAGH: Police forensics officers work near the scene of a shooting of an off duty policeman at the Killyclogher Road sports complex in the northern Irish town of Omagh on February 23, 2023. —AFP

ing an open mind," Assistant Chief Constable Mark McEwan told BBC Radio Ulster on Thursday. "The primary focus is on violent dissident republicans, and within that there is a primary focus as well on New IRA."

The New IRA, a splinter group of the Irish Republican Army, has admitted responsibility for two attacks in recent years. Politicians from across the deep divide, including the deputy leader of the pro-Ireland party Sinn Fein, Michelle O'Neill, and the pro-UK Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leader Jeffrey Donaldson, issued a statement condemning the attack.

"We extend our heartfelt solidarity to DCI John Caldwell and his family after yesterday evening's cowardly gun attack which has left him critically injured," the joint statement said. "We stand united in our outright condemnation of this attack... yesterday evening in front of his son and other children and young people," it added. "We speak for the overwhelming majority of people right across our community who are outraged and sickened by this reprehensible and callous attempted murder. Those responsible must be brought to justice." —AFP

## China coal mine collapse death toll rises to 5

**BEIJING:** The death toll from a collapse at a coal mine in northern China rose to five on Thursday, state media reported, as rescuers searched for dozens still missing after a massive landslide hindered recovery efforts overnight.

More than 50 people were trapped when a 180-metre-high slope gave way at the open-pit mine in the Inner Mongolia region's Alxa Left Banner area at around 1:00 pm (0500 GMT) on Wednesday, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Hundreds of rescue workers were dispatched to the remote site, but another landslide later that day temporarily halted efforts to save those trapped beneath the rubble. Rescuers have since resumed their work, with CCTV reporting on Thursday afternoon that at least five people had been killed in the incident, with six injured and 48 still unaccounted for.

Footage from the broadcaster showed rescue workers in orange overalls and yellow helmets dwarfed by a mountain of rust-coloured rubble, and excavators working to clear some of the debris. "I had just started work when I saw slag falling down the slope. The situation got worse and worse," a rescued worker named Ma Jianping told CCTV.

"We tried to organise an evacuation, but it was too late—the slope came down," he said from a hospital bed in the neighbouring Ningxia region, a catheter protruding from his throat. The injured were all currently in stable condition, CCTV reported a doctor at the hospital as saying. State media reported that the collapse had affected a

"wide area" of the mine operated by the Xinjing Coal Mining Company.

It was not clear what caused the collapse, and calls to the company by AFP went unanswered on Thursday. CCTV on Thursday said police were investigating the collapse, with "the relevant personnel currently under control". The report did not share further details.

A video posted on social media by a coal truck driver on Wednesday showed rocks cascading down a slope, kicking up clouds of dust that engulfed several vehicles. "The whole slope has collapsed... How many people must be dead from that?" a male voice can be heard saying in the background.

"If I'd lined up over there today, I'd have died in there, too," Zhang Li, an injured miner speaking to the Beijing News under a pseudonym, said he had been driving toward the mine when the landslide pushed his vehicle into a ditch.

"There are swollen bruises on my head and scratches on my hands," he said. Chinese President Xi Jinping has instructed authorities to "do everything possible to search for and rescue the missing people", state media reported Wednesday.

Located in China's arid north, Alxa League—which includes the Alxa Left Banner—is a sparsely populated region whose economy runs largely on mining and other extractive industries. Mine safety in China has improved in recent decades, as has media coverage of major incidents, many of which were once overlooked.

Accidents still occur frequently, however, in an industry where safety protocols are often lax, especially at the most rudimentary sites. Around 40 people were working underground when a gold mine in the northwestern Xinjiang region collapsed in December.

In 2021, 20 miners were rescued from a flooded coal mine in northern Shanxi province, while two others died. —AFP

## International

# French court delays Chilean's appeal for murder of Japanese student

## Facing life in jail, Nicolas Zepeda has insisted he is innocent

VESOUL: A French court on Thursday granted a request to delay the appeal of Chilean Nicolas Zepeda, convicted of the 2016 murder of his Japanese ex-girlfriend Narumi Kurosaki, after the defendant's lawyer was changed at the last moment.

Francois Arnaud, presiding judge at the court in Vesoul, eastern France, did not give a date for the later session as he accepted the arguments of Zepeda's new representatives that they needed more time to grasp thousands of pages of case files.

The appeal hearing had been suspended on Tuesday, its first day, as Zepeda's lawyer told the presiding judge he had been dismissed and the Chilean named a new one. "I want a real trial," the 32-year-old defendant told the jury at the time.

On Thursday, Zepeda added that "I did not dismiss Mr (Antoine) Vey," as his previous lawyer had told the court, saying "I am not responsible for this situation". Vey's office declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

Kurosaki's mother and two sisters, who had travelled from Japan to attend the appeal hearings, broke down in tears in the courtroom at the news of the suspension. Their representative Sylvie Galley said they had been "taken hostage" by the accused.

### Stakes are real

Zepeda's new defender, Renaud Portejoie, asked for a new slot in "early autumn" for the appeal hearing. Zepeda was sentenced in April last year to 28

years in jail for the murder of Kurosaki, then aged 21, in December 2016. Kurosaki, a brilliant scholarship student, arrived in the eastern French city of Besancon that summer to learn French. She disappeared on December 4. Zepeda, with whom she had broken up a year before, was the last person to see her alive. Facing life in jail, he has insisted he is innocent. Portejoie told daily L'Est Republicain newspaper on Wednesday that he faced an "impossible mission of defending Nicolas Zepeda and getting to know an 8,000-page file in 24 hours". "The stakes are real for Nicolas Zepeda... but also for the plaintiffs," Portejoie said.

### "Screams of terror"

Prosecutors said in the first trial that Zepeda was unable to deal with the couple's breakup, coming to Besancon to kill Kurosaki in her student dorm room before dumping the body in the forests of the rugged Jura region. They pointed to evidence from witnesses, telephone records and geolocation of the car Zepeda hired. The Chilean has admitted spending the night with Kurosaki in December, claiming he ran into her by chance while travelling through France.

But several witnesses reported hearing "screams of terror" and thuds "as if someone was striking someone else"—though none called the police at the time. But so far no trace has been found of Kurosaki's remains. While Zepeda himself

Foreign-based rights groups said Ahmadi was arrested in early 2021 while attempting to flee overland to Europe after being convicted of the murder. He had always denied the charges.

Ahmadi was hanged on Wednesday morning at a prison in the western city of Kermanshah, the Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) group, Kurdish-focused Hengaw group and Paris-based Kurdistan Human Rights Network said in separate statements.

The execution was carried out in secret without his family being notified in advance, they added. A political activist, he had been a member of the Kurdish Komala political party, which pushes for greater autonomy for Iran's Kurdish minority but is banned as a terror group by Tehran, they said.

He had spent some time in neighbouring Iraq where Komala's leadership is based, before returning to Iran, the rights groups said. "The execution of this Kurdish political prisoner was carried out without notifying the family and conducting a last meeting," IHR said.

three-year hiatus caused by the coronavirus pandemic, and Ambassador Nasser Al-Qahtani commended the role of Italian officials in reviving the celebrations, saying that it is a testament to the deep-rooted relations.

Ambassador Al-Qahtani mentioned that Kuwait is a strategic trade partner to Italy - adding that Italian exports to Kuwait in the first 10 months of 2022 reached EUR 1.9 billion, while Kuwaiti exports to Italy amounted to EUR 350 million. Undersecretary of Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Maria Tripodi stated that she was honored to be part of the celebrations, saying that the shared trust, respect, and humanitarian principles contributed to cementing relations despite various challenges.

Tripodi mentioned that Italy is Kuwait's number one European trade partner and the seventh worldwide with 65 percent increase in trade exchange compared to past year. She further added that relations are blossoming - not only on the economic front, but also on the cultural front as a couple of deal were struck between the Kuwaiti National Council of Culture Arts and Literature (NCCAL) and Italian universities on archeological sites in the island of Faialka.

In Moscow, Acting Charge de Affairs Salem Al-Muzayen spoke of the special Kuwait-Russia relations, underscoring the importance of the ongoing political dialogue across various levels. Celebrations also took place in the Sultanate of Brunei and Ambassador Salah Al-Mutairi extended his congratulations to the people of Kuwait - wishing the country further progress under Amir's wise leadership.

Kuwait's Consul-General based in Chinese city of Shanghai, Mishal Al-Shamali, took the opportunity to recall the sacrifices of the forefathers and martyrs and their determination in establishing a renowned nation. He said that Kuwaiti-Chinese relations are on a steady path of understanding harmony and joint visions, adding that they are hoping to strengthen the partnerships. Participating in the joyous occasions were high officials and diplomats from each country, all joining in to celebrate Kuwait's national holidays. Kuwaiti scholarship students also attended the festivities, celebrating a piece of home away from home. — KUNA

here in the Commission," Breton told reporters.

A spokesperson for TikTok said it was "disappointed with this decision, which we believe to be misguided and based on fundamental misconceptions". In November, TikTok admitted some staff in China can access the data of European users. The company however denies that the Chinese government has any control or access. TikTok on Thursday stressed it protects the data of 125 million users monthly in the European Union on its app and was taking steps to strengthen data security.

"We're continuing to enhance our approach to data security, including by establishing three data centres in Europe to store user data locally; further reducing employee access to data; and minimising data flows outside of Europe," the firm said. The United States last year banned the app from federal government devices, and some US lawmakers are trying to prohibit TikTok from operating in the United States. Last month, the Dutch government reportedly advised public officials to steer clear of the app over similar concerns. — AFP



VESOUL: Sylvie Galley (C), the lawyer for murdered Japanese student Narumi Kurosaki, walks with Kurosaki's family members as they arrive at the Vesoul courthouse on the first day of the appeal trial of Nicolas Zepeda. — AFP

has not spoken publicly about the facts of the case, his father Humberto on Wednesday listed a string of responses to the prosecution's claims in an interview with broadcaster France 3.

He said there were no eyewitnesses and claimed two people were "certain" they had seen Kurosaki in different places since her disappear-

Kurdistan Human Rights Network said, citing relatives, that Ahmadi had been "subjected to severe torture to accept the accusations against him and make forced confessions". Iran executes more convicts every year than any nation other than China, according to rights groups including Amnesty International.

Campaigners have also accused Tehran of using the death penalty as a weapon to suppress the protests that erupted after the death of Kurdish-Iranian Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested for allegedly violating the strict dress code for women.

It has already executed four men on charges related to the protests while IHR says 87 people have been executed so far in 2023 alone. Amnesty said Wednesday that Iranian authorities had "forcibly disappeared" four Kurdish dissidents linked to Komala who were now at "grave risk" of unfair trials on charges that carry the death penalty. — AFP

The four men—Pejman Fatehi, Vafa Azarbar, Mohammad Faramarzi and Mohsen Mazloum—were

arrested in July 2022 and are believed to be facing spying and terror charges. Amnesty accused Iran of "concealing their fate and whereabouts from their families and lawyer since their arrests." — AFP



BRUSSELS: Demonstrators pose in mock gallows as they take part during a protest supporting Iranian resistance movement in Brussels. — AFP

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## Kuwait, US and UK forces hold...

Continued from Page 1

On the sideline of the reception hosted by Kuwait's embassy in France, Ambassador Mohammad Al-Jedai expressed his pride in his country while speaking to KUNA. He hailed Kuwait's humanitarian role and relentless efforts on both regional and international fronts. Also, attending the celebrations was Kuwait's permanent envoy to UNESCO Ambassador Dr Adam Al-Mulla who spoke on Kuwait's role in the cultural scene praising its significant contributions to translating intellectual progress into tangible reality.

Meanwhile, Ambassador of Kuwait to the Netherlands Ali Al-Dafiri, praised the "dynamic and deep rooted" relations between the two countries and emphasized their commitment to further enhancing their partnership. Ambassador Al-Dafiri noted that the two countries share very strong trade and investment ties. "Kuwait maintains a major investment presence in the Netherlands across many sectors," he said.

Director of North Africa and the Middle East Department in the Dutch foreign ministry Marc Gerritsen stated in his speech to the large gathering "the role Kuwait plays cannot be overestimated, as a mediator and as a stable factor in a volatile region. We are proud that we can call Kuwait one of our dear friends in the region and we look very much forward to strengthening this friendship. The future of Kuwait will be cleaner and greener and the Netherlands will assist you in that and also learn from your experience in the energy field," he added. While speaking to the Kuwait News Agency, Gerritsen said, "I am here to congratulate Kuwait on its 62nd anniversary."

Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain, Khalifah Al-Kharafi, on sideline of the celebrations hosted at the embassy, wished the people of Kuwait a prosperous life and further progress and development. As for the embassy in Rome, festivities commenced after a

## EU bans TikTok on official devices...

Continued from Page 1

"The measure aims to protect the Commission against cybersecurity threats and actions which may be exploited for cyberattacks against the corporate environment of the commission," she said. There was no immediate comment on whether other EU institutions such as the European Council, which represents member states, or the European Parliament would take similar measures.

After the news was made public, EU industry commissioner Thierry Breton pointed to the cybersecurity risks he said had informed the decision. "As an institution, the European Commission has, from the beginning of the mandate, a very strong focus on cybersecurity, protecting our colleagues and, of course, everyone who is working

## MP proposes up to KD 700 monthly...

Continued from Page 1

provide the TV with such results. He also asked for the exact time when counting of votes began at all third constituency centers.

The lawmaker asked the minister for the voters' turnout percentages in all constituencies together and each individual constituency. He also demanded to know the number of voters who cast their votes in last year's election and requested to know which constituency and center they cast their votes.

Wasmu asked the justice minister if some documents of the vote counting process were not signed

## Violence flares around Gaza...

Continued from Page 1

a statement. United Nations chief Antonio Guterres said the "immediate priority must be to prevent further escalation". "The situation in the occupied Palestinian territory is at its most combustible in years," he said.

The army said the raid had targeted a "hideout apartment" used by suspects implicated in shootings in the West Bank. It said one of the wanted suspects was "neutralized", along with two other people who opened fire on troops. Both sides "exchanged fire" and rockets were also fired on the house by the army, spokesman Richard Hecht said. Rocks, explosive devices and Molotov cocktails were hurled at the troops, said the army, which added that it suffered no casualties.

The Palestinian health ministry said those killed in Nablus were aged between 16 and 72. Hours after the raid, the ministry announced the death of Anan Ennab, 66, from tear gas inhalation. He had been in the market when the incursion began, his brother Allam Ennab said on Thursday. "What happened yesterday in Nablus was a real massacre, like I've

by the election officials and what is the value of such documents. If the answer is positive, he demanded to know the number of unsigned documents. He asked if some representatives of candidates were prevented from seeing the ballot papers ahead of the counting and if counting officials had received protests from such representatives.

Wasmu demanded a detailed list of centers where voting percentages ranged from 90 percent and 100 percent in all the constituencies with the names of the head and members of the election officials. The lawmaker also asked about the number of state security agents who were present at election centers and what was their role in the election process. He also asked for the number of voters barred from voting for any reason in the five constituencies and in which constituency and center they are registered.

never seen before," the 68-year-old told AFP. Palestinian health officials said 82 people were treated for gunshot wounds. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said its medics also treated 250 cases of tear gas inhalation. The wounded include Palestine TV journalist Mohammed Al Khatib, who was shot in the hand, a colleague told AFP.

Talaat Ziada, the head of the intensive care unit in Nablus's Rafidia hospital, said his youngest patient was an 11-year-old boy shot in the stomach and leg. "It was a war zone in the Old City, and it was also a war zone here," he told AFP. "The corridors and stairs were covered in blood, and people were scrambling to check on their relatives." Wednesday's death toll was the highest since the second Palestinian intifada, or uprising, ended in 2005.

Palestinian shops were closed on Thursday in annexed east Jerusalem and elsewhere in the occupied West Bank, including Nablus, after a general strike was called in protest at the violence. The Lions' Den, a Nablus-based militant group, said six of those killed were members of various Palestinian factions. Hailing the army's "courage", Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant tweeted that Zionist "long arm" would reach "any terrorist".

US State Department spokesman Ned Price said Washington was "extremely concerned by the levels of violence". Since December, Zionist entity has been ruled by a coalition government regarded as the most right-wing in Zionist history. — AFP

## Powerful winter storms pound...

Continued from Page 1

If you must travel, have a winter survival kit with you. If you get stranded, stay with your vehicle." More than 1,550 flights within, into or out of the United States had been cancelled by 0000 GMT Thursday, according to Flightaware.com, with its "Misery Map" showing Denver, Salt Lake City and Minneapolis-St Paul particularly badly hit.

Roads were also difficult, with Wyoming suffering

from problems even on main highways. "Please change travel plans if you are coming towards Wyoming," the state's department of transport posted on its Facebook page. "A major winter storm and multiday closures are likely on Interstates and secondary roads throughout Wyoming!" Around 280,000 properties were without power across the country, according to Poweroutage.us, almost half of them in Michigan, where snow, sleet and freezing rain were icing power lines, making them vulnerable to gusting winds.

An unusual blizzard warning was put in place for the mountains around Los Angeles from early Thursday, with snow expected to fall even at relatively low elevations. "Now is the time to prepare for a COLD AND DANGEROUS winter storm expected for much of the week," the NWS in Los Angeles warned.—AFP

## International

# Somaliland clashes kill at least 96 in two weeks: Hospital

## More than 185,000 people have been displaced by violence: UN



**MOGADISHU:** At least 96 people have been killed in more than two weeks of clashes between security forces and clan members in the breakaway Somali region of Somaliland, a hospital director said Thursday. "We have 96 dead and 560 wounded," Ahmed Mohamed Hassan, director of the main hospital in the contested town of Las Anod, told AFP by telephone.

Garaad Jama Garaad Ali, a senior clan chief, had said on Wednesday that 150 people had been killed and 500 wounded. Somaliland, which has claimed independence from Somalia since 1991, but has never been recognised internationally, is often seen as a beacon of stability in a chaotic region.

However, political tensions have surged in recent months, leading to deadly violence between government forces and militias loyal to Somalia. The latest fighting broke out on February 6 in Las Anod, which straddles a key trade route and is claimed by both Somaliland and neighbouring Puntland, a semi-autonomous state of northeastern Somalia.

The UN says more than 185,000 people have been displaced by the violence. Heavy fighting was still raging on Thursday, according to the region's clan leaders

and witnesses. "It started in the early morning and already several artillery and mortar shells landed in the town," resident Mohamed Saleban said by phone, adding that people were fleeing.

On Wednesday, Hassan said the hospital itself had been bombarded and that several employees had on "a number of occasions" survived shelling. "They have destroyed the electricity system of the hospital, the oxygen system, the blood bank, the office of the human resources and other parts of the hospital building," he told reporters, vowing to continue working.

### Investigation call

The violence erupted after elders in the Sool region, where Las Anod is located, issued a statement pledging support for Somalia's federal government and urged Somaliland authorities to withdraw their soldiers from the area.

Somaliland authorities announced a ceasefire on February 10, but days later accused Somalia of attacking its forces. The UN said last week that more than 185,000 people had been uprooted from their homes, with aid workers struggling to respond

to the situation due to inadequate resources. Women and children accounted for an estimated 89 percent of the displaced population, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a statement. Many were reportedly seeking shelter under trees or inside schools, which have been forced to shut.

In addition to those displaced inside Somaliland, more than 60,000 others have fled to Ethiopia's Somali region to escape the violence, the UN's refugee agency said. UN right chief Volker Turk this month called on authorities to conduct a "credible and impartial investigation" into the clashes and warned that they compounded the already fragile humanitarian situation in the region.

Somaliland, a region of 4.5 million people, is a former British protectorate. It prints its own currency, issues its own passports and elects its own government but its quest for statehood has gone unrecognized, leaving it poor and isolated.

However, the region has been relatively stable in comparison to Somalia, which has witnessed decades of civil war and Islamist insurgency. — AFP

## Philippine rescuers confirm four dead in plane crash

**MANILA:** Philippine rescuers have confirmed four people died after the plane they were in crashed on an active volcano at the weekend, officials said Thursday. The victims, including two Australians, were on board the Cessna 340 that went missing Saturday morning shortly after taking off for Manila from Bicol International Airport in the central

province of Albay, several kilometres from the Mayon volcano. Carlos Baldo, mayor of Camalig municipality, which overlaps the crash site, said a search and rescue team reached the wreckage on Wednesday and confirmed there were no survivors. "We found the site, there were no signs of life," Baldo told a news conference on Thursday. Baldo said 179 people were involved in the operation to carry the bodies down the steep slopes of the volcano. They hoped to arrive at the base of the mountain by Thursday evening. The Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) said the plane's wreckage was on the western side of the volcano, about 3,500 to 4,000 feet (1,070 metres to 1,200 metres) above sea level.

"It's a very difficult terrain," said Albay disaster officer Cedric Daep, warning the retrieval operation could take longer than a day. "It's steep and there are ridges where only one person can climb at a time."

Manila-based Energy Development Corporation said previously that it owned the plane. The Australians were technical consultants for the renewable energy company. "Our heartfelt sympathies go to their families and friends during this difficult time," company president Richard Tantoco said in a statement.

The wreckage was spotted on Sunday, but rain, clouds and the risk of a volcanic eruption hampered efforts to reach the crash site. A rescue team, including veteran mountaineers, began making the steep climb on foot on Tuesday. — AFP

## US seeks custody of Peru ex-prez for extradition

**LOS ANGELES:** US attorneys asked a California judge on Wednesday to revoke the bail of former Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo and prepare for his extradition to Peru, where he is wanted on corruption charges.

"Now that... the Secretary (of State) has authorized Toledo's surrender, Toledo should be brought into custody so that the government may effectuate his surrender to Peruvian authorities," prosecutors said in their written request to the court. The request was filed in US District Court in San Francisco, and a hearing was set for March 9. Toledo, a 76-year-old with a doctorate from Stanford University, served as Peru's president from 2001 until 2006. He was detained in California in 2019, where he had returned to take up residence. He is wanted by Peruvian prosecutors to determine his role in a bribery scandal involving a Brazilian construction conglomerate. He faces a possible 20-year prison term in Peru.

Toledo was put under house arrest in 2020 after posting bond, and has resided in Menlo Park near Stanford on condition that he wear an electronic ankle monitor at all times. Prosecutors said Toledo's "flight risk has increased beyond the point of adequate mitigation," so he should no longer be allowed house arrest.



Alejandro Toledo

Toledo has sought to block his extradition over the Odebrecht case, in which he is accused of taking millions of dollars in bribes from the Brazilian conglomerate in exchange for favored treatment in bidding on public works. Toledo denies all charges.

Federal Judge Thomas Hixson in September authorized Toledo's extradition but left the final decision in the hands of the US State Department, which approved the request this week. Testimony from an Israeli-Peruvian businessman, Josef Maiman, who was close to Toledo, and from Jorge Barata, Odebrecht's representative in Peru, were key in the case. Both men said Toledo received bribes from Odebrecht. The firm acknowledged paying bribes in Brazil and several nations around Latin America in a scandal dubbed Lava Jato (or Car Wash), which has put dozens of politicians and business figures behind bars. — AFP

## Woman dies every 2 mins in pregnancy, childbirth: UN

**GENEVA:** A woman dies every two minutes due to pregnancy or childbirth complications, despite maternal mortality rates dropping by a third in 20 years, the United Nations said Thursday. Rates fell significantly between 2000 and 2015 but largely stagnated between 2016 and 2020 — and in some regions have even reversed, the UN said. The overall maternal mortality rate dropped by 34.3 percent over a 20-year



ABUJA: A general view of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Atiku Abubakar's offices in Abuja on February 23, 2023, ahead of the Nigerian presidential election scheduled for February 25, 2023. — AFP

## US, other govts urge calm for Nigeria election

**LAGOS:** US, European and other governments on Thursday urged Nigerian leaders to ensure a fair and calm election this weekend when the country votes to choose a successor to President Muhammadu Buhari.

More than 93 million Nigerians are registered to vote on Saturday in what has developed into a tense, competitive race among three presidential frontrunners for the first time since military rule ended in 1999. After two terms under Buhari, Africa's most populous nation is grappling with widespread insecurity from different armed groups, high inflation and growing poverty.

"It is vital for Nigeria's stability and democratic consolidation that the process is conducted and concluded safely, fairly and credibly," said a joint statement from the diplomatic missions of the United States, Britain, Australia, Japan, Canada and Norway.

"We encourage all actors to intervene proactively to calm any tensions and avoid any violence." Nigeria's elections have often been marked by violence, ethnic tensions and clashes between supporters of rival parties.

The main four candidates in the presidential race signed a peace accord on Wednesday, in a bid to ensure a free and peaceful election. "I once again ask

the candidates to abide by the spirit and letter of the Accord they have signed," Buhari said.

"Let me remind all Nigerians not for the first time that this is the only country we have, and we must do everything to keep it safe, united and peaceful." On Wednesday, a senatorial candidate for the Labour Party was killed by gunmen in southeast Enugu State, according to Labour Party officials.

### Jihadists, bandits

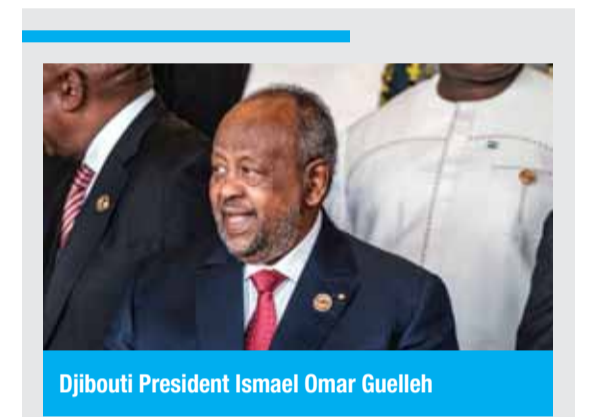
Security forces are still fighting a 14-year jihadist insurgency in the country's northeast and heavily armed bandits carry out raids on villages and mass abductions in the northwest. Offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission have also been attacked by gunmen, in violence often blamed on separatists in the country's southeast.

Three frontrunners are battling to succeed Buhari, who was first elected in 2015 and re-elected in 2019 mainly on promises he would fight insecurity and corruption. Bola Tinubu, candidate for the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and a former Lagos governor, faces old rival Atiku Abubakar of the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

But for the first time a surprise third candidate, Peter Obi of the Labour Party, has emerged to challenge the dominance of the PDP and APC with a message he will bring change. Days before the election, a national shortage of cash has also angered Nigerians, as they struggle to buy food at markets and pay for transport to work. — AFP

... and that they can fully exercise their reproductive rights." The report found that between 2016 and 2020, maternal mortality rates dropped in only two of the eight UN regions: in Australia and New Zealand by 35 percent, and in Central and Southern Asia by 16 percent.

The rate went up in Europe and Northern America by 17 percent, and in Latin America and the Caribbean by 15 percent. Elsewhere, it stagnated. The two European countries witnessing "significant increases" are Greece and Cyprus, the report's author Jenny Cresswell told journalists. Maternal deaths remain largely concentrated in the world's poorest regions and in conflict-affected countries. Around 70 percent of those deaths recorded in 2020 were in sub-Saharan Africa, where the rate is "136 times bigger" than in Australia and New Zealand, Cresswell said. — AFP



Djibouti President Ismael Omar Guelleh

## Djibouti to hold parliamentary vote snubbed by oppn

**NAIROBI:** The tiny Horn of Africa state of Djibouti heads to the polls on Friday for a parliamentary election boycotted by the main opposition parties, which have branded the vote a sham. Only two parties are contesting seats in the 65-member National Assembly, where veteran President Ismael Omar Guelleh's ruling Union for Presidential Majority (UMP) is assured of victory. Despite its diminutive size, Djibouti enjoys a strategically crucial position at the mouth of the Red Sea, using it to woo trade investors and foreign military powers. The opposition charges that the poll, which follows a presidential ballot in April 2021 that saw Guelleh re-elected for a fifth term with 97 percent of the vote, will not be free and fair.

"This election is only a formality, nothing will change," said a 32-year-old unemployed man who gave his name only as Ali. Guelleh, 75, has ruled Djibouti with an iron fist since 1999 and the country has seen an erosion of press freedom and a crackdown on dissent. The economy took a hit in 2022 from the war in Ukraine, a regional drought and fallout from the two-year conflict in neighbouring Ethiopia, but is expected to grow by around five percent this year, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

### 'Single party'

The main opposition parties, including the Movement for Democratic Renewal and Development (MRD) and the Republican Alliance for Democracy (ARD) have announced they will not take part. "Elections in our country are still not free, not transparent and not democratic," the MRD said in a statement in January, describing Friday's vote as nothing more than a "charade".

"The people of Djibouti are deprived of their right to freely choose their leaders," it added, denouncing the country's "single party" system. Djibouti's 230,000 voters will choose MPs for a five-year term, with the law stipulating that 25 percent of the 65 seats must go to women. In the last legislative ballot in 2018, the UMP—which emerged from a party that ruled Djibouti since independence from France in 1977 — won 58 seats. The Union for Democracy and Justice (UDJ), the only other party running on Friday, took five of the remaining seven.

"This election, similar to the presidential polls in 2021, are not really taken seriously by the population anymore—the public interest is very, very limited," Benedikt Kamski, Horn of Africa researcher for Germany's Arnold Bergstrasser Institute, told AFP. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional bloc, said it would be sending an observer mission.

Under Guelleh, the country of one million people has exploited its prime geographical advantage, investing heavily in ports and logistics infrastructure. Flanked by Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, and across the sea from Yemen, the desert nation has remained stable in a volatile neighbourhood. Foreign military powers including colonial ruler France, the United States and China, as well as Italy and Japan, have established bases or support facilities, there. It dreams of becoming the "Dubai of Africa" with the help of foreign investment, notably from China. The Asian giant helped fund a rail link between Djibouti and the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa which opened in 2017. It is also financing Africa's biggest free trade zone. In January, the government announced a memorandum of understanding with a Hong Kong-based company to build a \$1 billion commercial spaceport expected to take five years to build. — AFP

## Business

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2023

## Dubai housing boom buoys buyers, burdens tenants

Emirate sees record property transactions in 2022 due to influx of wealthy investors

**DUBAI:** With rents soaring and properties selling fast, the expatriate hub of Dubai is in the throes of a housing boom bolstered by rich emigres that has buoyed investors and burdened tenants. Dubai, renowned for its towering skyscrapers and ultra-luxury villas, saw record real estate transactions in 2022, largely due to the influx of wealthy investors—especially from Russia.

That helped to rake in more than \$140 billion last year, marking a 76 percent annual rise in property market transactions for the Gulf city state, based on the latest official figures.

"The market in the last year has massively changed—it is great for landlords, but it's not so good for tenants," said Jacob Fletcher of brokerage firm Betterhomes. While it may not be as rich in oil as the UAE capital Abu Dhabi, Dubai lures expatriates with tax incentives, a lush lifestyle and cheap services provided by low-wage laborers from Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

In upscale Dubai neighborhoods, where properties sell for more than \$10 million, the 219 sales recorded in 2022 were "more than the total recorded between 2010 and 2020", said real estate consultancy Knight Frank. Property prices in these prime locations jumped by 44 percent in 2022 compared with the year before, it said.

"The luxury market in Dubai was the fastest growing in the world but remains cheaper than main big cities," said Faisal Durrani, head of Middle East research at Knight Frank.

## Rich Russians

Over a decade ago, Dubai's property market slumped due to a financial crisis. The city is now a

magnet for ultra-rich investors, including Russians fleeing the impact of sanctions after their country's invasion of Ukraine. Russians were the biggest foreign buyers on Dubai's property market last year, according to Betterhomes.

British, Indian, Italian and French nationals are also among the top investors, the brokerage firm says. Entrepreneurs, business executives, bankers and celebrities are among the wild assortment of clients rushing to clinch a home in one of the first cities to open up after the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We're seeing a lot of customers from Europe, who are wanting to move here and who are wanting to send their kids to school here, start business here," said Farhad Azizi, who heads property development firm Azizi Developments. "So, we were seeing a lot of a lot of new clientele, and they've kept the market very busy." Most of Dubai's population of more than 3.5 million is comprised of expatriates. But the housing boom has made it more expensive for them to live in the city.

"There's about a 20 percent increase in the rental market this year compared to last year alone," said Fletcher of Betterhomes. "The people that have lived here especially for a while are very not happy with how high the prices have gone."

## 'Take the hit'

The real estate sector accounts for about a third of Dubai's economy. The city's residents are used to volatility on the property market, with saw prices plummeting during the 2009 financial crisis as well as the pandemic. With inflation spiraling worldwide, the rapid rise in rental prices in recent months has sparked alarm for many. "The market is so insane.



**DUBAI:** Boats are anchored in the Dubai Creek surrounded by high-rise buildings in the Gulf emirate. Home to towering skyscrapers and ultra-luxury villas, Dubai saw record real estate transactions in 2022, largely due to an influx of wealthy investors, especially from Russia. — AFP

It's so expensive," said a Western expatriate who has lived in Dubai with her husband and son for five years. The family must find a new home because their landlord has decided to sell the apartment.

"The market is very, very different. So, we are going to have to pay for something smaller and fur-

ther out," she told AFP on condition of anonymity. Social media networks are buzzing with disgruntled tenants who are locked in disputes with landlords over rental prices.

"What can we do? We've got to move so we have to take the hit," the expatriate said. —AFP

## Real estate prices will remain stable in 2023: Expert

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** The year 2023 will witness stability in the prices of residential properties, a recent study conducted for a bank in Kuwait revealed. The report also showed that the real estate sector was stable in the second half of the year 2022, especially the residential sector. The stability comes following a period of relatively high prices in the first half of 2022 in most of the country's governorates. Real estate prices peaked in 2020 and 2021.



Ibrahim Al-Awadhi

President of the Real Estate Union Ibrahim Al-Awadhi agreed with the result of the report but said continued stability means that prices would remain high. "Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic until the end of 2022, real estate prices, especially the residential sector, witnessed an unprecedented increase. The increase was both logical and illogical at times," he said.

"The inflation and spike in consumer goods on an international level led to a hike in real estate prices globally. In Kuwait, the prices of real estate properties rose much higher than many other countries in the region due to a shortage in local supply," Awadhi added: "It is notable that the interior residential areas maintained a better stability in prices while the suburban areas witnessed a slight decrease, which is mostly related to the increase of discount rate hike in the country," he pointed out.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's real estate sector is expected to witness stability in prices in 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Housing investors

Due to the price increase in the real estate sector, many investors thought that investing in real estate was unprofitable. Therefore, many real estate buyers opted for properties only for residential purposes, rather than investment purposes. Meanwhile, many investors in Kuwait turned to find investment opportunities in other sectors. "Investors moved to other sectors when they found that the real estate sector was no longer profitable," he said.

## Housing welfare

Awadhi pointed out that the current price stability could be a temporary phenomenon that is largely linked to the government's ability to process housing welfare applications relatively quickly. "If the government and Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) were able to shorten the wait times for housing requests, the prices could stabilize. Otherwise, the prices

could rise again," he added.

Regarding his expectation of price fluctuation in the real estate sector this year, he said: "I think by the end of the year, the prices will move up again. However, not the kind of spike we witnessed in 2020 and 2021. It could be a rational and acceptable increase and in tune with the market condition," he added.

Explaining the effect of the discount rate on real estate prices, Awadhi said: "The discount rate leads to a rise in the cost of financing. However, not all citizens or investors build their houses using their own personal wealth. They tend to get financed through various funding channels. Therefore, a rise in discount rate will affect their ability to build a house," he explained. Awadhi noted that in a year, only around 3,000 to 4,000 citizens will have the financial ability to build their own houses, which is a small number compared to the large number of people who depend on PAHW for housing loans.

invasion—and substantially higher than its estimates for more pessimistic scenarios. For the most exposed countries, trade had kept afloat, the WTO said, as had trade in products significantly affected by the war—such as wheat, maize, sunflower products, fertiliser and fuels.

"Global trade has held up well in the face of the war in Ukraine," the WTO's chief economist Ralph Ossa said. "Despite the devastation we have seen one year on, trade flows remained open... Sharply higher food prices and supply shortages have not materialised thanks to the openness of the multi-lateral trading system".

While Ukrainian exports collapsed by 30 percent in value terms last year, Russian exports expanded by 15.6 percent in value terms, almost entirely due to an increase in prices for fuels, fertilisers and cereals. The WTO estimates suggest, however, that Russia's exports by volume may have declined slightly. —AFP



Jerome Powell

## US GDP up 2.7% in Q4, less than earlier reported

**WASHINGTON:** The US economy grew slightly less than reported in the final three months last year, the Commerce Department said Thursday, citing a downward revision to consumer spending.

GDP growth in the October to December period was 2.7 percent, annualized, lower than the 2.9 percent increase originally reported. "The updated estimates primarily reflected a downward revision to consumer spending that was partly offset by an upward revision to non-residential fixed investment," said the Commerce Department in a statement.

GDP growth for 2022 remains unchanged at 2.1 percent. The adjustment comes as the Federal Reserve's aggressive efforts to cool demand and lower inflation ripple through the world's biggest economy, leading to a slump in the housing sector and hitting consumer spending. But overall, the labor market and consumption has generally held up, fueling hopes of a "soft landing" for the economy where inflation comes down without a major downturn. In the fourth quarter last year, economic growth reflected increases in areas like private inventory investment, led by manufacturing, as well as consumer spending, said the Commerce Department.

But among consumer spending, there was a shift from spending on goods to services. The pick-ups were also partly offset by decreases in residential fixed investment and exports, the department added. The deceleration in GDP in the final months last year mainly reflected a downturn in exports and slowing in consumer spending, among other areas, the Commerce Department said.

In the third quarter of 2022, GDP rose 3.2 percent. Analysts expect the pace of expansion to also slow in the first few months of 2023, in welcome news to the Fed. "However, even as growth slows, a focus on lowering elevated inflation means rates will move up further and will remain higher for longer," said Rubeela Farooqi, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics. —AFP

## WTO: Global trade resilient during Ukraine war

**GENEVA:** Russia's war in Ukraine did not dent global trade in 2022 as badly as feared, the World Trade Organization said Thursday—and Russia's export values have even surged. A year on since the full-scale invasion, the WTO concluded that trade had proved "remarkably resilient", with importing countries affected by the conflict finding alternative sources of supply.

A report looking into the war's impact on global trade and development estimated that trade growth in 2022 was above the WTO forecast of three percent issued in April in response to the



Business

KAMCO Invest Economic Report

# Inflation remains low in GCC; may fall globally in near term

## Kuwait consumer inflation witnessed a declining trend in 2022

**KUWAIT:** The year 2022 was a turbulent year for the global economy with runaway inflation and the cost-of-living crisis being dominant issues facing the bulk of the countries globally. The GCC economies were no exception that faced the challenges of higher prices that worsened due to excessive reliance on imported products.

However, proactive policies by the governments in the region and subsidies on food and energy items helped to keep inflation in the region at relatively low levels. Inflation in the GCC averaged at around the 4 percent mark and showed a downward trend for most countries during 2H-2022. Global energy prices sky-rocketed during 2022 mainly driven by the Russia-Ukraine conflict as Russia's energy exports were sanctioned.

Consumer inflation in Kuwait witnessed a declining trend in 2022 after peaking in April-2022 at 4.7 percent mainly reflecting a fall in the Food & Beverages and Clothing & Footwear groups. The y-o-y growth in the index was the smallest during the last two months of the year at 3.2 percent. The latest inflation reading for January-2023 showed a small uptick of 10 bps to reach 3.3 percent.

The increase was led by a 7.4 percent growth in the Food & Beverages index followed by the Clothing & Footwear price index which registered 6 percent y-o-y growth. Inflation in the Housing Services group, the largest weighted group, witnessed a y-o-y increase of 1.4 percent. In terms of m-o-m changes, Kuwait's CPI witnessed a marginal uptick of 0.24 percent during January-2023 driven by prices of Clothing & Footwear group which recorded m-o-m growth of 0.86 percent. Kuwait, which imports the bulk of its food requirements, was affected by the rise in world food prices which hit record levels in 2022. According to Reuters, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) main food price index reached 143.7 points in 2022 recording a 14.3 percent increase from 2021. Kuwait's Food & Beverages component of the CPI recorded the biggest yearly growth among the CPI indices primarily driving the country's inflation growth during the year.

The EU countries, Russia's biggest natural gas and oil export destination, started to diversify and look elsewhere for energy imports to curtail Russia's ability to wage war. The sanctioning of Russia's energy exports created a supply drop in global energy markets hence pushing oil

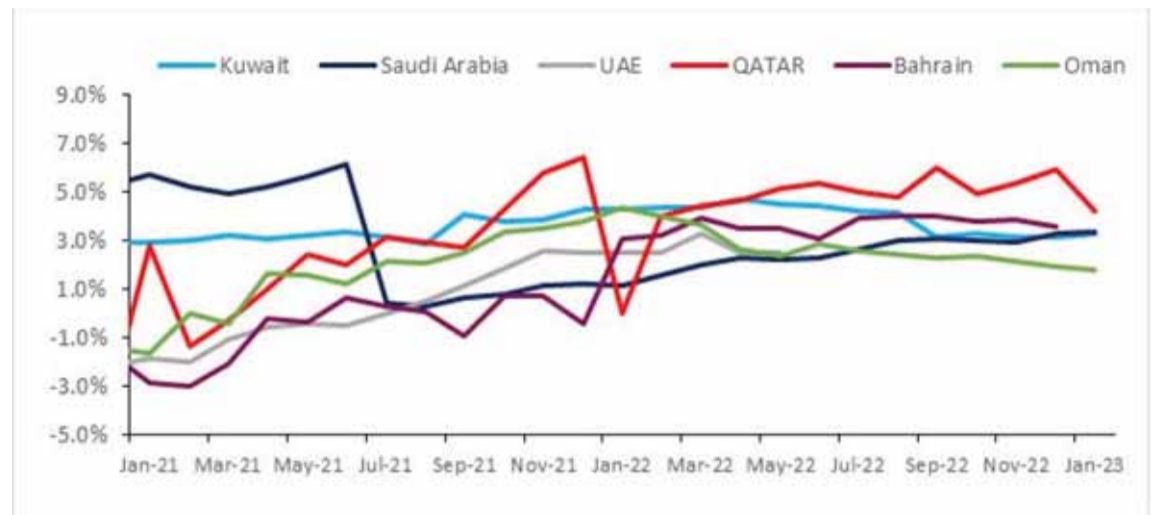
and natural gas prices up. The Russia-Ukraine conflict also created a negative sentiment in energy markets as the war nears its one-year anniversary.

In 2022, European natural gas prices reached record highs. The Dutch TTF natural gas future prices touched EUR 340/MWh in August-2022, the highest levels ever recorded, while the US oil prices spiked to 13-year high of over \$130 per barrel during March-2022. Russia and Ukraine are key producers of global foodstuffs. Between them the two countries export nearly one third of the world's wheat exports and barley and over 70 percent of its sunflower.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has prevented export of foodgrains from those countries from leaving their shores causing worldwide price increases in food as well as other repercussions such as fear of food shortages, inflation, and political instability. Inflation reached a peak of 9.1 percent in June-2022 in the US and has mostly trended downwards thereafter. Inflationary pressure is also expected to ease in the near term. According to the IMF, nearly 84 percent of the countries in the world are forecasted to have lower consumer price index inflation growth in 2023 than in 2022 when inflation reached the highest level in decades. In terms of global inflation growth, the IMF forecasted in its latest World Economic Report, that global headline inflation would fall from an annual average of 8.8 percent in 2022 to 6.6 percent in 2023 and further to 4.3 percent in 2024.

The IMF attributed its lower inflation projection declining international fuel and nonfuel commodity prices due to weaker global demand. Efforts to control inflation via tighter monetary policies, including higher interest rates, are expected to continue in 2023. After raising rate by 25 bps in 2023, the US Fed is expected to undertake further rate hikes as indicated in their statement as well as probability surveys from Bloomberg that shows at least two more rate hikes of 25 bps this year.

In its latest response at the start of February-2023, Saudi Arabia's Central Bank increased its repo rate by 0.25 percent to 5.25 percent while the UAE Central Bank lifted its base rate for overnight deposit facility from 4.4 percent to 4.65 percent. Similarly, Kuwait's Central Bank has raised its discount rate by 50 bps from 3.5 percent to 4 percent whereas the Central Bank of Bahrain raised its one-week deposits rate by 25 basis points to 5.5 percent. On the other hand, the



Central Bank of Qatar kept its rates intact; its repo rate at 5.25 percent, its deposit rate at 5 percent and its lending rate at 5.5 percent. GCC central banks follow the US Federal Reserve's rate changes since their local currencies are pegged to the US dollar barring Kuwait which has its currency pegged to a basket of currencies. Inflation in the MENA region is expected to affect economic growth despite being low when compared to global economies.

Efforts such as price controls and consumption subsidies in some countries in the MENA region helped to control prices. However, these measures are expected to result in additional costs to oil importing countries in the region. According to the World Bank, developing oil importing countries in the region might need to find new revenues, increase deficit, debt, or even cut government spending in other areas of the economy to fund costs of the inflation mitigation programs. In contrast, there is no such fiscal pressure for the GCC and other oil-exporting countries in the region as state revenue growth mainly from higher oil prices is expected to more than compensate for additional inflation mitigation costs incurred by governments. In the GCC region, inflation is expected to diminish in 2023 led by higher interest rates and slowing global growth.

According to PWC, inflation in the region is expected to average of 2.7 percent in 2023. The GCC region is also expected to gain from its relative stabil-

ity in its financial covers thanks to higher oil prices and higher energy exports in 2022. This would allow countries in the region to invest in critical sectors in order to protect from future fluctuations in key food and component prices. Global inflation trend According to the IMF, global inflation is expected to stabilize at 6.6 percent in 2023 and then drop to 4.3 percent in 2024 as compared to 8.8 percent in 2022.

The forecast is based on expected drop in energy prices, improving global supply chains and stabilization in prices of essential commodities. However, factors such as faster economic growth in China and a rise in energy prices can push inflationary pressures upwards. On the regional front, inflation in developing countries is projected to reach 7.9 percent in 2023 and 5.8 percent in 2024. The primary apparatus of controlling the global run-away inflation in 2022 has been the coordinated aggressive increase of benchmark rates among most of the major central banks in the world. The increase of interest rates is expected to have consequences in economic growth around the globe.

According to Morgan Stanley analysis, the US economy would stagnate during 2023 witnessing a marginal growth of 0.5 percent while economies in euro area and UK are likely to contract 0.2 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively. On the other hand, India and China are expected to drive global economic growth during 2023 with GDP expansion likely to reach 6.2 percent and 5.0 percent, respectively.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 23 FEBRUARY 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	1,108	1,077	1,115	1,077	38	10,976,703	-31	-2.80%	-0.09%	168	180	16.4	2.04	3.2%	1.01
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	313	302	314	300	14	11,339,470	-11	-3.51%	-3.82%	294	303	15.9	1.38	3.2%	1.27
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	197	195	198	193	5	21,108,727	-2	-1.02%	-0.51%	194	198	24.5	0.60	2.0%	1.16
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	227	228	229	226	3	2,125,818	1	0.44%	4.11%	227	233	18.0	0.83	2.1%	1.28
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	878	868	882	865	17	35,876,125	-10	-1.14%	5.47%	855	874	26.8	1.99	1.2%	1.16
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	779	758	779	756	23	2,972,644	-20	-2.57%	-5.01%	754	761	54.6	3.01	0.6%	1.09
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	144	135	144	134	10	7,175,551	-10	-6.90%	-11.18%	133	141	120.2	0.63	18.2%	1.81
204	National Investments	Financial Services	238	236	239	231	8	425,810	-1	-0.42%	-0.42%	232	237	17.4	0.97	19.0%	1.87
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	116	113	116	110	6	8,219,964	-3	-2.59%	0.89%	110	113	NM	0.57	4.5%	1.00
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	125	120	126	115	11	20,657,828	-5	-4.00%	4.35%	112	121	11.9	0.84	2.0%	1.14
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	146	140	148	138	10	15,270,793	-6	-4.11%	5.26%	136	146	10.5	1.01	0.0%	1.64
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	63.3	60.2	63.3	59.9	3	5,696,669	-2.6	-4.14%	-19.63%	60.2	62	NM	0.38	14.7%	1.23
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	111	111	113	109	4	31,945,207	1	0.91%	2.78%	108	111	16.2	0.81	2.6%	1.08
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	829	797	838	794	44	1,206,159	-32	-3.86%	-6.01%	787	809	16.4	1.74	1.6%	1.03
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	104	100.8	104	99.2	5	11,748,207	-2	-2.14%	1.92%	99	104	20.4	0.61	5.0%	0.62
501	National Industries	Financial Services	209	207	209	206	3	2,280,119	-1	-0.48%	-4.61%	202	210	10.5	0.92	5.3%	1.50
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,245	1,234	1,245	1,208	37	126,745	-2	-0.16%	1.56%	1,226	1,260	11.9	1.18	4.9%	1.01
506	HEISCO	Industrials	609	610	615	602	13	928,560	2	0.33%	-0.49%	590	611	20.2	1.61	3.3%	0.75
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	794	791	798	782	16	790,517	-3	-0.38%	-1.13%	790	813	8.3	1.56	7.6%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	605	593	607	583	24	10,453,987	-15	-2.47%	-17.64%	583	618	38.8	1.09	2.8%	1.57
605	Zain	Telecommunications	549	553	559	542	17	18,345,749	5	0.91%	-1.78%	546	557	12.7	1.98	6.0%	0.77
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,531	3,712	3,727	3,531	196	1,347,043	132	3.69%	5.45%	3,560	3,585	8.8	3.35	10.9%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	208	199	208	198	10	3,123,589	-8	-3.86%	-1.97%	195	206	NM	0.88	0.0%	1.18
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,775	1,748	1,775	1,702	73	766,024	-2	-0.11%	-8.00%	1,700	1,780	19.3	10.59	2.6%	1.43
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	77.7	76	78	75.8	2.2	22,098,002	-1.8	-2.31%	0.00%	74.2	76.6	9.4	0.87	6.4%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	233	231	234	229	5	9,832,168	-3	-1.28%	-1.70%	229	235	31.3	1.24	0.0%	1.09
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	387	396	403	387	16	3,862,267	11	2.86%	0.76%	380	390	NM	1.26	3.9%	0.48
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	367	368	370	365	5	3,994,947	-1	-0.27%	-0.54%	358	371	23.9	1.50	2.7%	0.73
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	183	183	185	180	5	2,241,674	-2	-1.08%	-2.66%	182	186	15.1	1.70	9.8%	0.49
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	2,154	2,045	2,180	2,030	150	441,265	-105	-4.88%	-0.34%	2,035	2,070	23.2	6.39	4.1%	0.98
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	881	870	882	855	27	1,830,769	-5	-0.57%	8.07%	860	887	11.9	3.25	0.0%	0.47

\* As of end of week closing

## Business

Moody's Investor Service Report

# Tight financing conditions challenge frontier markets' credit strength

## Although emerging market inflation is falling, GDP growth will flatline

WASHINGTON: Recent improvement in financing conditions is positive for many emerging market (EM) issuers, with inflation, yields and spreads all somewhat lower since November 2022. Nevertheless, hopes for rate cuts in the US (Aaa stable) in the near term are likely misplaced, while China's (A1 stable) rebound will not provide the same broad-based benefits as in previous cycles. Financing conditions will remain tight, with frontier economies most exposed. Some of the recent easing in EM financing conditions will likely reverse, with more volatility ahead. The recent easing partly reflects declining inflation, which has spurred expectations that the tightening cycle may have peaked. However, we continue to assume that monetary policy will remain restrictive, with rate cuts unlikely in 2023. While hopes of a more benign growth environment are increasing, the corollary of a sustained decline in inflation will be significantly lower growth.

China rebound is positive but will provide only limited, short-term benefits for most EMs. While China's swift reopening in late 2022 is positive for China's real GDP growth, domestic consumption is the main driver of the increase. This is positive for Asian countries with large tourism sectors but will not likely have a major effect on most other EMs. We believe China's GDP growth will decline structurally unless there is a large pickup in productivity and consumption.

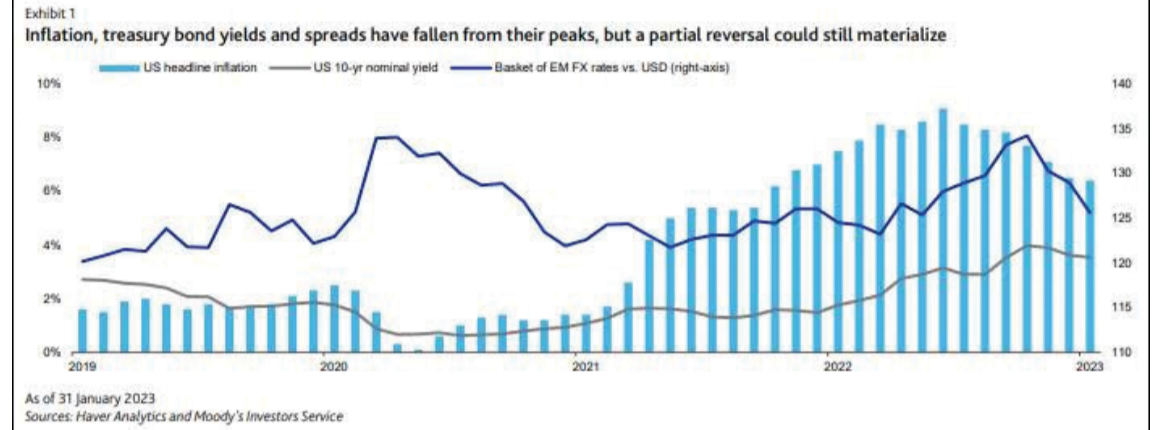
EM inflation is falling as economies respond to the decisive steps taken by central banks since 2021 and the effects of commodity prices retracting from their peak. However, growth is also set to ease for most EMs in 2023. Any accompanying increase in unemployment and social risks will pose challenges to policymaking and creditworthiness. "Elevated default risks are concentrated in a handful of frontier sovereigns. While 25 percent of rated EM sovereigns have ratings of Caa1 or below, they account for less than 10 percent of total external

rated debt and some have already defaulted. For the remaining EM sovereigns that we rate, default risks are most acute for frontier economies, in particular those with lower incomes and less access to international capital markets. In contrast, larger and higher-rated EM sovereigns will continue to demonstrate the resilience they have shown in recent months. Our baseline forecast for US real GDP assumes generally flat growth with a recession in the middle of 2023, reflecting the US Federal Reserve's determination to raise domestic interest rates high enough to bring down inflation sustainably.

While some recent economic data suggests that economic growth remains very resilient and that headline inflation has also fallen, core inflation remains elevated. Were a recession to be avoided, it would likely sustain the current positive sentiment toward EMs. This is not our baseline forecast, however. Despite the positive benefits of robust economic growth, we anticipate that EM financial conditions will continue to remain challenging for much of 2023. China rebound is positive but will provide only limited, short-term benefits for most EMs. The relaxation of China's COVID-19 control measures at the end of 2022 have provided a further tailwind for EMs.

In conjunction with a shift in policy focus to growth from regulatory tightening and deleveraging, China's economic output in 2023 will likely be stronger than previously expected. Recent data points also suggest a strong rebound in consumption and services activity because of the reopening of borders and the Lunar New Year holiday. For example, some outbound travel bookings over this period have increased by over 600% from 2022 (according to booking sites), with the biggest benefits for neighboring Asian countries such as Thailand (Baa1 stable) and Malaysia (A3 stable). Nevertheless, we believe that infrastructure investment and manufacturing growth will moderate

Some of the recent easing in EM financing conditions will likely reverse, with more volatility ahead. Since November 2022, most of the key US indicators relevant for EMs have softened from their peak. They include: (1) inflation; (2) treasury bond yields and; (3) the US dollar (see Exhibit 1).



from the strong pace in 2022. This, together with weaker exports, will weigh on manufacturing investment and production. Furthermore, a significant unknown is whether the property market will stabilize.

Given that the measures announced so far are unlikely to stimulate a full return in market confidence, a recovery may require some time. Reflecting the above, we think a broad short-term boost to most EMs' GDP growth will be limited. It is also notable that the increase in commodity prices (with the exception of iron ore) since China's reopening has been relatively muted, meaning limited net benefits for most EM commodity exporters in 2023.

The primary focus for EM macro conditions in 2023 will be GDP growth rather than inflation. Throughout

most of 2022, EM central banks demonstrated their ability and willingness to lower inflation and defend their currencies against excessive volatility. Most notably, central banks in Latin America and in particular, Brazil (Baa2 stable), responded earlier and more aggressively than those in advanced economies. As a consequence, inflation is generally falling in most major EM economies, including in some parts of Eastern Europe and Africa, where the effects of high energy and food prices have been particularly severe (see Exhibit 3). For most EMs, we expect inflation to trend toward central banks' targets throughout 2023. While this would be a positive development overall, price levels still remain high in absolute terms and will continue to dent both purchasing power and growth.

## Turkey cuts key borrowing rate to aid quake recovery

ISTANBUL: Turkey's central bank on Thursday dropped its key interest rate by half a percentage point to 8.5 percent, saying the cheaper borrowing cost would bolster earthquake recovery efforts even as inflation rages. Turkey was already battling runaway inflation and relying on wealthy allies to keep its economy afloat when the massive earthquake on February 6 killed more than 43,000 people, razed entire cities and left millions needing urgent help. It must now pour billions of dollars into rebuilding 11 southeastern provinces flattened by the disaster, the worst in its post-Ottoman history. The central bank said the cut to its key rate would support employment and industrial output, and predicted a quick recovery despite the economic toll.

"Despite the expected impact of the earthquake on economic activity in the short term, it is estimated that its effects will not have a sustained impact on the performance of the Turkish economy in the medium term," the bank said in a statement. "The (bank's) board believes that monetary policy following this measured cut is sufficient to sustain the necessary post-earthquake recovery while preserving financial and price stability," it added.

A prominent business group has estimated there was some \$84 billion in quake damage, but estimates from other experts are more conservative, putting the total closer to \$10 billion. As many as 164,000 buildings were destroyed by the quake or left beyond repair, according to an official estimate. When the quake hit, Turkey's official annual inflation rate had slowed to 58 percent from a two-decade high of 85 percent last year.

But independent economists at the Inflation Research Group (ENAG) said the inflation rate was in fact as high as 121.6 percent in January, down from 137.5 percent in December. —AFP

## World Bank hopes to select new chief by May

WASHINGTON: The World Bank said Wednesday it hopes to find a successor by early May to chief David Malpass, who has announced he will step down nearly a year early. The Washington-based development lender will begin accepting candidate nominations on Thursday, a process that will run until March 29. The bank says women candidates would be "strongly" encouraged.

A shortlist of three candidates will then be issued, followed by "formal interviews... with the expectation of selecting the new president by early May 2023." By informal agreement, not cited in the statement, the president of the World Bank is typically an American, while the head of the International Monetary Fund is customarily a European. The 66-year-old Malpass, was appointed in 2019 when Donald Trump was president after previously serving as Under Secretary of the Treasury for international affairs. A week ago, he made a surprise announcement that he would leave his post nearly a year before his term was due to expire in 2024. His tenure at the World Bank saw the organization grapple with global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and an international economic slowdown. —AFP

## Hong Kong exchange reports IPO drought in 2022 as profits slide

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's stock exchange last year saw the fewest new listings in more than a decade, it said Thursday as the city struggles to emerge from pandemic isolation and kickstart an economic recovery. Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing (HKEX) reported 90 initial public offerings during 2022, raking in HK\$104.6 billion (\$13.3 billion), a fall of almost 70 percent from the previous year.

Before the pandemic, Hong Kong's bourse was often crowned as the top IPO venue in the world, drawing more than 100 new listings annually between 2013 and 2020. The latest figures mark a steep drop from peak levels in 2020 when IPOs raised HK\$400 billion.

The recession-hit city's exchange also saw annual profits plunge 20 percent to HK\$10.1 billion, the first

drop since 2016. At the start of last year, vast swathes of Hong Kong's economy shut down as the highly transmissible Omicron variant fuelled the city's worst-ever coronavirus outbreak.

The economic environment was further complicated by a regulatory crackdown in mainland China that waylaid initial public offerings from Chinese mega-companies. Hong Kong markets rallied last month as investors rode a wave of optimism about China's reopening and hopes for an easing of US interest rate hikes, though they have since fallen from a peak in late January. Still HKEX saw a burst of activity in the final stretch of 2022, with the last month alone accounting for nearly a quarter of the IPOs.

Profits in the fourth quarter also rose 11 percent on-year to HK\$2.98 billion, while quarterly revenue was up seven percent. The second half of the year showed "encouraging momentum" in the IPO market and Hong Kong remains in the top four markets globally in 2022, the exchange operator said.

"Despite the challenging global economic and geopolitical backdrop, HKEX remained one of the world's premier capital-raising venues," said chief executive Nicolas Aguzin.



The Chinese finance hub has renewed its search for international listings, with city leader John Lee personally making overtures to Saudi Aramco. HKEX's share price has slipped around three percent since the start of the year while the city's benchmark Hang Seng Index is up around three percent.

On Wednesday, Hong Kong finance chief Paul Chan said the stock exchange will study proposals to remain open during bad weather. —AFP

## Huawei MatePad SE 10.4" Kids Edition ideal for children

KUWAIT: In today's digital age, children are increasingly exposed to technology from a young age. While some parents may have concerns about the effects of screen time on their children, others see the benefits that technology can offer in terms of education, entertainment, and developing digital skills all in a safe and healthy way.

Huawei recently launched a unique kids' tablet - the Huawei MatePad SE 10.4" Kids Edition, specifically designed for children aged 3-8 with their health, safety and education in mind. Available in 10.4-inch display, this latest addition to the Huawei MatePad Series comes with a dedicated area for your children called Kids Corner, an Eye Comfort 2K Display, and parental assistant features in addition to a brand new Kids Case. The new Huawei MatePad SE 10.4" Kids Edition stands firm as the tablet to accompany the growth of children safely and healthily.

### Kids' Corner

Kids' Corner is a child-centric treasure chest that can be accessed from the ordinary main screen for adult use. Parents can use passwords to manage the switching in and out of Kids Corner. Aside from multi-layer eye care modes and parental control settings, Kids Corner is packed with a wealth of children-friendly apps with a playful interface. Kids Corner also features Kids painting, Recorder, and Camera, among many other features. Huawei MatePad SE 10.4" Kids Edition is a springboard for children's creativity, giving them the chance to capture funny and interesting moments, sketch out their dreams, and record their creations.

Huawei has collaborated with Baby Panda World and Azoomee, two educational apps for children, to provide a constant stream of enriching and educational content. The tablet comes with a free three-month VIP membership to Baby Panda World and a free one-year VIP membership to Azoomee.

## S Korea freezes rates at 3.5%

SEOUL: South Korea's central bank on Thursday froze benchmark interest rates at 3.5 percent owing to concerns over the slowing economy, ending a year-long run of hikes. The Bank of Korea decision comes after the economy shrank in the last three months of 2022 — the first time since



### Eye comfort 2K display

The Huawei MatePad SE 10.4" Kids Edition uses the power of technology to protect children's eyes from the hazards of digital viewing. The tablet's Eye Comfort mode has obtained the TÜV Rheinland Low Blue Light Certification and Flicker Free Certification, demonstrating itself to be effective at filtering out harmful blue light and preventing eye fatigue caused by flickers.

The Huawei MatePad SE 10.4" Kids Edition comes with 4096-level auto brightness adjustment that takes the ambient lighting conditions into account, which means that the screen brightness changes in accordance with the lighting environment. Thanks to the presence of an ambient light sensor and gyroscope, the tablet is packed with five eye care modes, which are Blue light filter, Posture alerts, Brightness alerts, Bumpy road alerts, and eBook mode, which help children maintain healthy digital habits.

### Parental assistant

Children often pester their parents so that they can watch their favorite cartoons or play their favorite games - and when done in excess, these activities can undermine academic performance and



effect the child's eyesight. Huawei MatePad SE 10.4" Kids Edition takes the need for wholesome digital habits into account - providing a range of parental control settings in Kids Corner that help ensure that kids are spending quality time on their tablets.

A parent's password is required to change the parental control settings or exit Kids Corner to return to the home screen. Comprehensive content and time management settings allow parents to make certain apps, images and videos off limits, ensuring that children only access age-appropriate content, and adhere to set screen time limits. This gives parents peace of mind while providing children with the space to pursue their passions. Moreover, parents can choose via app management which apps their children are able to access, and add the apps to the home screen of Kids Corner. They can also select videos and images that they authorize their child to see in the Kids Corner's Multimedia via content management. In Kid's profile, parents can view their child's usage records, including usage time of the current week and previous week, and list of apps access durations. This gives parents a good understanding of how their child is learning and growing, and intervene early if they detect any unhealthy habits.

assessing the pace of (the) inflation slowdown". "Currently available information suggests that the slowdown of global economic growth and inflation has continued," it added.

The BOK said the economy had slowed because of weakening consumption and a continued decrease in exports. Economic conditions could improve in the second half of the year, with recovery in the Chinese economy and demand in the IT industry bouncing back, but global economic uncertainties were still "judged to be high", the bank said. —AFP



## Isa Cultural Center offers unique journey into Bahrain's past, present

The Isa Cultural Center (ICC) takes visitors on a journey featuring Kingdom of Bahrain's past and present while also highlighting future aspirations. ICC is a unique architectural edifice of its kind, combining originality of traditional architecture and sophisticated technology. The ICC, named after the late Amir

Sheikh Isa Al-Khalifa, is one of Bahrain's leading cultural institutions that offered services in intellectual, cultural and scientific domains. The center consists of the Historical Documents Center, the National Library, the E-Library, and the Exhibitions, Conferences and Seminars halls and venues. — KUNA



## Met Opera's 2023-24 season dominated by the contemporary

The prestigious Metropolitan Opera will escalate its turn towards newer productions in its coming season, including with a staging of "X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X." It's part of the 143-year-old New York institution's push to diversify its audiences that traditionally have skewed elderly and white.

As it continues climbing back following the havoc the early pandemic wrought on live performance, the Met was forced to take out \$23 million from its endowment, according to a report by The New York Times, and cut its total number of performances by 10 percent. But despite the challenges the company has found resounding success recently with a number of operas by living composers, including "The Hours" and "Fire Shut Up In My Bones."

Both of those productions will return in 2023-24. The season kicks off in September with "Dead Man Walking," a crime drama based on the book of the same name that also inspired an Academy Award-nominated film.

And the Met's staging of "X," which opens there November 3 — will see

Robert O'Hara, the Tony-nominated director of the acclaimed "Slave Play," debut at the operahouse as he oversees the production. As it expands its repertoire it's still giving plenty of space to its classics, including Bizet's "Carmen" and Verdi's "La Forza del Destino."

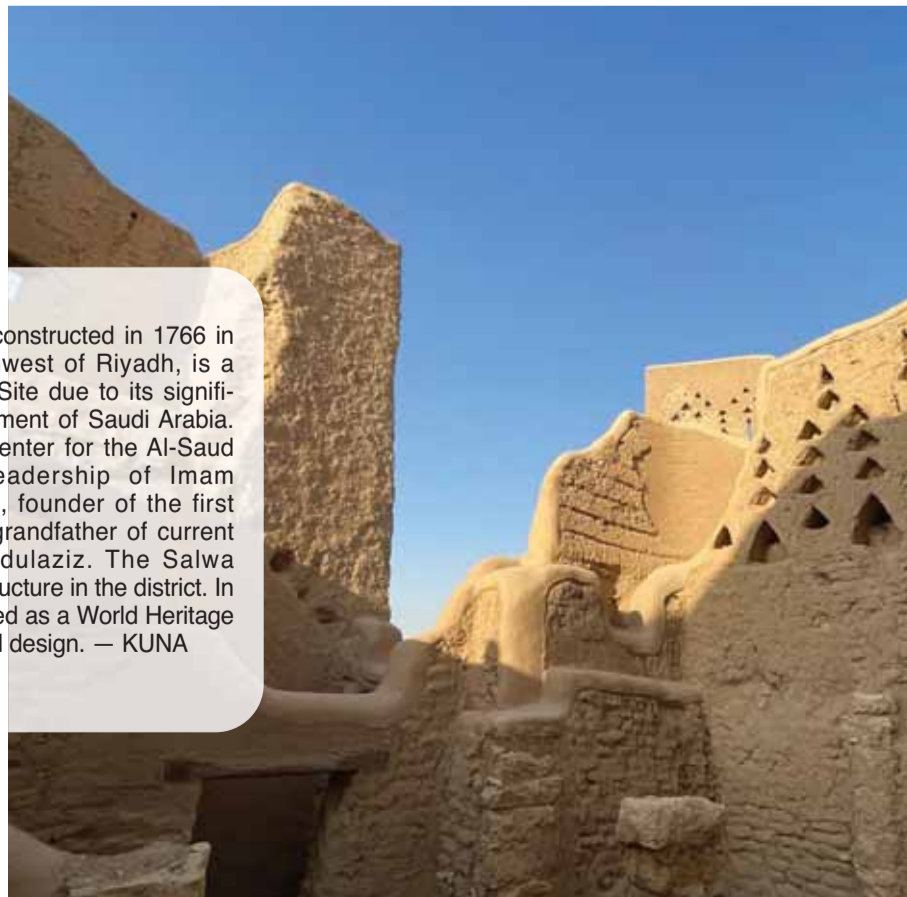
Speaking to AFP last year, the Met's General Manager Peter Gelb called the storied institution's audience "eclectic," and said that the Met must continue to push artistic boundaries even if some old-timers prefer tradition. "For the art form to survive we have to break new ground," he said. "Art is about change." — AFP

In this file photo American soprano Renee Lynn Fleming performs during a rehearsal for "The Hours" at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. — AFP



## AT-TURAIIF DISTRICT First capital of Saudi state

At-Turaif district, constructed in 1766 in Al-Diriyah northwest of Riyadh, is a World Heritage Site due to its significance to the establishment of Saudi Arabia. The district was the center for the Al-Saud family under the leadership of Imam Mohammad bin Saud, founder of the first Saudi state and fifth grandfather of current King Salman bin Abdulaziz. The Salwa Palace is the largest structure in the district. In 2010, At-Turaif was listed as a World Heritage Site for its buildings and design. — KUNA



## Lifestyle | Features



This handout photo shows the Neronian tiny points found in Grotte Mandrin were which experimentally reproduced using the same flint and replicating the same technologies. — AFP photos



Dr Ludovic Slimak holding a Neronian nanopoint found in Grotte Mandrin layer E. The studies of these light points show that these tiny points were used as arrowheads 54,000 years ago in Mediterranean France.



A horse mandibular and a Neronian point appearing on the archaeological layer E (Neronian) from Grotte Mandrin.

## HOMO SAPIENS IN EUROPE USED BOW-AND-ARROW 54,000 YEARS AGO

A cave in southern France has revealed evidence of the first use of bows and arrows in Europe by modern humans some 54,000 years ago, far earlier than previously known. The research, published on Wednesday in the journal *Science Advances*, pushes back the age of archery in Europe by more than 40,000 years.

Stellmoor in Germany, dating back 10,000 to 12,000 years.

The new research comes from the Mandrin rock shelter overlooking the middle valley of the Rhone River in southern France. The Grotte Mandrin site, which was first excavated in 1990, includes layer upon layer of archaeological remains dating back over 80,000 years.

uted to the presence of Homo sapiens some 54,000 years ago and is interposed between layers of numerous Neanderthal occupations.

The researchers conducted a functional analysis of flint artifacts found in Layer E that were more finely executed than the points and blades in the layers above and below. Tiny flint points were the key because other elements of archery technology such as wood, fibers, leather, resins and sinew are perishable and rarely preserved in European Paleolithic sites.

### 'Too light to be efficient'

For the study, the researchers reproduced the tiny flint points found in the cave, some of which are smaller than a US penny, and fired them as arrowheads with a replica bow at dead animals. "We couldn't throw them at the animals any other way than with a bow because they were too tiny and too light to be efficient," said Laure Metz of Aix Marseille University, a co-author of the study along with Ludovic Slimak of the University of Toulouse.

"We had to use this kind of propulsion," Metz told AFP. "The only way that it was working was with a bow."

Fractures on the flint points were compared with scars found on the artifacts found in the cave, proving undoubtedly that they were used as arrowheads,



This handout photo shows the view of archeological excavations at the entrance of the Grotte Mandrin.

the researchers said. "Fractures for a lot of them, not all, were fractures of impact," Metz said. "And they are coming at the end of the point." Metz said the evidence suggests that the Neanderthals and the Homo sapiens who used in the cave likely met at some point although "we don't know the nature of the meeting, whether it was nicely or not." The Neanderthals who inhabited the Mandrin site continued to use traditional weapons, however, such as thrust or hand-thrown spears and did not

develop mechanically propelled weapons, she said. "The traditions and technologies mastered by these two populations were thus profoundly distinct, illustrating a remarkable objective technological advantage to modern populations during their expansion into the European continent," the researchers said. Metz said the occupants of the cave would have typically hunted horses, bison and deer and animal bones have been found inside. — AFP

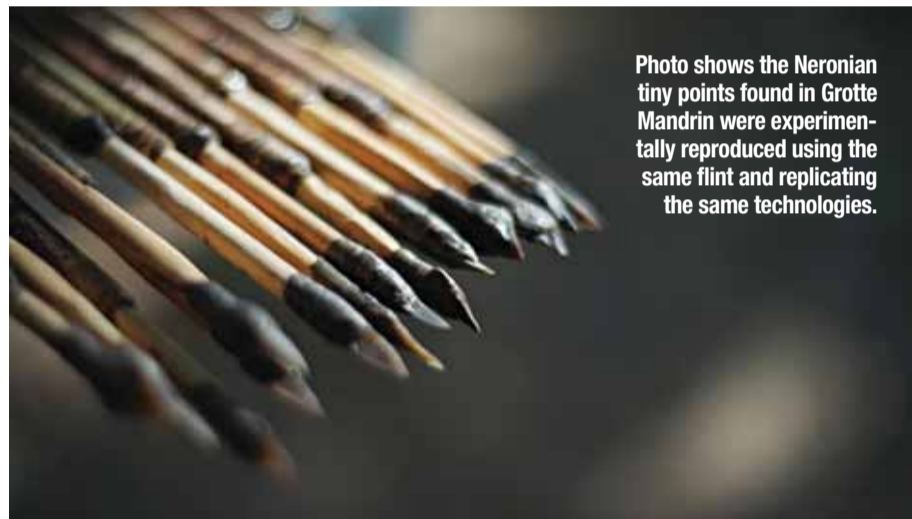


Photo shows the Neronian tiny points found in Grotte Mandrin were experimentally reproduced using the same flint and replicating the same technologies.

The use of the bow-and-arrow in Africa has been documented to date back some 70,000 years. But the oldest previous evidence of archery in Europe was the discovery of bows and arrows in peat bogs of Northern Europe, notably

The researchers who conducted the latest study have documented previously that Neanderthals and their modern "cousins"—Homo sapiens—alternated in inhabiting the Mandrin cave. A level known as the "Layer E" has been attrib-



Employees pose with an artwork entitled 'Dance on the Beach' (The Reinhardt Frieze) by Edvard Munch, during a photocall at Sotheby's auction house in central London.— AFP photos

## Kandinsky work among masterpieces at London auction

A newly restored masterpiece by Wassily Kandinsky, "Murnau Mit Kirche II", will be auctioned in London on March 1, alongside a Munch and a Kupka once owned by Sean Connery. Valued at \$45 million (42 million euros), the 1910 Kandinsky painting heralded the Russian master's move towards abstraction. Measuring around one meter (three feet) by one meter, it offers a colorful vision of the German village of Murnau, with its pointed roofs and church spire stretched like the peaks of the Bavarian Alps. The oil work once adorned the dining room of couple Johanna Margarethe Stern and Siegbert Stern, founders of a textile company.

At the heart of Berlin's cultural life in the 1920s, counting Thomas Mann, Franz Kafka and Albert Einstein in their

circle, they built up a collection of around 100 paintings and drawings. Siegbert Stern died of natural causes in 1935. His wife fled to the Netherlands but died in Auschwitz in May 1944 after being captured by the Nazis.

"Murnau Mit Kirche II" was only identified a decade ago in a museum in Eindhoven, where it had been since 1951. It was returned last year to the Stern heirs, whose 13 survivors will share the proceeds. They include one member of the family who was in hiding during the war. "Nothing can undo the wrongs of the past," said a statement from the family. But the painting's restitution was "immensely significant to us, because it is an acknowledgement and partially closes a wound that has remained open over the generations".

### A hidden Munch

The sale at Sotheby's will also see a painting by Edvard Munch, "Dance on the Beach" (1906-7), go under the hammer. The work, which was kept safe from the Nazis in a barn in a Norwegian forest, is expected to fetch \$15-25 million. Also on sale will be Frantisek Kupka's 1912 work "Complexe", which belonged to the late James Bond actor Sean Connery.

It is expected to sell for \$2.6-3.4 million, which would be a record for the Czech artist at auction. The proceeds will go to the Sean Connery Foundation, created by his estate to deliver grants to institutions and organizations in Scotland and The Bahamas. —AFP



Employees pose with an artwork entitled 'Murnau mi Kirche II' (Murnau with Church II) by Wassily Kandinsky, during a photocall at Sotheby's auction house in central London.



An employe poses with an artwork entitled 'Fille au bateau (Maya)' by Pablo Picasso, during a photocall at Sotheby's auction house.

## Berlin film festival shines stark spotlight on Ukraine

From desperate attempts to round up injured troops from the trenches to children playing on burnt-out tanks, Ukrainian filmmakers have brought the battle against Russia in all its horror to this year's Berlinale film festival. "There are no red carpets at the front line. There is red blood-soaked soil," Ukrainian ambassador to Germany Oleksiy Makeiev told visitors to an event to showcase Ukrainian cinema at the country's embassy in Berlin.

"There are no second cuts on the front line. There is only one chance to protect the country," he said. The Berlinale is championing Ukrainian cinema this year in a bid to support filmmakers and highlight the brutal reality of the country's war with Russia on its first anniversary. Europe's first big cinema showcase of the year, which runs until February 26, is spotlighting Ukraine with a host of screenings, merchandise and fringe events.

The festival opened on February 16 with a video address from President Volodymyr Zelensky, who is the subject of a documentary premiered at the event by two-time Oscar winner Sean Penn. Makeiev will also join Ukrainian filmmakers for a red-carpet demonstration on February 24, exactly one year on from Russia's invasion. And a new European support fund for Ukrainian cinema worth one million euros (\$1.06 million) was launched during the festival by the culture ministers of France, Germany and Luxembourg.

### No holds barred

New Ukrainian films showing at the Berlinale include "Eastern Front", a no-holds-barred documentary filmed on the front line by filmmaker and volunteer medic Yevhen Titarenko. Co-directed by Titarenko and Russia's Vitaly Mansky, the film leaves nothing to the imagination as it follows the desperate effort to round up injured and dying troops from the trenches.

Titarenko, 34, ran a film production business in Crimea until 2014, when Russia annexed the peninsula. He travelled to the Donetsk region later that year, initially with the intention of making a documentary. "I saw with my own eyes what was going on and made a decision to take part as a volunteer," Titarenko told AFP.

He has since made more than a dozen films "to show people how (war) looks from the inside", including this latest focused on the first months of

Russia's full-scale invasion. "Ukrainians don't want to fight and (go to) war, we want to make culture, normal things like in other countries. But we've got no other choice," he said.

### 'Heartbreaking'

Another new film showing at the festival is Alisa Kovalenko's "We Will Not Fade Away", a documentary following the lives of five teenagers in the Donbas. Kovalenko, 35, began filming the teens in 2018 as they were preparing to embark on an expedition to the Himalayas. After Russia's invasion, she temporarily abandoned the project to spend four months fighting on the front line with volunteer battalions in Kyiv and Kharkiv.

She then eventually returned to the footage and began editing it, a process that turned out to be "heartbreaking". "We understood that we had to change everything in the editing. It's completely another film," Kovalenko told AFP. The result is a haunting portrait of a fragile peace through the eyes of the teenagers, with the Himalayas expedition itself fading into the background.

"It's about hope and the power of dreams," Kovalenko said. "Russia can bomb our cities, we stay without electricity, we can have no lights in our windows but if you still have this hope and you have dreams you still can have this light inside you. And this light Russians and war cannot take away from you," she said.

Two of the protagonists have since fled the region, while two have gone missing. Other Ukrainian films on show include "Do You Love Me?", a fictional portrait of a teenage girl coming of age amid the collapse of the Soviet Union, and "In Ukraine", a documentary showing snapshots of daily life under war in Ukraine's towns and cities.

"In Ukraine" shows children playing on burnt-out tanks and in urban play areas with destroyed buildings in the background. The festival is also screening Ukrainian director Roman Liubiy's "Iron Butterflies", which chronicles the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 by Russian-armed separatists in eastern Ukraine. "We want to show our solidarity with Ukraine and with the people in Ukraine as well as the filmmakers," festival chief Mariette Rissenbeek told visitors to the Ukrainian embassy. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Francisca, resident of the town of Aserradores, Pacific Coast of Nicaragua, trudges at a mangrove swamp to collect black shells and later sell them to tourists and restaurants in the area. — AFP photos



View of footprints of black shell female collectors at a mangrove swamp near the town of Aserradores, Pacific Coast of Nicaragua.

# When men won't 'get dirty', Nicaraguan women dig for cockles

From a young age, Elena Martinez and other female residents of Aserradores, a small fishing community in eastern Nicaragua, learn to navigate the dense mangrove forest to extract a black mollusc from deep under the mud. Every few days, they leave home at dawn to row about two kilome-

ters (1.2 miles) in a fishing boat to the mangroves, where they crawl through gnarly branches knee-deep in mud, digging for the delicacy by hand. While keeping food on the table, the women also help conserve the mangrove forest - a natural barrier that harbors countless animal species and protects coastal settlements from floods, tidal

waves and hurricane winds. It is hard, back-breaking work that leaves the women covered in mud from head to toe. But 40-year-old Martinez and her companions laugh and joke as they go about the task of finding mangrove cockles.

In several hours they each gather a small pile of the mollusc known to sci-

women" do this job "because men don't like to get dirty, they don't like to get scratched" by the mangrove branches, said Martinez. "We have to do it because of our children, for our children's studies. We have to find a way to feed them," she explained. The men of Aserradores make a living mainly from fishing for the table and to sell. But the fish are getting fewer.

### 'We plant, we reforest'

The work of Martinez and her colleagues is also important for conservation. While digging for cockles in the Aserradores estuary more than 150 kilometers (93 miles) northwest of Managua, they deposit seedlings provided by environmental authorities and NGOs to repopulate the mangrove forest. "What we do is protect the mangrove... we plant, we reforest," said Martinez as she deftly dug into the mud, removed a cockle, and placed it in a bag hanging from her waist. "It is for our own sake, that of our children and the rest" of the community, she said.

Martinez was 10 when she first started to gather cockles, at a time the finite nature of the resource was not appreciated, she said. "Growing up, I did not consider how valuable it was... we took large amounts of shells without thinking that maybe one day they will run out and we won't have anything with which to sustain our children."



A woman prepares black shells for lunch with her family at town of Aserradores, Pacific Coast of Nicaragua, which she collected at a mangrove swamp, and which she usually sells to tourists and restaurants in the area.

Martinez is a mother of three youngsters in their twenties engaged in fishing. Juana Izquierdo, 50, recalls that as a child, the cockles were so plentiful she scooped them up from the surface of the mud but over the years, "they started decreasing because there were more collectors." Nowadays, she returns smaller cockles to the mud to grow, "to protect and save our mangrove."

About 100 women in the municipality of El Viejo, which includes Aserradores,

are involved in cockle harvesting and mangrove reforestation. "We work three days and rest three or four days, then we return," said Izquierdo. "We support our family. In the sea, sometimes they catch fish, sometimes not, sometimes the poor things (men) only earn enough for fuel. And since we row, we don't spend anything on fuel, we just spend our energy," she said. — AFP



Elena Martinez, resident of the town of Aserradero, Pacific Coast of Nicaragua, shows black shells she collected from a mangrove swamp to later sell them to tourists and restaurants in the area.



A woman prepares black shells for lunch in the town of Aserradores, Pacific Coast of Nicaragua, which she collected at a mangrove swamp, and which she usually sells to tourists and restaurants in the area.

ence as *Anadara tuberculosa* - some for home consumption, but most to sell in town. The cockle is a popular menu item in Nicaragua and famed for purported aphrodisiac qualities.

Restaurants can resell a dozen cockles for as much as 120 cordobas (about \$3.30), but the women only get about a quarter to a sixth of that price. "Only

People walk towards the small island of San Biagio, off Manerba del Garda, Lake Garda. — AFP photos



People walk towards the small island of San Biagio, off Manerba del Garda, Lake Garda. — AFP photos



People walk from the small island of San Biagio, off Manerba del Garda, Lake Garda, towards the Belvedere point (Rear).

## Lake Garda tourists flock to island reconnected by drought

On foot or by bike, visitors stream across the narrow path connecting the small island to the edge of Lake Garda, a symbol of the winter drought hitting northern Italy. Dotted with cypresses and rocky white beach-



People walk on the small island of San Biagio, off Manerba del Garda, Lake Garda.

es, San Biagio island was in the past only accessible by boat. But historically low waters on the lake have revealed a sand and stone causeway-and tourists are flocking to the site.

"It's a beautiful sight, but sad at the same time, because it's caused by drought. We hope it will be short-lived," said Alberto Pampuri, 62, who cycled to the spot with his wife and two friends from nearby Brescia. The unusual phenomenon recalls the "Floating Piers" installation created in 2016 by artist Christo, when yellow floating footbridges were placed across nearby Lake Iseo.

"But they were artificial bridges, whereas this is a natural work of art," said Agata Carteri, a 48-year-old teacher. A lack of snow on the surrounding mountains, warm temperatures and no rain for six weeks have combined to bring the water levels of Garda, Italy's largest lake, to its lowest winter level for 30 years. The waterline is 60 to 70 centimeters (around two feet) below the average for the last few decades.

### Warning signs

After a record drought last summer which devastated harvests, the north of Italy is once again showing warning signs, with water levels low in the River Po, Lake Maggiore and Lake Como. Five years ago, Matteo Fiori had to wade his way to San Biagio island, also known as the Island of Rabbits, holding his rucksack above his head to keep it dry. "The water came up to my chest, it was an adventure," the 45-year-old social worker said as he surveyed the newly emerged causeway.

While the lack of snow spells trouble for ski resorts in the mountains, the novelty of the low waters is a boost for

the little community of Manerba del Garda. "The island has become a popular out-of-season attraction," said Mayor Flaviano Mattiotti. "But if the level of the lake doesn't rise in the spring, we are ready to dredge the harbours to allow access for tourist boats, which would be a first." Almost 28 million tourists visited Lake Garda last year, around 40 percent of them from Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

### Walking on water

"It's like walking on water," said Afra Vorhauser, from the northern town of

Merano, after walking across to the uninhabited island. In the bright February sun, families ate picnics on the grass or at wooden tables, while on the exposed beaches children climbed the rocks or skimmed stones. This winter has seen a "new tourist movement, born out of the curiosity for discovering areas of the lake that are normally below water", said Paolo Artelio, head of local tourism agency Visitgarda.

These include the Grottoes of Catullus, the ruins of a Roman villa built on the Sirmione peninsula, a part of which has emerged thanks to the lower water level.

But officials are keen to emphasise that the normal attractions of the lake remain. "For tourists, nothing changes, because the lake still has an average depth of 136 meters-they can surf, sail or swim as they wish," said Pierluccio Ceresa, secretary general of the Community of Garda, which is responsible for the quality of the water. He said it was "premature to proclaim a disaster", saying that if it snows in the coming weeks and rains in March, the situation "will return to normal". — AFP



An aerial photo shows the small island of San Biagio, off Manerba del Garda, Lake Garda.

## Sports

# Six Nations sigh of relief as Wales-England to go ahead

## A fierce rivalry between neighbors

**CARDIFF:** Wales playing England at home is one of the stand-out fixtures of the Six Nations, a fierce rivalry between neighbors that sees thousands fill Cardiff for a day of rugby, drinks and cheer. Past matches have etched some of the most iconic moments in rugby history in both countries, a centuries-old ritual that has evoked high emotion since the initial game back in 1881.

In his autobiography "Number Nine Dream", ex-Wales scrum-half Rob Howley wrote: "As anyone who has ever played in an England-Wales game will tell you, the rivalry and intensity is unparalleled. It certainly doesn't need the players or the pressmen to throw fuel on the fire." "Look what these bastards have done to Wales," talismanic ex-Wales fly-half Phil Bennett famously told his teammates before the 1977 match against England they went on to win 14-9.

Wales, Bennett said, had been "exploited, raped, controlled and punished by the English", citing natural resources diverted to England and the scourge of holiday homes

among other gripes. Acrimony and animosity are generally far from the spirit of the average rugby union fan, supporters of both teams are more interested in good-natured banter than jibes based on perceived socio-economic and political exploitation, but the edge nevertheless remains. The fact Saturday's Wales-England match nearly did not go ahead has left many in both countries astounded, with even Wales captain Ken Owens saying the country were the "laughing stock" of world rugby.

### Strike averted

A potential strike by Welsh players over contractual issues was averted just on Wednesday. The Welsh Rugby Union (WRU) were left staring at massive losses had the game not gone ahead. An estimate of up to £9 million (\$11m) lost by the WRU is more than doubled for the Welsh capital's businesses on match day. "I'm pleased to announce that after extensive conversations and discussions over

the last week the Wales-England game will go ahead as scheduled," said Nigel Walker, the acting WRU chief executive.

All professional players in Wales were invited to a meeting to discuss issues with the Professional Rugby Board (PRB), which handles contractual issues, on Wednesday - a deadline set by Welsh players for progress on the matter. Many of the players' existing deals at the four Welsh regional sides expire at the end of the season. A new financial agreement between the four Welsh regions - Cardiff, Dragons, Ospreys and Scarlets - and the WRU is set to be in place from next week.

And there was compromise on a number of issues including reducing to 25 the controversial 60-cap minimum Test selection rule for players at clubs outside of Wales, guaranteed representation at PRB board meetings and the inclusion of a solely fixed contract alongside fixed-variable hybrid contracts (80 per cent in set wages, with 20 per cent as bonus payments).

"Everybody in Welsh rugby really needs to pull together now to find the best way forward and we need to do it collaboratively, together, to put Welsh rugby back at the top end of world rugby and not the laughing stock which I think we are at the moment," Wales skipper Owens said. Welsh fans will now hope that the players can put a troubled week behind them come Saturday at the Principality Stadium. Owens, while admitting that the dispute had been "a distraction", vowed: "When we have crossed that white line at training, we've prepared well and done our work as professional players. We are ready for Saturday."

"We have fronted up in training and prepared as we would for any Test match and are looking forward to going toe-to-toe with England." Wales coach Warren Gatland will now unveil his 23-man squad for the England clash on Thursday after cancelling Tuesday's scheduled team announcement, with everyone hoping the focus switches to what should be a mouth-watering match in the third round of the Six Nations. —AFP

## England unchanged for second New Zealand Test

**WELLINGTON:** England named an unchanged team for the second and final Test against New Zealand in Wellington starting Friday, after captain Ben Stokes said they had played "the perfect game" to go 1-0 up in the series. The tourists dominated the first Test in Mount Maunganui to win by 267 runs with 40-year-old fast bowler James Anderson claiming seven wickets.

The haul has seen him return to the top of the Test bowling world rankings for the sixth time in his career and the first time since 2018, deposing Australia captain Pat Cummins. Stokes was not surprised Anderson had returned to the pinnacle after claiming match figures of 7-54 at the Bay Oval, forming part of a potent pace trio with Stuart Broad and Ollie Robinson.

"I don't think he'll be that fussed by it, to be honest. He'll just keep doing his thing," Stokes said on Thursday. "I think, and a lot of guys in the dressing room do, that Jimmy has been certainly one of the best in the world for a long, long time. "He's someone I know I can throw the ball to when I need a wicket, so having someone like him along with Broady and Robbo is a real treat to be able to captain at the moment." Stokes said consideration had been given to resting one or more of his front-line seamers for the Basin Reserve contest but all three informed him on Thursday they felt fresh and ready to go.

### 'Tough sessions'

He hinted the trio may have been motivated by the grass-laden nature of the pitch, which appears to hold the promise of sideways movement. "It is a fine line between picking your strongest 11 but then also making sure your bowlers are a hundred percent ready," Stokes said. "It was pretty easy to name the team, once they gave the all-clear they were all good to go." Last week's win was England's 10th from 11 Tests under Stokes, and England's first on New Zealand soil in 15 years.

Stokes was proud his team achieved it by adhering to a game plan that involved piling pressure on New Zealand's top order when they batted in seam-friendly conditions under lights. "When we feel like it's time to put the other team under pressure, that's what we try and do and we were able to do that," Stokes said. "I think we played near enough the perfect game, considering it was a day-night Test match."

A draw or win in Wellington would subject New Zealand to their first home series defeat in six years. Black Caps skipper Tim Southee hopes a forecast for rain on each of the first two days proves inaccurate, believing his team have the pedigree to square the series. They have fashioned a strong record at the Basin Reserve, having notched seven wins and just two losses from 14 Tests there over the last decade.

"We know these conditions reasonably well and having won a few series and a lot of games in that time, I guess that's where home advantage comes into it," he said. "England, strategically, played it beautifully last week and we had a couple of tough sessions under lights. "But we're now moving forward into a traditional Test match, you can't dwell on what happened." Southee confirmed seamer Matt Henry would play after missing the first Test to attend the birth of his child but wouldn't divulge who will make way.

New Zealand (from): Tom Latham, Devon Conway, Kane Williamson, Henry Nicholls, Will Young, Daryl Mitchell, Tom Blundell, Michael Bracewell, Scott Kuggeleijn, Tim Southee (capt), Matt Henry, Neil Wagner, Blair Tickner. England: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (capt), Ben Foakes, Ollie Robinson, Stuart Broad, Jack Leach, Jimmy Anderson. —AFP

## Murray cruises with marathon win over Zverev

**DOHA:** Andy Murray teetered on the brink before beating Alexander Zverev in a marathon that lasted more than three hours on Wednesday to reach the quarter-finals of the Qatar Open. Murray won 7-6 (7/5), 2-6, 7-5 after he was twice two points from defeat on his serve in the third set. In his on-court interview after the victory, Murray said the crowd helped him. "It makes a big difference for the players when we come and get a lot of energy and a great atmosphere from the crowd," Murray said. "I obviously enjoyed playing in that atmosphere tonight." The British former World No 1, will face French qualifier Alexandre Muller, who upset Dutch eighth seed Botic van de Zandschulp 6-2, 6-4.

Murray and Muller have never met. "Not so familiar," said Murray. "But he's obviously had a good week this week coming through qualifying. He will have played four matches now, so obviously likes these conditions." "My coach will obviously watch video and stuff tonight to get a bit more familiar with his game, but it's an opportunity for me in the quarters tomorrow." Top-seeded Andrey Rublev, the Doha winner in 2020, was in danger of suffering a fourth opening-match exit in five tournaments this year before fighting his way back from 2-5 in the third set to edge Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor 1-6, 6-1, 7-6 (8/6).

Griekspoor squandered three match points on



DOHA: Britain's Andy Murray returns the ball to Germany's Alexander Zverev (not pictured) during a tennis match of the Qatar Open in Doha on February 22, 2023. —AFP

his serve in the ninth game of the third set. He then saved two match points in the tie-break before Rublev won in one hour 54 minutes. Rublev will face Jiri Lehecka, a 21-year-old Czech, who beat Finn Emil Ruusuvuori, 6-2, 7-6 (7-2). Canadian second

seed Felix Auger-Aliassime struggled against Jason Kubler's serve in the first set but recovered to overcome the Australian 4-6, 6-1, 6-4 after two hours and 16 minutes. Kubler had won the only previous meeting in Newport last year. —AFP

## Untroubled Swiatek cruises into semis

**DUBAI:** World number one Iga Swiatek swept past Liudmila Samsonova for the loss of just one game in the last 16 of the Dubai WTA tournament on Wednesday, earning praise from fellow three-time major winner Andy Murray. The 21-year-old Pole was then handed a walkover into the semi-finals when scheduled quarter-final opponent Karolina Pliskova pulled out with an injury. On Wednesday, Swiatek triumphed 6-1, 6-0 over Samsonova to follow her opening 6-1, 6-1 win over Leylah Fernandez.

Swiatek has dropped only eight games in her last six matches, a stretch which saw her lift the Doha title last weekend. "She is different," tweeted men's former world number one Murray in appreciation. Reigning French and US Open champion Swiatek was to have faced former Dubai finalist Pliskova in Thursday's quarter-finals but the Czech said a virus would force her withdrawal.

## Smith, Johnson top stars as LIV season opens

**PLAYA DEL CARMEN:** Reigning British Open champion Cameron Smith and two-time major winner Dustin Johnson are among the big names as the controversial Saudi-backed LIV Golf League opens its 2023 campaign on Friday. The series of 54-hole events offering record purses of \$25 million expands to 14 stops in seven nations, starting at Mexico's Mayakoba resort.

Several big names were lured to LIV Golf from the US PGA Tour, prompting a PGA ban that set up a court fight scheduled to begin in January 2024. Top-ranked Jon Rahm, Rory McIlroy, Tiger Woods and Masters champion Scottie Scheffler were among those who stayed with the PGA as a split in the sport brought chaos, but so far LIV players remain able to play in majors if they qualify.

LIV Golf continues to fight to earn world ranking points, but with new players making the jump the 2023 season could see top talent from LIV and older tours meeting only at the four majors, adding to the tension around April's Masters showdown at Augusta National. Johnson won last year's individual LIV Golf crown after taking a title in Boston with an eagle on the first playoff hole and led an all-American 4Aces squad to the team title.

Australia's Smith, the 2022 PGA Player of the Year, won his first major title at St. Andrews but made the jump to LIV Golf after the US PGA's Tour Championship. Smith captured the Chicago title in

"After playing the finals here a few years ago and doing very well this year, it's very disappointing for me," tweeted Pliskova. "But after struggling with a virus and cramps for a couple hours right after my match, I'm not able to continue." Pliskova had booked her last-eight spot with a 7-5, 6-7 (6/8), 6-2 victory over Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina. Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka made it 13 wins in 13 matches in 2023 by dethroning defending champion Jelena Ostapenko 2-6, 6-1, 6-1.

"In the first set, she played unbelievable tennis and I couldn't do anything," world number two Sabalenka said. "I was looking at my team asking like, 'What can I do?' but somehow, I turned around this game, and started playing really incredible tennis." Coco Gauff and Madison Keys will meet in an all-American quarter-final. Fifth-seeded Gauff advanced when Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina withdrew from their last 16 clash due to a lower back injury. Keys booked her quarter-final spot with a 6-2, 6-1 win over former world number one Victoria Azarenka in just 57 minutes. —AFP



DUBAI: Poland's Iga Swiatek hits a return against Canada's Leylah Fernandez (unseen) during the WTA Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championship in Dubai on February 21, 2023. —AFP

September in his second LIV start and in November claimed his third Australian PGA Championship triumph as LIV players remain eligible for DP World Tour events amid an ongoing court battle. Critics brand LIV Golf as a bid by Saudi Arabia, which backs the circuit via its Public Investment Fund, to "sportswash" its human rights record.

But LIV Golf commissioner Greg Norman sees the league carrying the sport to a younger audience with fast-paced shotgun starts, on-site concerts and increased interaction between stars and fans. "In less than a year, LIV Golf has reinvigorated the professional game and laid the foundation for the sport's future," Norman said. "Our league format has already begun to build connections with new audiences around the globe. Major champions, current and future Hall of Famers, and up-and-coming stars are all committed to creating this new platform for world-class competition as the sport evolves for the next generation."

### 13 major winners

PGA officials have made changes to combat defections, including the creation of elevated events with prize money boosted to \$20 million at nine tournaments and to \$25 million at the Players Championship. LIV Golf, however, boasts 13 major winners, including Johnson, Smith, Phil Mickelson, Bryson DeChambeau, Brooks Koepka, Patrick Reed, Sergio Garcia, Louis Oosthuizen, Martin Kaymer, Graeme McDowell, Henrik Stenson, Bubba Watson and Charl Schwartzel.

The series includes stops in April at Adelaide and Singapore, events on back-to-back weekends at the start of July at Spain's Valderrama and England's Centurion courses and a November season-ender in Saudi Arabia. US events include three at courses owned



Australia's Cameron Smith

by former US President Donald Trump - May at Trump National near Washington, August at Trump National in Bedminster, New Jersey, and at Doral in October. Other US stops include Tucson and Orlando in late March and early April, Tulsa in May, Greenbrier in August and Chicago in September. —AFP

Sports

# MLS banking on new Apple deal to boost popularity

## First league to offer all games available to stream

NEW YORK: Major League Soccer is hoping its ground-breaking new global streaming deal with Apple TV will launch a new era of growth when their season gets under way on Saturday. Under a new 10-year deal, worth a reported \$2.5 billion, MLS becomes the first league to offer all their games available to stream, via Apple TV, domestically and internationally. Previously MLS clubs broadcast their games via regional and local television networks with select games shown nationally on various cable sports channels.

The league often seemed low on the list of priorities of those channels, well below NFL, NBA and college football, but is hoping that by becoming a major investment for Apple, their profile will be transformed. "We're going to be putting (games) on a device for any fan anywhere in the world, anytime, anywhere without any blackouts. It's unprecedented," MLS commissioner Don Garber told reporters on Wednesday at the league's new purpose built studios in Harlem. "No other league really can offer that type of opportunity for consumer and fan engagement. So I couldn't be more excited," he said.

MLS games were shown outside of North America on a variety of channels but now all will be available on Apple TV, phones, tablets and browsers with no geographic restrictions on the content. The league which began in 1996 with 10 teams and mostly American players, now has 29 clubs in the United States and Canada with players drawn from over 80 nations and Garber hopes the Apple deal will also draw in fans from some of those markets.

"I can't tell you what it's like to have our clubs talk to a player from Argentina or from Brazil or from, you know, Croatia or from England and know that you'll be able to deliver a game directly to one of their fans with the click of a button," he said. "That is perhaps the most exciting part of this new partnership. We are playing in the global game and we're not the global league that we want to be. And what better way to do that with a global digital partner that is ubiquitous around the world?"

### Simplified Schedule

For local fans of MLS, who are given free passes to the streams as part of their season tickets,

the new deal brings a simplified schedule with the vast majority of games being held on a Saturday - rather than spread out over various days. The Premier League has built a following in the United States with its regular Saturday morning slot on television and Garber wants MLS also to become "destination viewing".

"I think for us, having a consistent schedule is going to help our teams be able to create habits with their fans and allow us to produce games in ways that are gonna be higher quality and frankly, more efficient," he said. While other competitions around the world will be closely watching how successful MLS is with their new deal, the league hasn't completely abandoned traditional television, with 34 games to be shown in the United States on Fox.

Garber said the league has no goal for subscriptions in the first season but MLS is also targeting the significant Mexican-American audience by linking up with Mexico's Liga MX for a new month-long, World Cup style tournament every August featuring the top flight teams from both countries. Domestic league action will stop play for the entirety of the Leagues

Cup, which will also be streamed on Apple TV. "We've got one of the most popular professional soccer leagues in the world right across our border. So why not sit down and create a competition that will matter? It's going to be pretty cool," said Garber.

There is plenty more change this season with the newly formed St Louis City joining as the 29th club and the playoff system tweaked to have "best of three" first round series. The opening weekend features a local derby in California where Los Angeles Galaxy will face defending champions Los Angeles FC in a game which has been moved to the 89,000 capacity Rose Bowl in a bid to break the league-wide attendance record of 73,019 set by Charlotte last season.

Surprisingly there have been no big-name arrivals in the league this off-season but it is clear that Apple is banking on a higher profile for the sport in the coming years. The United States and Canada will host the 2026 World Cup along with Mexico and Garber believes that will be a game-changer. "The pathway to 2026 is something that's going to be the rocket fuel for the entire soccer ecosystem in the US," he said. —AFP



## Pakistani shooter shines in Kuwait tournament

Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The skeet competition of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah tournament will conclude on Friday. The first day witnessed the Pakistani shooter Othman taking first place - followed by Kuwait's Abdelaziz Al-Faihan (second); Abdallah Al-Rashidi (third); Palestinian shooter Mardello (fourth) while Bahrain's Mohammad Hassan and Tammar Al-Awadhi grabbed the fifth and sixth positions respectively.

In the Women's skeet, Kuwait's Fatima Al-Zaabi took the first place; Kazakh Olega (second); Kamate Kazanora (third); Bahrain's Latifa Al-Najim (fourth) while Kazakh Zaya and Kuwait's Afrah Bin Hussein took the fifth and sixth positions respectively. Meanwhile, the trap competition will start on Saturday and it is expected to be competitive and exciting.

Qatar's shooter Aminah Al-Sheerawi said the championship is at a high level with experienced shooters competing in the championship. Al-Sheerawi congratulated Kuwait's leadership and Kuwaitis on the occasion of the national days. Also, President of the Palestinian shooting federation Dr Maen Barakat congratulated HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince, Kuwait government and the people on the occasion of the National and Liberation Days. He said they are keen on participating in HH the Amir Grand Prix due to its importance.

In another development, Secretary General of



KUWAIT: Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federation, Tournament Director Obaid Al-Osaimi honors International Shooting Sport Federation Secretary Willy Grill.



Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federation, Tournament Director Obaid Al-Osaimi honored International Shooting Sport Federation Secretary Willy Grill in appreciation of his efforts in supporting the sport of shooting.

## Sprint king Kerley opens the season with 200m win

MELBOURNE: American sprint star Fred Kerley kicked off his season Thursday with a comfortable 200m victory in Melbourne, easing up in the final stretch to cross in 20.32 seconds. The reigning 100m world champion and Tokyo Olympic silver medalist was the star attraction at the Maurie Plant meet, which has been upgraded to World Continental Tour Gold level-second only to Diamond League in status. One of only three men in history to run sub-10 seconds for the 100m, sub-20 for the 200m and sub-44 for the 400m, he stressed during the week he wanted to focus more on the 200 after missing a medal at last year's world championships.

"I just wanted to put on a show for the crowd," said the 27-year-old, who powered into the front off the bend then eased off and lifted his arm in the air when he knew the race was won. "I still got to work on the bend, but I'm not too worried about that. I know coming home, I'm good." Australia's fastest man, Rohan Browning, came second in 20.71. American Noah Lyles topped last year's 200m times with a blistering 19.31sec at the world championships in Eugene, which put him third on the all-time list behind Usain Bolt and fellow Jamaican Yohan Blake. Kerley has a personal best of 19.76. Australia's Ella Connolly won the women's 200m in 23.28. Browning won the men's 100m (10.26) while Australia's Naa Anang won the women's (11.20). Commonwealth 1,500m



MELBOURNE: Fred Kerley of the US celebrates as he wins the men's 200m event at the Maurie Plant athletics meet in Melbourne on February 23, 2023. —AFP

champion Oliver Hoare claimed the mile in 3:52.24. The Australian finished ahead of New Zealand's Sam Tanner, with America's Rio Olympic 1,500m champion Matthew Centrowitz a distant 11th. "It's been a big couple of weeks and really proud," said Hoare, fresh from leading Australia's mixed relay team to bronze at the World Cross Country Championships last weekend.

Jessica Hull was also part of that bronze medal team and backed it up by cruising to the 1,500m title. Fast-improving Ethiopian teenager Senayet Getachew capped a memorable week by winning the women's 3,000m in 8:46.54 ahead of Uganda's Prisca Chesang, smashing her personal best. It came after the 17-year-old upset the pre-race favorites to win an arduous U20 women's race at the cross-country worlds. Kenyan Ishmael Kipkurui, the men's U20 world cross-country winner, finished first in the men's 3,000 in 7:41.38. —AFP

## Regulator can block clubs from joining Super League

LONDON: Ministers have announced plans for an independent football regulator to oversee the financial sustainability of the men's game in England, with powers to prevent clubs from joining breakaway leagues. The regulator would license clubs, requiring them to demonstrate sound financial business models, run robust owners' and directors' tests and give fans a greater say in the running of clubs.

It would also have the power to block clubs joining breakaway leagues, appearing to prevent a repeat of any attempt to form a Super League such as the one that proved so unpopular with supporters in 2021. "Despite the success of the sport both at home and abroad, we know that there are real challenges which threaten the stability of clubs both big and small," said British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

"These bold new plans will put fans back at the heart

of football, protect the rich heritage and traditions of our much-loved clubs and safeguard the beautiful game for future generations." Football Association CEO Mark Bullingham said the FA welcomed the plans, set out in a government white paper-a policy document setting out proposals for future legislation-to be published on Thursday. "Our response will highlight a critical point made repeatedly by the fan-led review, which recommended that the professional game increases funding of the grassroots game," he said.

The Football Supporters' Association also welcomed the proposals. "The football governance white paper clearly addresses our key concerns around ownership, rogue competitions and sustainability and of course we support any proposals that offer fans a greater voice in the running of their clubs," said FSA chief executive Kevin Miles. But the Premier League warned it was vital that regulation did not damage the game. "We will now work constructively with stakeholders to ensure that the proposed government regulator does not lead to any unintended consequences that could affect the Premier League's position as the most-watched football league in the world, reduce its competitiveness or put the unrivalled levels of funding we provide at risk," it said in a statement. —AFP

# Classifieds

### Change of Name

**I, Ajith**, holder of Indian Passport number Z3828192 having permanent address Vazhappilly House, behind Holy Cross Church, Arthat P.O, Thrissur - Dist, Kerala, India - 680521, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Ajith (Given name) and Vazhappilly Ittoop (Surname). (C#3173) 24-02-2023

**I, Syed Mahaboob** Basha holder of Indian Passport number T2417304 S/o Shaik Khasimsab resident of Dno. 2-361, Sastrinagar Akkayapalli, Kadapa City YSR, District. Have changed my name as Given Name MAHABOUB BASHA surname Shaik. (C#3169)

**I, Rayamarakkal** Salma Muhamed Hashim father of Abdul Razak rayamarakkal Muhamed hashim Passport no. T4486251 Rayamarakkal house Elavally, Kakkassery po, Thrissur, pin:680511, Kerala have changed my son's name to Salmaan hashim Abdul Razak for all purposes. (C#3170)

**I, AMATULLAH** holder of Passport No. M5451208 do hereby change my name to AMATULLAH (as Given name) BURHAN VOHRA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name AMATULLAH BURHAN VOHRA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#3171)

**I, BABUDIN**, holder of Indian Passport No. P3551947 having permanent address Uttar Pradesh, India, pin code 245206 residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under Given name BABUDIN and Surname SHABUDIN. (C#3172) - 23-02-2023

**I HAVE CHANGE MY NAME FROM QUTBUDDIN** PASSPORT NO. Z2690395 IN FUTURE I AM KNOW FROM THIS NAME QUTBUDDIN HAKANI V/P NAJAMPURA SAGWARA. (C#3166)

**I, ABDUL KHADER** holder of Indian Passport No. Z3284430 having permanent address Telangana India 500005, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: Abdul Khader Omer and Surname: Bawazeer (C#3167) - 22-02-2023.

### Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital	24812000	Khalidiya	24848075
Amiri Hospital	22450005	Kaifan	24849807
Maternity Hospital	24843100	Shamiya	24848913
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700	Shuwaikh	24814507
Chest Hospital	24849400	Abdullah Salem	22549134
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010	Nuzha	22526804
Adan Hospital	23940620	Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300	Qadsiya	22515088
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000	Dasmah	22532265
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9	Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
		Shaab	22518752
		Qibla	22459381
		Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
		Mirqab	22456536
		Sharq	22465401
		Salmiya	25746401

### Clinics

Kaizen center  
Rawda  
Adaliya

25716707  
22517733  
22517144

## Leipzig frustrate Man City

Gvardiol shows his attacking flair



LEIPZIG: Leipzig's Croatian defender Josko Gvardiol (3rd left) gets up to score the 1-1 goal with his head during the UEFA Champions League round of 16, first-leg football match between RB Leipzig and Manchester City in Leipzig on February 22, 2023. — AFP

LEIPZIG: RB Leipzig centre-back Josko Gvardiol scored a second-half header, cancelling out Riyad Mahrez's strike to earn a 1-1 with Manchester City in their Champions League last 16 clash on Wednesday. One of the breakout stars of the Qatar World Cup as the cornerstone of Croatia's miserly defense, Gvardiol showed his attacking flair, launching himself above the City defense to head in the equalizer in the 70th minute.

City took the lead after 27 minutes through Mahrez and looked on course for a comfortable away win but their fluency deserted them after the interval in the first leg tie. The home side, who have only lost once in their past 20 games, found their zip in the second half and looked the team most likely to head to the Etihad for the return leg with a victo-

ry under their belt. City's star striker Erling Haaland suffered for a lack of service, with the Norwegian clearly missing ill midfielder Kevin de Bruyne.

City dominated possession in trademark fashion for the first quarter of the match, but failed to carve out any opportunities against a well-drilled and structured home side. "At the end, we were a little nervous, the coach told us to calm down, there are 90 minutes left to play," said Mahrez. Leipzig coach Marco Rose added: "Two very, very different halves. We just didn't happen in the first half, just chased the ball, were very bad when we had it. The second was quite different, we were better with the ball, won it back better and played how we had envisioned to play."

The breakthrough came in the 27th minute, when

City midfielder Jack Grealish took advantage of a sloppy pass from Xaver Schlager, pouncing with threading a vertical ball goalwards. City captain Ilkay Gundogan attracted the attention of the Leipzig defense but let the ball run through his legs into the path of Mahrez, who cut a shot past the fingertips of 'keeper Janis Blaswich and into the net. Rodri went close to doubling City's lead just three minutes later but put his header just wide.

Former Chelsea striker Timo Werner had half a chance in first-half injury time, but waited too long to unleash a shot and his deflected effort was easily claimed by Ederson. Leipzig swapped out wing backs Lukas Klostermann and Benjamin Henrichs at halftime looking for additional penetration. The new man went close to scoring an

equalizer twice in the space of two minutes early in the second half, first through a looping header and second when he shanked a close-range attempt when one-on-one with Ederson.

The introduction of Christopher Nkunku in the 66th minute came during the home side's best period of the game and gave them an immediate boost, striker Andre Silva forcing a rushed save from Ederson a minute later. Gvardiol snuffed out an Haaland counter attack and got the home side on the scoreboard soon after, climbing a meter higher than the City defense to head in the equalizer from a Marcel Halstenberg corner. Man City held on as Leipzig searched for a winner, meaning both teams head to Manchester on an equal footing ahead of the return fixture on March 14. — AFP



TEXAS: Mallory Swanson #9 of the United States hoist the trophy with her teammates after defeating Brazil in the 2023 SheBelieves Cup match at Toyota Stadium on February 22, 2023 in Frisco, Texas. — AFP

## United States win SheBelieves Cup

FRISCO: In-form Mallory Swanson scored again as the United States beat Brazil 2-1 to clinch a fourth straight SheBelieves Cup crown Wednesday. Striker Swanson has now netted in six matches in a row, the longest such run for the US women since Christen Press did the same from November 2019 to February 2020. Swanson is hitting form at the right time, with the top-ranked United States preparing to defend their crown in July's Women's World Cup in New Zealand and Australia. The 24-year-old scored twice in the tournament opener against Canada and again in the 1-0 win over Japan. She kept her streak going with a 63rd-minute strike that put the United States up 2-0.

She seized on a through ball from Rose Lavelle and fired past Brazilian goalkeeper Lorena. Alex Morgan had put the United States ahead in first-half stoppage time, curling a left-footed shot past Lorena. Brazil clawed back a goal in the 90th minute as substitute Ludmila headed past Alyssa Naeher—the first goal conceded by the USA in 2023. It wasn't enough to stop the tournament hosts from winning the event for the sixth time overall.

Japan snatched second place on goal difference

after snapping a four-game losing streak with a 3-0 victory over Olympic champions Canada earlier Wednesday. Brazil were third and Canada were fourth. It was a disappointing end to a turbulent tournament for the Canadians, who were playing amid their ongoing dispute with their federation over pay and conditions in which they are seeking parity with the men's team.

Swanson said the tournament had been a good chance for younger US players to gain experience and stake their claims to World Cup spots. "I think it's just overall a really good experience for everyone, especially some of the younger girls that don't have as much experience," she said. "They played a lot of minutes." Brazil applied plenty of pressure in a frenetic first half. After American Crystal Dunn's shot in the fourth minute bounced off a Brazilian defender and off the post, Brazil saw Bia Zaneratto and Debinha both come close in the eighth minute.

Morgan went wide off a cross from Lindsay Horan and Brazil's Kerolin went just wide with an angled shot on the half-hour mark. Morgan's goal to send the US into the interval ahead was "huge," Swanson said. "We needed the momentum to kind of shift." Brazil did all they could to shift it back, but Adriana's fierce shot from outside the area bounced off the crossbar in the 48th. By the time Ludmila broke through it was too late—Swanson had already struck again. —AFP

## Lukaku boosts Inter's hopes

MILAN: Romelu Lukaku boosted Inter Milan's chances of reaching the Champions League quarter finals for the first time in over a decade after scoring the only goal in Wednesday's 1-0 win over Porto. Belgium forward Lukaku struck with four minutes remaining of the first leg at the San Siro on the rebound from his own header to decide an absorbing encounter at the San Siro. Simone Inzaghi's side travel to Portugal next month to decide who will go through to the last eight with a slight advantage thanks to Lukaku's second goal in as many games in all competitions.

The 29-year-old, who has struggled with injury all season, struck his first league goal since August at the weekend and came off the bench in the second half to ensure Inter will have a lead to protect in the second leg as they seek a first quarter-final tie since 2011. "Winning is the most important thing... I'm focusing on trying to do what's best for Inter," said Lukaku to Amazon Prime. "I'm pleased for the win, let's hope we can keep it going." Lukaku stuck as Sergio Conceicao's Porto were playing with 10 men after key midfielder Otavio, in his first appearance since the start of February, was sent off in the 78th minute for two bookable

offences. The Portuguese champions have been a bogey side to Italian teams in recent seasons but will have to turn the aggregate score around if they are to add to the series of Serie A scalps which include Juventus and Roma. "It's a slight advantage that we'll try to make count against a good, physical team which is used to playing in the last 16 and quarter-finals... It's a great win," said Inzaghi. "It was deserved for what we did on the pitch, but we know it's not finished here and the second leg will be difficult." Inter should have been ahead in the 13th minute when Federico Dimarco found Lautaro Martinez with a deep cross, but the Argentina striker sent his header way off the bar.

Five minutes later Hakan Calhanoglu forced a fantastic save from Diogo Costa, the Turkey international playing a one-two from his own corner and whipping a beautifully struck effort shot which nearly went in at the near post. However, it was Porto who wasted the best chance of a niggly half in the 37th minute after a lovely team move, their first decent attack of the match. From Otavio's pass Mehdi Taremi played the perfect layoff to Marko Grujic, who should have done better in front of Andre Onana before Wenderson Galeno headed wide with the goal gaping. Costa then made sure that the teams would go into the break level with another superb stop, this time reacting brilliantly to keep out Alessandro Bastoni's flicked header from Dimarco's inswinging free-kick. — AFP



MILAN: Inter Milan's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku shoots to open the scoring during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 first leg football match between Inter Milan and FC Porto, on February 22, 2023. — AFP