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## Grilling filed over 'dual' govts

5 MPs propose changes to election law • MP calls to raise cost-of-living allowance

### Crown Prince meets Bhutan King



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace on Monday King of Bhutan Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, which reflected the strength of bilateral relations. The two touched on issues of mutual concern during the meeting attended by senior state officials. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Jenan Bushehri on Monday filed to grill Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Barrak Al-Sheetan over alleged violations and failure to perform the duties of his ministerial job. This is the second grilling to be filed by lawmakers to grill Cabinet ministers amid a fresh political crisis between the National Assembly and the government over a number of controversial draft legislation.

Last week, MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf filed to grill Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid over alleged mismanagement of Kuwait's huge investments abroad. Bushehri said she filed the interpellation after the Cabinet decided to raise the salaries of ministers by KD 6,000 monthly and the appointment of senior officials in the government, some of whom did not fulfill required conditions.

The lawmaker also accused the minister of failing to coordinate between the government and the Assembly. Bushehri, herself a former minister who resigned following a grilling in the Assembly, said she was forced to file the grilling after she felt there were two governments - one headed by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah and the other headed by Sheetan. She vowed that

the grilling will be exceptional and will defend the rights of the Kuwaiti people.

Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun said he received the grilling, which will be listed on the agenda of the next regular session on Jan 24. The grilling against the finance minister is also listed for debate in the same session. Sheetan said in a brief statement that he will deal with the grilling in accordance with the constitution and the internal charter of the Assembly.

Meanwhile, five MPs submitted a draft law stipulating amendments to the voting system of the electoral law in which each Kuwaiti voter will be entitled to vote for two candidates instead of one under the current system. The government unilaterally amended the voting system in 2012, allowing voters to elect only one candidate instead of four in the previous system. That amendment triggered street protests by the Kuwaiti opposition. On Sunday, Saadoun also proposed to amend the voting system to allow Kuwaiti voters to elect up to four candidates from within their constituencies or from other electoral districts.

Also, MP Ahmad Lari yesterday proposed to increase the cost-of-living allowance for Kuwaiti employees from KD 120 to KD 300 per month to account for the rise in prices in the country.

### News in brief

#### Public holidays announced

KUWAIT: The Cabinet approved Sunday, Feb 19 as the Israa and Miraj holiday in lieu of Saturday, Feb 18. It also approved Monday, Feb 27 as a holiday in lieu of the National Day holiday which falls on Saturday, Feb 25. The Liberation Day holiday is on Sunday, Feb 26. Work resumes on Tuesday, Feb 28.

#### Top Pak lawyer shot dead

PESHAWAR: A top lawyer was murdered at a Pakistan high court on Monday by a colleague who shot him six times while dressed in full judicial robes, police and a witness said. Abdul Latif Afridi - former president of Pakistan's Supreme Court Bar Association - was lounging with coworkers in a break room at Peshawar High Court when he was slain in an apparent grudge attack. — AFP

#### Putin slams arms deliveries

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin on Monday slammed Kyiv's "destructive" policies and growing Western arms supplies to Ukraine in a phone call with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Putin said Kyiv was pursuing "a destructive line" and that it had "bet on the intensification of hostilities with the support of Western sponsors, who are ramping up supplies of weapons and military equipment." — AFP

#### TikTok in talks with Jordan

AMMAN: TikTok said Monday it is in talks with Jordan to lift a ban in place since December after videos posted on the app were accused of "inciting murder and chaos". "We have faith that through our ongoing conversations with the authorities, we can arrive at a resolution that would allow TikTok to continue serving the millions of users in Jordan," TikTok said in a statement. — AFP

### Dubai property transactions hit record high

DUBAI: Dubai recorded real estate transactions worth more than \$143 billion in 2022, the official Dubai Media Office said Monday, calling it a "milestone" for the United Arab Emirates' main business hub. The property boom comes amid an influx of

Russians who have purchased properties in some of Dubai's most popular areas, after Moscow faced a tightening of Western sanctions following its invasion of Ukraine.

"Dubai's annual real estate transactions have crossed the milestone of half a trillion dirhams for the first time," the Dubai Media Office said in a statement. "The sector witnessed transactions worth a record 528 billion dirhams in 2022, a 76.5 percent increase from 2021." The real estate sector accounts for about a third of the economy in Dubai. It has steadily grown since an easing of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions saw Dubai open up much earlier

than the rest of the world.

Russians were the biggest international buyers of Dubai real estate last year, Bloomberg reported, citing brokerage Betterhomes. It said that the emirate registered more than 86,000 residential sales transactions in 2022, beating the previous record of 80,000 in 2009. Dubai's "real estate sector has demonstrated its ability to sustain its rapid growth and enhance its attractiveness as an investment magnet," said Sultan Butti bin Mejren, director general of the government's Dubai Land Department. "The sector is set to achieve even greater growth in the future," the Dubai Media Office quoted him as saying. — AFP

### Zionists kill Palestinian boy in Bethlehem

DHEISHEH: Zionist forces killed a Palestinian boy Monday near Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said. Omar Khmour, 14, was shot in the head early Monday in the Dheisheh refugee camp in the southern West Bank and "succumbed to his wounds", the ministry said. He is the second boy killed in Dheisheh during a Zionist military incursion so far this month.

One person was arrested by troops in Dheisheh, the Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group said. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa said the army had entered the camp "at dawn and launched a campaign of raids on citizens' homes". Mourners gathered later Monday for Khmour's funeral, with his mother leading the procession of his body through Dheisheh.

His body was wrapped in a red and white keffiyeh scarf and a Palestinian flag, before being carried by militants from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Khmour is the fourteenth Palestinian killed in the West Bank since the start of the year, the majority shot dead by Zionist forces, according to an AFP tally. — AFP

### Laser guides lightning bolt for first time

PARIS: Scientists said Monday they have used a laser beam to guide lightning for the first time, hoping the technique will help protect against deadly bolts - and one day maybe even trigger them. Lightning strikes between 40-120 times a second worldwide, killing more than 4,000 people and causing billions of dollars worth of damage every year.

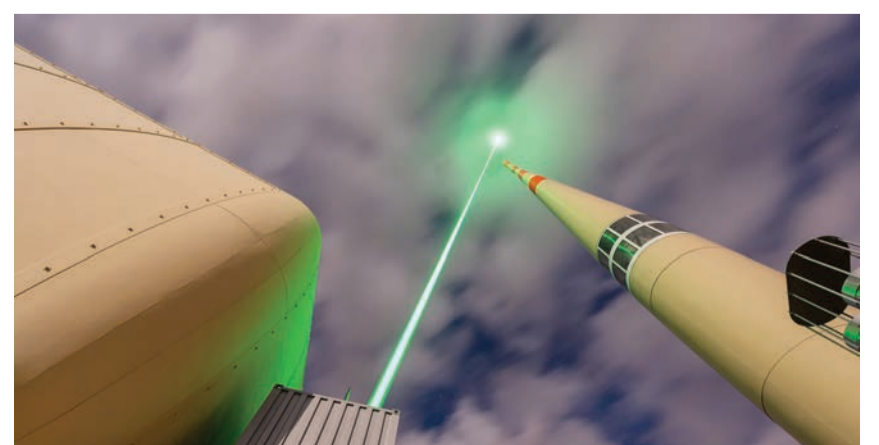
Yet the main protection against these bolts from above is still the humble lightning rod, which was first conceived by American polymath Benjamin Franklin in 1749. A team of scientists from six research institutions have been working for years to use the same idea but replace the simple metal pole with a far more sophisticated and precise laser.

Now, in a study published in the journal Nature Photonics, they describe using a laser beam - shot from the top of a Swiss mountain - to guide a lightning bolt for more than 50 m. "We wanted to give the first demonstration that the laser can have

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BETHLEHEM: The mother of Omar Khmour, 14, mourns over his body during his funeral in Dheisheh refugee camp in the occupied West Bank on Jan 16, 2023. — AFP



This handout image released on Jan 16, 2023 shows a 'divert lightning' in action on Santis Mountain in Switzerland. — AFP



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# Cabinet discusses recommendation on major development projects

## Ministry condemns Afghanistan terror attack, voices solidarity with Nepal

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti Cabinet studied Monday recommendation of the follow-up committee of implementing major development projects on the periodical report submitted by the Ministry of Public Works regarding Kuwait International Airport Terminal 2.

This came during the Cabinet's weekly session, headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Sief Palace, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Barrak Al-Shaitan said after the meeting.

The Cabinet decided to task the Ministry of Public Works and the Central Agency for Public Tenders with taking necessary steps to cut red tapes, Al-Shaitan noted. The Cabinet then discussed National Assembly affairs and was briefed on the Speaker's letter submitted on January 10 by MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf concerning the grilling motion against Minister of Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment

Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid.

The motion will be listed on the next parliament session's agenda in line with the Article 135 of the bylaw. The Cabinet expressed reassurance about the minister's responses, stressing that interpellation is a constitutional right for MPs.

On Arab and international political affairs, the Cabinet expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation of the terrorist attack that took place near Afghanistan Foreign Ministry headquarters and resulted in casualties and injuries. The Cabinet stressed Kuwait's principled and firm position of rejecting all kinds of violence and terrorism, affirming standing with the Afghan people, offering sincere condolences to the relatives of the victims, and wishing a speedy recovery to those injured. The Cabinet further voiced Kuwait's sympathy and solidarity with Nepal over a passenger plane crash in Pokhara, offering condolences to its leadership, government, people and relatives of the victims. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presides over the Cabinet meeting at Sief Palace on Monday. — KUNA

## Streets and the conscience of a merchant

In my view

By Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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For many decades, work on the main roads of Kuwait is at a snail's pace, and if they start to repair or maintain a street, you the citizen should realize that you may die before the work on the street is completed. Economists know why merchants, who monopolize tenders, are late in completing the job, as there is a file for a large number of workers under the item of this maintenance or the item of constructing the road. This large number is brought into the country, and less than half of them work on the project while there are many ways to make profit out of the rest.

Among the reasons behind the delay of constructing or repairing roads is that there are profitable changing orders, as the number increases with the passing of months and years, and because of this, Kuwait people are suffering from poor street conditions and procrastination and stalling. As for repairing streets within residential areas, this is a dream that we hope remains as such and not materialize into reality, because when the government opens the door for repairing roads in residential areas, then that group of merchants will torture Kuwait people, this time in front of their homes.

As for Kuwait's interest and keenness for development, in addition to Kuwait lagging behind its sister Gulf countries, are values that lost their effectiveness due to many repetitions. They turned into rhetoric, as Napoleon Bonaparte said: "There is only one figure in rhetoric of serious importance, namely, repetition."

Kuwaitis are frustrated with repetition, as we have insatiable stomachs and shameless faces. The best solution is to let Kuwait people deal with them. Reveal the names of owners of companies who won the tender and leave the rest to the people, as long as our government is afraid of them. Our affairs in Kuwait are still being run by special relations and are used to seize tenders for profits, and they are cheating methods that got us to where we are today - building roads with bad standards and road repairs that are not according global conditions and standards, so our yearly suffering is repeated every time it rains.

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "Verily from what was learnt by the people from the speech of the earliest prophecy is: If you feel no shame, then do as you wish." (Al-Bukhari). Because they have no shame, they do as they wish and we remain in the circle of torture that is imposed upon us. If people do not move apart from the National Assembly, which we hope will be different this time, and without the government, which is still hesitant towards standing with the people, then we all will continue suffering from the slow construction and bad production, and Kuwait streets and its repairs will remain to tell the influence story which spoiled the enjoyment of a beautiful country.

## Ministry assures protection for jewelry merchants

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has assured the protection of the rights of all dealers of precious artifacts and jewelry who present the metals before the ministry for verification and inspection.

"Regulating the market and protecting the sector from any negative repercussions is a national responsibility of the ministry and it is based on its commitment to its supervisory and regulatory role," the ministry announced.

"Precious products and jewelry merchants must be discharging their social responsibility in protecting the sector from any repercussions

due to any violations in order to preserve the rights of the consumers. The ministry granted a period of 18 months to implement its decision, starting with a full year and followed by an additional six months, to avoid any confusion among the merchants of precious artifacts and jewelry in reconciling their situation," the ministry added.

The ministry's steps are part of an integrated series that it undertakes as part of the state's efforts to modernize mechanisms to combat money-laundering and terror funding in accordance with international standards that are expected to be evaluated internationally from next May.

"Precious metal and jewelry dealers must be aware that regulating their market and updating its procedures will reflect on the reputation of the state as well as their reputation for the role of the new regulation in providing confidence in their dealings and providing a

with the thyroid hormone," he said.

"Based on statistics of the Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC), thyroid cancer ranked second in the country from 2014 to 2018, with approximately 500 cases, including 137 cases among men, a rate of 1.4 cases per 100,000 people, and 363 cases among women, a rate of 6.8 cases per 100,000 people," he said. Dr Saleh indicated that early detection of thyroid cancer achieves high recovery rates of up to 90 percent, stressing the importance of awareness for all groups.

Dr Shemmari spoke about the thyroid cancer awareness campaign, explaining that although thyroid cancer ranks fifth in terms of the most common cancers in Kuwait, death due to this type of cancer is very low, with a mortality rate of less than 2 percent of total cases. "After stopping for more than two years due to COVID-19, the awareness campaign returned this year to its usual activities. Five health centers have been selected to be responsible for answering inquiries from patients and visitors regarding the disease," she said. Dr Shemmari pointed out treatment protocols approved by the Ministry of Health in Kuwait are presented through lectures given to doctors and nursing staff in governmental hospitals.

Dr Otaibi said the early awareness campaign for youth group cancers is the first of its kind in Kuwait, GCC and Middle East, as this campaign

targets a specific age group and not a specific tumor, while previous awareness campaigns educated people about specific types of tumors such as breast, colon and prostate cancers. "Through our work in the treatment of oncology, we have noticed a large segment of young people under 40 who suffer from various types of cancers, the most common of which are breast, thyroid, colon and urinary tract cancers," she said.

Despite the development of early detection methods and rise in early diagnosis of cancer and thus the increase in the recovery rate, Dr Otaibi said this does not apply to this age group, as early detection does not include those under 40. "The number of cancer cases were diagnosed in this age category is 532, according to the latest statistics of the Kuwait Cancer Control Center, which is approximately 20 percent of the number of cancer cases are diagnosed annually, with breast cancer constituting 26 percent of cases, followed by thyroid cancer with 22 percent, colorectal cancer with 23 percent and urinary tract cancers at 17 percent," she said.

Dr Otaibi said the idea of this initiative was launched to educate young people in this age group about the most common types of cancers, their symptoms, how to prevent them and raise awareness of the risk factors that increase the incidence of cancer, such as smoking.



**KUWAIT:** Attendees pose for a group photo during the launch of the cancer awareness campaign on Monday.



**KUWAIT:** From Left, Dr Eman Matar Al-Shemmari, Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh, Dr Maryam Abdul Mohsen Al-Otaibi and speaker Samia Al-Seedan.

## CAN campaign to generate awareness for thyroid cancer

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** The National Cancer Awareness Campaign (CAN) announced the launch of a cancer awareness campaign for January during a press conference on Monday, in the presence of Chairman of the Campaign Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh, in-charge of the thyroid cancer awareness initiative Dr Eman Matar Al-Shemmari and in-charge of the early awareness campaign for youth cancer Dr Maryam Abdul Mohsen Al-Otaibi.

Dr Saleh expressed his gratitude for announcing the launch of the initiatives that aim to educate young people of both sexes about cancers, as they represent 72 percent of the Kuwaiti society. He also praised efforts by CAN to raise awareness of thyroid cancer. "This is an important opportunity to highlight the importance of early detection of thyroid diseases, including thyroid cancer. Thyroid disorders are common among women due to the association of the female hormone estrogen



**KUWAIT:** Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Azamat Karagulov (right) with the Kuwait Times Managing Editor Mustafa Qamhiya during the former's visit to Kuwait Times. During their meeting they discussed issues of mutual interest, particularly means of enhancing cooperation between Kyrgyzstan Embassy in Kuwait and Kuwait Times in the area of media. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Ex-minister: We have removed capable expats

**KUWAIT:** Former health minister Dr Adel Al-Sabeeh said Kuwait's policy to replace expat workers with nationals in various sectors has hurt Kuwait and led to a decline in its social and service levels. "When I was health minister, we had exceptional medical talents among expats. However, total Kuwaitization started, and removed many exceptional expatriate consultants from heading medical departments as they were replaced by less experienced ones, so what happened?" Dr Sabeeh said.

"The qualified expatriates accepted the situation, but some of them looked for other opportunities in other countries that respect their capabilities, while those who stayed are only awaiting job opportunities in other countries - so who is the biggest loser? Definitely Kuwait, as those who are ill care about the quality of treatment rather than the nationality of the doctor," he added.

"Kuwaitization in concept is a good thing, but it has to be implemented in a scientific manner. Therefore, we must not remove an expatriate unless they are replaced with Kuwaitis who have equal or better capabilities, so that the level of work is not hurt. Planning and executing for the country while raising the quality of service needs exceptional scientific staff, and not only to hold Kuwaiti citizenship," Dr Sabeeh concluded.

safe environment for sector trading," it added.

"The ministry is always ready to facilitate the new stamping procedures without delay and as quickly as possible in a way that does not affect the interests of merchants and the rights of all dealers in the sector," it added.

"Opposing opinions should not raise suspicions that may not exist in terms of trying to hide manipulations that push some to counter the ministry's organizational efforts and improve their business environment. The ministry will not be lenient while taking measures to protect the rights of traders in this sector and preserve its supervisory and regulatory right," it clarified.

The ministry also thanked the majority of precious products and jewelry merchants who have shown cooperation and positive response with the decision. It called on others not to delay the implementation of the decision any further.

Local

# Kuwait's vision aims to counter extremist ideology, spread moderation: Al-Ansari

## Kuwait-EU workshop discusses new strategy to combat terrorism



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and EU experts discuss how to counter terrorism during a workshop at the Kuwait National Library on Monday.



KUWAIT: Audience attending the workshop. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Information, in cooperation with the European Union, organized a joint workshop on Monday at the National Library of Kuwait. The three-day event discusses the strategic communications to counter extremism and terrorism.

In his opening remarks, Mazen Al-Ansari, Head of the Countering Radicalization Team of the Ministry of Information and Acting Assistant Undersecretary of International Media Sector, said "Today's workshop aims to shed light thoughtfully on the methods and means of combating extremism on social media platforms and how to use the latest technology and information to serve our goal."

He affirmed that Kuwait aims to safeguard the security of its society and country by focusing on awareness campaigns and educating youth, the most important group in society which all countries depend on for their development and progress. He added, "Although this panel discussion was sup-

posed to be held in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented it to happen. The State of Kuwait has always been keen to play its role in combating terrorism by developing a strategic plan to promote moderation and combat extremism," he pointed out.

"With the participation of nearly 400 governmental and private entities and public figures from all over the world, Kuwait put a vision aims to counter extremist ideology and spread moderation in Kuwaiti society through innovative and scientific methods as well as media methodologies and electronic system of effective communication inside and outside the country," he explained.

Ansari indicated that Kuwait is a country of love and peace, and it will always be keen on developing its strategy with the countries of the European Union, noting that bilateral relations have witnessed continuous progress at all levels. "Kuwait is the first Gulf country to sign a cooperation agreement with the EU in 2016, which made it possible for more cooperation to exchange experiences and viewpoints through workshops and conferences on

various fields," he added.

Charge d'Affaires at the EU Delegation in Kuwait, Gediminas Varanavicius, stated that this workshop builds on the strong and excellent relations between the EU and Kuwait, which remains a reliable partner and ally to the EU, assuring the framework of the new EU Strategy towards the Gulf including Kuwait, which was adopted last year, that focuses on enhancing the EU-GCC cooperation on global agenda such as security and counter-terrorism.

"The workshop shows that both Kuwait and the EU are facing common global challenges including security. We in the EU are convinced that exchanging our experiences and know-how with the Gulf region and Kuwait in particular is important to overcome those challenges together," he added.

Varanavicius revealed that the EU partnership with Kuwait in the field of security and counter-terrorism is based on three pillars which are counter-terrorism finance and money laundering, EU-GCC Judicial cooperation, and countering extremism.

"I would like to stress the importance of interna-



Mazen Al-Ansari



Gediminas Varanavicius

tional cooperation in countering extremism, as this joint three-day workshop is an excellent example of such cooperation. The presence of so many EU ambassadors here today is a testament to this," he pointed out, praising Kuwaiti government for its constant support for the Kuwait-EU partnership in the field of security and counterterrorism.

## Fake social media accounts pose challenges: Expert

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Have you ever found yourself attacked on social media by a fake account after commenting on a post or writing a tweet? Or arguing with someone verbally assaulting you after expressing your opinion on a specific issue while using a fake account? Kuwait Times spoke to professor and journalist Suad Fahad Al-Mojel and discussed the reasons some people do not use their real names while commenting on social media, what makes them attack other users randomly, and how to control this issue.

Mojel said creating fake accounts gives people a false feeling of power and courage that makes them continue their criticism, cursing and attacking without the repercussions that come with direct discussions. "When they have a direct discussion, they are enforced to commit to boundaries that others draw for them, but having an anonymous identity gives them the opportunity to exceed all the boundaries imposed by social ties," she explained.

"The person who presents a realistic, positive and useful argument is more acceptable and doesn't need to cover their identity or even use a nickname, but people who are using fake accounts

know they have extremist or offensive views," Mojel said. "Digital control is like a dream that we are wishing comes true. We are witnessing an electronic revolution, especially in the matter of social media that is developing rapidly and daily, so any attempt to surround it with controls is an illusion," she said.



Suad Fahad Al-Mojel

"Despite the technological development that many countries are skilled with, they are unable to confront this issue. It is a giant problem that reached in many cases to hack into important international institutes. Therefore, in my point of view, it is almost impossible presently to resolve this problem, but we can work on mitigating its effects so it doesn't grow and become more horrible. That is actually what the world is trying to do," she said.

In a previous report, Mojel spoke about why some people create fake accounts on social media, saying technology has played a big role in influencing people's moods. "There is total reliance on devices despite our human mind being superior to it. We were controlled by it, and this has created anger, mood swings and nervousness if it doesn't give us what we need," she said. "Over time, our minds start to act like it, and this reflects it on some people's behaviors, as they unleash their energies through fake accounts, attacking others and being offensive on social media."



KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Minors Affairs and Endowment ministry officials during the signing of the protocol.

## Endowment, minors affairs sign protocol

**KUWAIT:** The Public Authority for Minors Affairs has announced that it has signed a cooperation protocol with the Endowment ministry with regard to organizing activities and programs for those under the care of minors' affairs.

Acting director of the Authority, Hamad Al-Barjas said during a press conference after the signing of the protocol: "The provisions of the protocol include the organization of various cultural, educational and religious programs for those under the care, commensurate with their needs and age groups, as well as contributing and participating in organizing activities for the charitable events under the supervision of the Authority."

"The Authority is keen to strengthen the partnership in providing services with the entities related to its work as the Authority aims to cooperate with many government agencies through cyber connectivity and intensify efforts to strengthen institutional partnership," he added.

On his part, acting undersecretary of the Endowment ministry, Muhammed Al-Mutairi laud-



KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Minors Affairs and the Endowment ministry sign the protocol.

ed the cooperation between the Authority and the ministry in providing a variety of programs for those under care.

"Among the programs covered by the agreement are the young readers' program - the curriculum project, and the holy Quran memorization competition program during the month of Ramadan, as well as holding special programs for minors under care and their families, including Quran memorization competitions and honoring the ideal mother," he added.

## GCC woman dies in car-truck collision

**KUWAIT:** The public relations department at the Kuwait Fire Force has announced that a woman was found dead after a road accident involving a car and a truck on the King Fahad highway. "The central command administration has received a tip of the accident and fire squads from Nuwaiseeb station was sent to the location. The squads found the woman, a GCC national, who died on the spot following a collision between her car and a truck, the PR department at the KFF said. The accident has been dealt with as the deceased was sent to the concerned departments.



## Al-Najat charity sponsors 13,700 orphans in 2022

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti Al-Najat charity said in its annual report that it had sponsored around 13,700 orphans from 16 countries around the world. Head of the orphans department within the charity Abdullah Al-Ruwaished, stated to KUNA that Najat society is keen on caring the orphans, especially Syrian refugees, in attempt to alleviate some of their sufferings.

The charity's role is not limited to distributing stipends, explained Al-Ruwaished, but also encompasses constant following up on the orphans' essential needs and psychological and social affairs. This is done in coordination with Ministry of Social Affairs and Societal Development as well as the Foreign Ministry and Kuwait's embassies in the concerned countries. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Children participate in activities sponsored by Kuwaiti Al-Najat charity.

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## News in brief

## Kuwait expresses solidarity with Nepal over air crash

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed on Sunday Kuwait's sympathy and solidarity with Nepal over a passenger plane crash in Pokhara, central of the country. The ministry offered Kuwait's condolences to Nepal, its leadership, government, people and the relatives of the victims on this incident.

## US dollar stabilizes at KD 0.305

**KUWAIT:** The US dollar stabilized on Monday at KD 0.305, while the euro went up by 0.26 percent to reach KD 0.331, compared to Sunday's rates. The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) said in its daily bulletin that the British pound sterling went up by 0.27 percent to reach KD 0.374, as well as the Swiss franc by 0.33 to KD 0.330, while the Japanese yen stood unchanged at KD 0.002. The CBK publishes daily average exchange rates that do not necessarily reflect actual prices of the currencies' trade for the day.

## OPEC basket up to \$81.86 pb

**VIENNA:** The price of the OPEC crudes went up by \$1.13 to settle at \$81.86 per barrel Friday, as opposed to \$80.73 pb last Thursday, said the international oil cartel on Monday. According to the OPEC bulletin, the average oil price of the cartel basket in 2022 was at \$82.07 per barrel. The last OPEC+ online ministerial meeting on December 4th decided to keep the decreased production levels at two million barrels per day. The decision was made due to the uncertainty surrounding the globally economy and the oil market. According to the latest OPEC report, the demand for oil remain unchanged in the beginning of this year, reaching 29.2 million barrels per day, an increase by 600,000 barrels from the same period in 2022. —KUNA

## Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** Cars move on the Gulf Road on a partially sunny day as clouds hover over the city. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

# KRCS delegation participates in IFRC annual partners' meeting

## Meeting to discuss humanitarian situation in Asia Pacific: Al-Hasawi



**KUALA LUMPUR:** The annual partners' meeting of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).



**Anwar Al-Hasawi.** —KUNA photos

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The annual partners' meeting organized by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in the Asia-Pacific region kicked off Monday, with the participation of a delegation from Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) headed by Deputy Chairman of KRCS Anwar Al-Hasawi. The meeting will continue until January 18.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Hasawi said on the sidelines of the meeting that the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the Rohingya in Bangladesh and Myanmar, will be discussed with IFRC's partners. He pointed out KRCS' humanitarian role in supporting its partners, especially with regard to the issues of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Rohingya, stating that KRCS had previously provided urgent humanitarian assistance to these countries, especially with regard to the relief and health aspect for the benefit of the Rohingya and the Afghans, in addition to providing help to those impacted by the floods that swept Pakistan.

He looks forward to the outcome of this meeting, as well as individual meetings, to decide what to do in the framework of cooperation with IFRC's partners and counterparts in other societies. He underscored KRCS' keenness to enhance ways of cooperation with its partners in the Asia-Pacific region to facilitate the tasks of providing aid implemented by societies worldwide. He explored Kuwait's humanitarian role in supporting countries most in need and its continued provision of help to disadvantaged people, as it occupies a leading position in global humanitarian action, referring to the role of the Red Crescent Society that covers over 105 countries worldwide since the establishment of the society in 1966. Several partners of IFRC and the Red Crescent in the Asia-Pacific region are participating in this meeting in order to exchange expertise and experiences, discuss the most crucial challenges resulting from humanitarian crises along with natural disasters, and develop a mechanism for collective action and effective response. —KUNA



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## PAAET will work to fulfill aspirations of Kuwait: Al-Fajaam

**KUWAIT:** Director General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr Hassan Al-Fajaam said that the Authority will work towards further developing applied education in Kuwait to serve the aspirations of the country with highly-trained working nationals. PAAET is an academic institute in Kuwait and is considered one of the largest institutes in the Middle East in terms of the number of enrolled students. The PAAET offers a wide variety of programs across its different colleges and training institutes.

Dr Fajaam extended his abundant thanks and great gratitude to His Highness the Amir 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 Sheikh Ahmed Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Minister of Higher Education and Practical Research Dr Hamad Al-Adwani for the confidence they reposed in him by assigning him to manage one of the important educational institutions in Kuwait.

He explained that this assignment is a responsibility and trust that requires serious work towards developing and improving the educational process and achieving the state's aspirations for a better future for the education sector, asking God for help to serve the country and the people. Al-Fajaam expressed his thanks to all the employees of the authority's for their sincere efforts and fruitful cooperation. —KUNA



**Dr Hassan Al-Fajaam**

## Housing dept official inspects workflow at Mutlaa projects

**KUWAIT:** The deputy director of the executive affairs at the Public Authority for Housing Welfare, Rashed Al-Enezi has visited Mutlaa area to inspect the ongoing works at the projects for the construction of the main transfer stations, the equipment of the secondary transfer stations, the cable projects for feeding the main transfer sta-

tions and the projects for the low and medium pressure cables.

"The authority is currently executing 18 electricity projects in the city of Mutlaa, which includes four projects for the main substations, three projects for equipment of secondary substations, nine projects for ground cables and two projects for cable networks of medium and low pressure in the suburbs," Al-Enezi said.

Al-Enezi stated that the contractors and technical staff supervising these projects need to adhere to the completion of the projects in accordance with the contract dates, according to the time schedule, and to sort out any hurdles that may impede the completion of the projects.



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DNIPRO: Rescuers work on a residential building destroyed after a missile strike in Dnipro. — AFP

# Ukraine missile toll rises to 40

## 'Russian armed forces do not strike residential buildings or social infrastructure'

**DNIPRO:** The toll from a devastating Russian strike on Dnipro rose to 40 on Monday, as more bodies were pulled from the debris of one of Russia's deadliest attacks since its invasion. Residents gathered to watch as cranes removed collapsing sections of the Soviet-style residential building that was ripped open by the strike in central Ukraine on Saturday. The emergency services gave the new toll specifying that three children were among those dead and that 34 people were still unaccounted for. The Kremlin claimed to reporters its forces were not responsible and pointed to an unsubstantiated theory circulating on social media that Ukrainian air defence systems had caused the damage.

"The Russian armed forces do not strike residential buildings or social infrastructure. They strike military targets," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Ukraine leader Volodymyr Zelensky said late Sunday that search operations would go on as long as necessary and condemned Russia's "cowardly silence" over the attack. EU presidency holder Sweden condemned

"in the strongest terms" the attack, with Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson telling reporters that "intentional attacks against civilians are war crimes".

### 'Defensive' Belarus drills

The rising cost of the strike came as Russia and its close ally Belarus announced the beginning of new joint military drills. Belarus, which has been a key ally to Russia throughout the conflict, allowed Moscow's forces to launch their invasion from Belarusian territory last February. Its defence ministry said the air force exercises would involve joint "tactical" flights and that every airfield in Belarus would be involved. "The exercise is purely defensive in nature," Pavel Muraveyko, first deputy state secretary of Belarus's Security Council, said in remarks carried Sunday by the defence ministry.

The Institute for the Study of War, based in the United States, said in an analytical note Monday that the risk of a new offensive from Belarus was "low" and

"the risk of Belarusian direct involvement was very low". Meanwhile, UN atomic watchdog chief Rafael Grossi was expected in Ukraine on Monday to deploy observer missions at nuclear power plants across the country that have been a key concern throughout Russia's invasion. "I'm proud to lead this mission to Ukraine, where we're deploying in all of the country's NPPs (nuclear power plants) to provide assistance in nuclear safety and security," he said on Twitter. Ukraine in recent weeks has been pressing Western backers to supply its forces with advanced tanks, in particular the German-designed Leopard model.

### Observer teams at nuclear plants

German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht resigned on Monday after months of heavy criticism over Berlin's stuttering response to the war in Ukraine. Britain this weekend pledged 14 Challenger 2 tanks to Ukraine, which would make it the first Western country to supply the heavy tanks Kyiv has been calling for.

Peskov, the Kremlin's spokesperson, told reporters Monday that fighting in Ukraine would continue with or without the deliveries. "These tanks are burning and will burn," he said. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said in an interview with German media on Sunday that "recent pledges for heavy warfare equipment are important-and I expect more in the near future".

Separately on Monday, Ukraine officials said that Russian forces had continued shelling the southern city of Kherson, which was recaptured by Kyiv's forces late last year. The regional governor Yaroslav Yanushevych said one woman was killed in an attack on a residential building and that Russian forces also damaged an empty children's hospital.

In Crimea, the Ukrainian Black Sea peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014, the Moscow-appointed official responsible for the military city Sevastopol said Russian forces had downed seven drones over the last 24 hours. — AFP

## EU parliament chief to unveil new reforms

**STRASBOURG:** The president of the European Parliament will seek Monday to get ahead of a graft scandal that has rocked the legislature, by officially unveiling a series of reforms to clean up the multinational assembly.

But many MEPs and observers believe the changes to be presented by Roberta Metsola don't go far enough to be able to restore credibility in the institution. The parliament has been the focus of intense scrutiny since the scandal broke open a month ago with the arrest of one of Metsola's 14 vice-presidents after Belgian police raided homes and offices of several MEPs, former MEPs, parliamentary aides and heads of NGOs that dealt with lawmakers.

Belgian prosecutors are investigating alleged graft in the European Parliament benefitting Qatar and Morocco. The police raids turned up 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) in cash. Qatar has denied having any role in any wrongdoing in the case. Morocco says it is the target of unjustified "media attacks" over the allegations.

Metsola's arrested vice-president Eva Kaili, a Greek MEP who has since lost that high parliamentary position, also has said through her lawyer that she knew nothing about cash found at her home. Kaili remains in custody with three other suspects: Kaili's boyfriend Francesco Giorgi, who was a parliamentary aide; former MEP Pier Antonio Panzeri; and Niccolo Figa-Talamanca, head of an NGO suspected of making payments to MEPs. The three male suspects are all Italian. According to a Belgian media report, Giorgi has made a confession. All four are charged in Belgium with "criminal organisation, corruption and money laundering". Greece and Italy have launched their own investigations.

Metsola has vowed to act swiftly to "strengthen integrity, independence and accountability" in the parliament. She has also said the graft scandal showed "European democracy is under attack". On Monday, Metsola will kick off the parliament's first plenary session of 2023 in Strasbourg, eastern France, by formally announcing measures which have already been trailed.

These include restricting parliamentary access for former MEPs; registering outside individuals who lobby, meet or speak at the parliament; a public MEPs' registry of gifts and travel received; and punishment for breaches. Yet legal experts and some senior MEPs have voiced scepticism that those steps go far enough.—AFP



POKHARA: Rescuers pull the body of a victim who died in a Yeti Airlines plane crash in Pokhara on January 16, 2023. — AFP

## Hopes of survivors in Nepal plane crash 'nil'

**POKHARA:** Nepali rescue workers scoured a debris-strewn ravine Monday for three missing bodies from the mangled wreckage of a plane that crashed with 72 people on board, with hopes of any survivors now "nil", according to authorities.

The Yeti Airlines ATR 72 plummeted into the steep gorge, smashed into pieces and burst into flames as it approached the central city of Pokhara on Sunday morning, in Nepal's worst aviation disaster since 1992.

The cause of the crash was not yet known but a video on social media—verified by AFP partner ESN—showed the twin-propeller aircraft banking suddenly and sharply to the left as it approached Pokhara airport. A loud explosion followed. Nepal, which has a poor record on air safety, observed a day of mourning on Monday for the victims.

Soldiers used ropes and stretchers to retrieve bodies from the 300-metre (1,000-foot) deep ravine late into the night, with recovery efforts continuing throughout Monday. Officials said 69 bodies had been recovered so far, with autopsies on 24 ongoing. The plane was carrying 68 passengers and four crew when it went down.

"We pray for a miracle. But, the hope of finding anyone alive is nil," senior local official Tek Bahadur KC told AFP. Debris from the airliner was strewn across the crash site, including the mangled remains of passenger seats and the plane's white-coloured fuselage.

### 'In pain'

Raj Dhungana, the uncle of one of the plane's passengers, 23-year-old Sangita Shahi, told AFP outside a hospital in Pokhara that his whole family "is in pain". He described a "very talented" young woman who was a student in Kathmandu, and also ran a makeup studio and worked on an online business platform on the side.

"God has taken away such a nice person," he said. The passenger manifest included five Indians, four Russians, two South Koreans, and one person each from Argentina, Australia, France and Ireland. The rest were Nepalis. "Incredibly sad news," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese tweeted. Indian premier Narendra Modi also expressed his condolences.

The ATR 72 was on a flight from the capital Kathmandu and hit the ground between Pokhara's brand-new international airport and the old domestic one shortly before 11:00 am (0515 GMT) on Sunday. "I was walking when I heard a loud blast, like a bomb went off," said witness Arun Tamu, 44, who was around 500 metres away and who live-streamed video of the blazing wreckage on social media. "A few of us rushed to see if we can rescue anybody. I saw at least two women were breathing. The fire was getting very intense and it made it difficult for us to approach closer," the former soldier told AFP. It was unclear if anyone on the ground was injured. Aviation expert Greg Waldon told AFP that, from the video shared on social media, it appeared the plane may have had a "wing stall", meaning one wing suddenly stopped providing lift. "When you're at low altitude and you have an event like that... it's major trouble," Waldon, Asia managing editor at industry publication FlightGlobal, told AFP.—AFP

## Italy nabs fugitive Mafia boss Denaro

**PALERMO:** Italian anti-mafia police caught Sicilian godfather Matteo Messina Denaro on Monday, ending a 30-year manhunt for Italy's most wanted fugitive. A ruthless operator who once reportedly boasted he could "fill a cemetery" with his victims, the 60-year-old Messina Denaro was a leading figure in Cosa Nostra, the real-life Sicilian crime syndicate depicted in the Godfather movies.

The mobster was nabbed "inside a health facility in Palermo, where he had gone for therapeutic treatment", special operations commander Pasquale Angelosanto said in a police statement. He had been undergoing periodic treatment for colon cancer under a false name, and did not resist arrest, ANSA news agency said.

Criminology expert Anna Sergi at the University of Essex said Messina Denaro was "the last one, the most resilient one, the 'purest' Sicilian mafioso remaining". "The secrets he is said to keep fuel conspiracies around mafia-state agreements in the 1990s," she told AFP. "He is the essence of the great historical power of Cosa Nostra. The myths around his period on the run are part of the reason why the Mafia myth endures."

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said Messina Denaro was the "most significant" mafia boss and his arrest in his native Sicily was a "great victory" for the state in its war against organised crime. Police images showed him being escorted by officers to a waiting vehicle, wearing a cream hat, sunglasses and a brown leather jacket with a cream sheepskin lining. Before that, the only known photo of him dated back to the early 1990s. He had been on the run since 1993. His first words to police were "I'm Matteo Messina Denaro", ANSA reported. Locals could be seen cheering and applauding in the rain as he was driven away. Messina Denaro was arrested a day after the 30th anniversary of the arrest of Salvatore "The Beast" Riina, the Cosa Nostra boss who died in 2017. He had been number one on Italy's most-wanted list, accused of mafia association, multiple murders and use of explosives.—AFP



ROME: A handout picture from Italian Carabinieri Press Office, released by ANSA on January 16, 2023 shows Italian police reconstructions of the face of fugitive Sicilian godfather Matteo Messina Denaro, caught by Italian anti-mafia police. — AFP

## International

# Peruvians defy state of emergency, mobilize for major new protest

## Almost 100 stretches of road remained blockaded in 10 of Peru's 25 regions

**LIMA:** Lima and other Peruvian regions were under a renewed state of emergency even as opponents of President Dina Boluarte began mobilizing toward the capital ahead of a major demonstration Monday, the latest in weeks of deadly unrest. At least 42 people have died, according to Peru's human rights ombudsman, in five weeks of clashes at burning roadblocks and other flashpoints to demand fresh elections and Boluarte's resignation.

She took over on December 7 as the South American country's first woman president following the impeachment and arrest of leftist Pedro Castillo for his failed bid to dissolve Congress and rule by decree. On Sunday some 3,000 protesters in Andahuaylas in southeastern Peru began boarding trucks and buses bound for the demonstration in Lima, RPP radio reported.

The government extended by 30 days a state of emergency from midnight Saturday for Lima, Cusco, Callao and Puno, authorizing the military to back up police actions to restore public order. The state of emergency also suspended constitutional rights such as freedom of movement and assembly, according to a decree published in the official gazette.

In protest epicenter Puno, the government declared a new night-time curfew for 10 days, from 8:00 pm to 4:00 am. Dozens of demonstrators had arrived in Lima's Miraflores district late Saturday as part of a mobilization for what they called a "takeover of the city."

Almost 100 stretches of road remained blockaded Sunday in 10 of Peru's 25 regions—a record, according to a senior land transport official. Castillo, a former rural school teacher and union leader, faced vehement opposition from Congress during his 18 months in office and is the subject of numerous criminal investigations into allegations of widespread graft. His ouster sparked immediate nationwide protests, mainly among the rural poor, that petered out over the holiday period but resumed on January 4.

## London police officer admits serial rapes

**LONDON:** A British police officer in an armed unit protecting MPs and foreign diplomats has admitted 24 counts of rape and a string of other sex offences over nearly two decades. David Carrick, 48, appeared in court in London on Monday and pleaded guilty to four counts of rape, as well as false imprisonment and indecent assault against a 40-year-old woman in 2003.

Reporting restrictions were lifted on his admission at a previous hearing in December last year of 43 charges against 11 other women, including 20 counts of rape, over a 16-year period to September 2020.

Carrick's force, the Metropolitan Police, has apologised to his victims, after it emerged police were aware of several allegations of rape, domestic violence and harassment against him. But he faced no criminal sanctions or internal disciplinary proceedings. He was suspended from duty after he was arrested in October 2021. The Met has been under intense scrutiny about the conduct of its officers, particularly since the kidnap,



**LIMA:** Protesters march demanding the resignation of Peru's President Dina Boluarte and the closure of Congress, in a residential area in Lima, on January 15, 2023. — AFP

### 'Terrible cruelties'

In the run-up to Monday's demonstrations, attitudes among both protesters and government officials appeared to harden. "We ask that Dina Boluarte resign as president and that Congress be shut down. We don't want any more deaths," Jasmin Reinoso, a 25-year-old nurse from Ayacucho, told AFP.

Prime Minister Alberto Otrola called for protesters to "radically change" their tactics and opt for dialogue. "There is a small group organized and paid for by drug

trafficking and illegal mining that wants to take power by force," Otrola said on local television.

Earlier in the day, some 500 Peruvians, including several dozen police officers, attended a mass in Lima's central cathedral for fallen protesters, as well as for a policeman burnt alive in the southern city of Juliaca. Many of the mourners wore white T-shirts to symbolize peace and bore photographs of the dead.

Lima Archbishop Carlos Castillo, who led the service in Spanish and the Quechua Indigenous language,

rape and murder of a young woman in south London in March 2021. Wayne Couzens, who also served with the Met's diplomatic protection squad, detained Sarah Everard by falsely claiming she had broken coronavirus lockdown rules.

She was then raped and strangled. Couzens admitted killing her and is serving a full-life sentence in prison. Police were criticised for a lack of proper vetting procedures of Couzens, and for failing to take action after he allegedly exposed himself in 2015.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan, whose office oversees policing in the British capital, said he was "sickened and appalled" by Carrick's offending. "Londoners will be rightly shocked that this man was able to work for the Met for so long and serious questions must be answered about how he was able to abuse his position as an officer in this horrendous manner," he added.

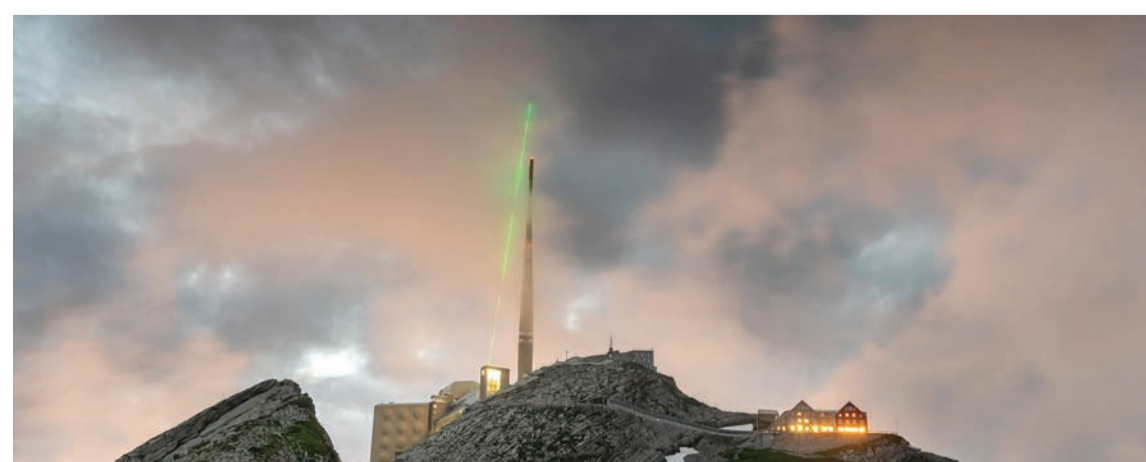
Investigators said Carrick met some of his victims through online dating apps or on social occasions and used his position as a police officer to gain their trust. He then subjected them to attacks, coercive control and degrading treatment.

"It is unbelievable to think these offences could have been committed by a serving police officer," said Detective Chief Inspector Iain Moor, from the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Major Crime Unit. — AFP

that is struck by lightning around 100 times year. After two years building the powerful laser, it took several weeks to move it in pieces via a cable car. Finally, a helicopter had to drop off the large containers that would house the telescope. The telescope focused the laser beam to maximum intensity at a spot around 150 m in the air - just above the top of the 124-m tower. The beam has a diameter of 20 cm at the beginning, but narrows to just a few centimeters at the top.

During a storm in the summer of 2021, the scientists were able to photograph their beam driving a lightning bolt for around 50 m. Three other strikes were also guided, interferometric measurements showed. Most lightning builds up from precursors inside clouds, but some can come up from the ground if the electric field is strong enough. "The current and power of a lightning bolt really becomes clear once the ground is connected with the cloud," Houard said.

The laser guides one of these precursors, making it "much faster than the others - and straighter," he said. "It will then be the first to connect with the cloud before it lights up." This means that, in theory, this technique could be used not just to drive lightning away, but to trigger it in the first place. That could allow scientists to better protect strategic installations, such as airports or rocket launchpads, by igniting strikes at the time of their choosing. In practice, that would require a high conductivity in the laser's plasma - which scientists do not think they have mastered yet. — AFP



This handout image shows a lightning rod in action on Santis Mountain in Switzerland. — AFP

## Pakistan must act to end forced child marriage: UN

**GENEVA:** UN rights experts on Monday deplored a reported rise in abductions, forced marriages and conversions of girls from Pakistan's religious minorities, urging the government to swiftly halt such practices. "We are deeply troubled to hear that girls as young as 13 are being kidnapped from their families, trafficked to locations far from their homes, made to marry men sometimes twice their age, and coerced to convert to Islam," the experts said.

"We are very concerned that such marriages and conversions take place under threat of violence to these girls and women, or their families." The experts called on Pakistan's government "to take immediate steps to prevent and thoroughly investigate these acts".

The group of around a dozen independent United Nations rights experts includes the UN special rapporteurs on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, on contemporary forms of slavery, on violence

called for peace and an end to the "spiral of violence." "The blood that is spilled does not cry out for vengeance," he said.

"May the terrible cruelties that were done to some," including to "our burnt policeman brother, may these cruelties disappear from our horizon." On Friday, Boluarte expressed her "regret" for the deaths, but insisted: "I will not resign." An Ipsos poll published Sunday said Boluarte had a 71 percent disapproval rating.

More than 100 Peruvian, Argentine and Chilean intellectuals, meanwhile, urged Boluarte in an open letter Saturday to "stop the massacre of citizens who exercise their legitimate right" to protest. The unrest has been largely concentrated in the southern Andes, where Quechua and Aymara communities live.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has said that in order to end the crisis, these groups need to be better integrated into Peruvian society. Jose Muro, deputy minister of territorial governance, told TV Peru Sunday the government would create "spaces for dialogue" countrywide to discuss unanswered social demands.

### Radical groups?

Meanwhile the airport in Cusco, gateway to the famed Machu Picchu site, reopened Saturday. It had been shuttered two days earlier—the second time it had been closed due to the protests. Train services to the historic Inca citadel also resumed Sunday.

Peru has been politically unstable for years, with 60-year-old Boluarte the country's sixth president in five years. Castillo has been remanded in custody for 18 months, charged with rebellion and other crimes. The authorities insist radical groups are behind the protests, including remnants of the Shining Path communist guerrilla group. As proof, they have presented the capture this week of a former member of that organization, Rocio Leandro, whom the police accuse of having financed some of the unrest. — AFP

against women and on minority issues.

Such investigations, it said, should be carried out "objectively and in line with domestic legislation and international human rights commitments". The experts, who are appointed by the UN Human Rights Council but do not speak on behalf of the world body, pointed to reports indicating that Pakistan's court system enables offences against religious minority girls and young women "by accepting, without critical examination, fraudulent evidence".

"Family members say that victims' complaints are rarely taken seriously by the police, either refusing to register these reports or arguing that no crime has been committed by labelling these abductions as 'love marriages'," they said. The experts pointed out that abductors often "force their victims to sign documents which falsely attest to their being of legal age for marriage as well as marrying and converting of free will".

"These documents are cited by the police as evidence that no crime has occurred." The experts insisted it was vital that all victims, regardless of their religious background, be afforded access to justice and equal protection under the law. Pakistan's authorities, they said, "must adopt and enforce legislation prohibiting forced conversions, forced and child marriages, kidnapping, and trafficking". — AFP

## Last activists leave village as coal pit expansion rolls on

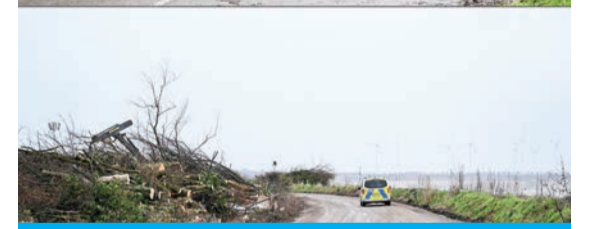
**LUETZERATH, Germany:** The last two climate activists occupying a western German village to stop it making way for a coal mine extension left their underground hideout on Monday, marking the end of the police operation to evict them. Already abandoned by its original residents, Luetzerath has become a symbol of resistance against fossil fuels.

Around 300 activists occupied the village, staking out emptied buildings and building positions in the trees, to try to prevent the expansion of the adjacent Garzweiler open-cast coal mine. Police launched an operation on Wednesday to clear the protest camp, making quicker progress than expected. By Sunday, authorities had succeeded in removing all but the last two, holed up in a self-built tunnel under the settlement.

The end of the operation came despite a huge demonstration held on Saturday, attended by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg. Police estimated that 15,000 people participated in the rally, but organizers put the turn out closer to 35,000. Protest planners accused authorities of "violence" after clashes between police and participants, which resulted in injuries on both sides.

Energy giant RWE has permission for the expansion of the mine under a compromise agreement signed with the government, led by Social Democrat Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Under the deal agreed in October, Luetzerath will be demolished, while five neighboring villages are spared. At the same time, RWE also agreed to stop producing electricity with coal in western Germany by 2030 - eight years earlier than previously planned.

With Russia's gas supply cut in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine, Germany has had recourse to coal, firing up mothballed power plants. The extension to the mine, one of Europe's largest, is deemed necessary to secure Germany's future energy supply. "It was necessary and of course it is a sin in terms of climate policy and of course we should work towards keeping this sin as short as possible and not constantly prolonging it," said Economy Minister Robert Habeck. But activists, who feel betrayed by Green politicians like Habeck, argue extracting the coal will



**LUETZERATH:** This combination of pictures shows (top) environmentalists sitting on wooden tripods on a road on Jan 11, 2023 and (bottom) a police car driving past cut trees on the same road. — AFP

mean Germany misses targets under the Paris climate agreements.

### 'Most beautiful place'

The end of Luetzerath comes after years of local resistance to the expansion plans left a different kind of mark on the area. In the nearby village of Keyenberg, recently spared from the bulldozer, local resident Thomas Schueller told AFP that "90 percent" of his neighbors had already moved out. "When the first street empties, then the others go, too," said the 51-year-old who has lived in the village since birth. "We never thought there was a chance to save this place," said Schueller, a house painter by profession. "I only wish it had happened 10 years earlier, then most people wouldn't have moved away."

Keyenberg native Wolfgang Wangerin, 42, said he felt a "pain in my heart, because I knew I would never be able to show this (place) to my children." "When I found out that this place had been saved, it was very emotional," said Wangerin. "For me, this is the most beautiful place on earth," said Alexandra Bruene, 45, whose current home near Holzweiler to the south of Luetzerath was finally excluded from expansion plans in 2014. Bringing new life back to the area would now take at least "five to 10 years", she said. — AFP

## International

# Greece's last king Constantine laid to rest at former royal cemetery

## 'This is not the end, father, you will live forever in our hearts'

**ATHENS:** Greece's last king, Constantine II, was laid to rest on Monday at the royal cemetery of Tatoi near Athens, after a private funeral service that drew dozens of European royals and a crowd of several hundreds.

Constantine, who died last week aged 82, was a divisive figure in the country's history, and the government drew criticism from conservatives after deciding not to grant him the honour of a state funeral.

Former prime minister Antonis Samaras was among those who said Constantine, a former Olympic gold medalist for Greece, deserved to be buried as a former head of state. In his eulogy, Constantine's eldest son Paul said his father ascended to the throne during a "difficult period" and had left the country to avoid causing "fresh bloodshed".

"This is not the end, father. You will live forever in our thoughts and hearts," he said, adding that the former monarch had helped Athens secure the 2004 Olympics.

At least 2,000 people had queued outside the Athens Metropolitan Cathedral from dawn on Monday to pay their respects, according to state television ERT. Police declined to give an estimate of the numbers.

Some gatherers clutched flags of the royal era, flowers and portraits of the ex-king and his wife, the Danish princess Anne-Marie. Many bowed and kissed the coffin, which was covered with the Greek flag.

"He was an honourable man, a proper family man who never harmed Greece," pensioner Fotis Stamatiou, 85, told AFP. "We are here to accord our king the honour he deserves... We love him," added fellow pensioner Arietta Papadaki.

### Toppled by coup

The private service, officiated by Archbishop Ieronymos, head of the Orthodox church of Greece, began shortly after noon with almost 200 guests attending. Royals from Belgium, Britain, Denmark,

Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain flew in for the service.

The British Crown was represented by Princess Anne, daughter of the late Queen Elizabeth II. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and President Katerina Sakellaropoulou-whose official residence is a former royal palace-did not attend the funeral. The government was represented by Deputy Prime Minister Panagiotis Pikrammenos and Culture and Sports Minister Lina Mendoni.

Surveys in past decades have shown most Greeks feel either indifference or resentment towards the former king. The last member of a century-long dynasty, Constantine had reigned for just three years when an army dictatorship seized control of the country in 1967.

Declassified US diplomatic cables say Constantine may have been mulling martial law himself prior to the coup. Nearly eight months after the junta seized power, Constantine organised a military counter-coup that failed. He fled to Rome with the rest of the royal family, and later to London. The junta abolished the monarchy in 1973, and Greeks voted not to restore the royal family after the restoration of democracy in 1974.

### 'Kingdom of Greece no longer exists'

Later locked in a bitter property dispute with the Greek state, Constantine had his Greek citizenship revoked in 1994. The ex-king returned to Greece in 2013, selling the 9,500-square-foot (880-square-metre) London mansion where his family had lived for four decades.

The day after Constantine's death at a private Athens hospital, the prime minister announced the funeral would be held privately. Mitsotakis insisted on Saturday it was the right decision, stressing that the former king was the leader of the "Kingdom of Greece, which no longer exists".

He said history "will judge Constantine fairly and



ATHENS: Pall-bearers carry the coffin in front of Greece's former Queen Anne-Marie (CtopR) and Pavlos, Crown Prince of Athens, as they leave after the funeral service of former King of Greece Constantine II in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens, on January 16, 2023. —AFP

harshly". There was a frantic race over the weekend to prepare the royal cemetery in Tatoi, about 29 kilometres (18 miles) north of Athens, after it nearly burned down in a 2021 summer wildfire.

Most members of the former royal family are buried at the former royal summer palace at Tatoi, including the dynasty's Danish-born founder George I. Constantine

was married to Anne-Marie-sister to Denmark's Queen Margrethe-and they had five children.

He was also the younger brother of Sofia, the queen mother of Spain. As crown prince, he won a sailing gold medal in the 1960 Rome Olympics and was an honorary member of the International Olympic Committee. —AFP

## German defence minister quits over Ukraine aid

**BERLIN:** German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht resigned on Monday after coming in for months of heavy criticism over Berlin's stuttering response to the war in Ukraine. Her decision came just days ahead of a crucial meeting of defence ministers from Ukraine's allies, and as Berlin was under intense pressure to provide battle tanks to Kyiv.

A spokeswoman for Chancellor Olaf Scholz said on Monday he would announce a replacement for Lambrecht "in the near future" but government sources told AFP that no decision was expected on Monday on her successor.

Lambrecht, 57, said in a statement she had asked Scholz to relieve her of her duties. "The months-long media focus on my person hardly allows for objective reporting and discussion about servicemen and women... and security policy decisions in the interest of the citizens of Germany," she said. The politician from Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD) had faced criticism

for months over what some see as Germany's wavering response to the conflict in Ukraine.

Patience for Lambrecht ran out when she posted a New Year's video on social media in which she lauded her "special experiences" as defence minister in 2022 against a backdrop of loud fireworks. Leading German media blasted the tone-deaf message, with some commentators saying she was "no longer tenable as a minister". Rumours had been swirling ever since that she was planning to hand in her resignation.

### Tanks for Ukraine

Lambrecht's move comes days before the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, which coordinates arms supplies to Kyiv, is due to meet at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany. The defence portfolio was always going to be daunting even before the war in Ukraine.

Lambrecht, who took office in December 2021, had been expected to address a series of military equipment failures that had made the armed forces a laughing stock in Germany. But the war in the Ukraine added urgency to her task, leaving her in charge of Germany's colossal plan to revive its ailing army with a special fund of 100 billion euros (\$108 billion).

At the same time, the conflict also

early morning of January 8 in the central region of Kafrine, leaving 40 dead and more than 100 injured. The government responded by announcing nearly two dozen measures, including limiting buses and trucks to 90 kilometres per hour (56 mph), banning night buses and outlawing the import of used tyres-the suspected cause of the accident.

But bus companies are fighting back, securing a one-year delay in a proposed ban on placing luggage on roof racks to prevent vehicles from becoming imbalanced. A witness interviewed by RFM radio said that in the latest accident, the bus driver had tried to dodge a donkey that was on the road.

According to the World Bank, Senegal, a country of 17 million, records 24 road deaths for every 100,000 inhabitants annually. By comparison, the toll is six per 100,000 across the European Union and two in Switzerland, while the average across sub-Saharan Africa is 27. —AFP



ARBIL: File photo shows German Defence Minister Christine Lambrecht talking to soldiers as she visited German armed forces in Arbil. Germany's Defence Minister has decided to step down from her post, it was announced on January 16, 2023. —AFP

exposed a lack of understanding of the workings of modern warfare. Even before Russia's invasion, Lambrecht was mocked in January 2022 for her announcement that Germany would send 5,000 helmets to Kyiv, where the Ukrainian government was seeking weapons to ward off Moscow.

She then came under fire in May for allowing her son to accompany her on a government helicopter on their way to a

family vacation. In the fateful video posted earlier this month, Lambrecht reflected on a year ending with "war raging in the middle of Europe".

To the backdrop of exploding fireworks during chaotic New Year's celebrations in Berlin, the minister said the war in Ukraine had led to "a lot of special experiences" and the chance for "many encounters with great and interesting people". —AFP



SAKAL: A general view of an accident scene near Sakal, northern Senegal, on January 16, 2023 where nineteen people were killed when a bus and a truck collided. —AFP

## Road crash in Senegal kills 19

**DAKAR:** Nineteen people were killed on Monday when a bus and a truck collided in northern Senegal, firefighters said, eight days after a smashup between two buses left 40 dead. Twenty-five people were injured in Monday's accident, which occurred near Sakal in the Louga region, Papa Ange Michel Diatta, a colonel with the national firefighting service, told AFP.

In a tweet, President Macky Sall said, "Another deadly accident on our roads... 19 human lives lost." The toll "highlights the need to strengthen highway safety measures," he said. Road accidents are common in Senegal, mainly because of driver error, poor roads and decrepit vehicles, say experts.

Senegal was plunged into three days of mourning after two buses collided in the

ing talks between Japanese and Indian defence and foreign ministers in 2019, but was delayed by the pandemic.

Japan and India—along with Australia and the United States—are part of the "Quad" alliance, a grouping of regional powers that is increasingly concerned about China's military and economic influence.

Tokyo has held a string of joint military exercises in recent months, as well as overhauling its defence and security strategy and explicitly airing its concerns about China. In December, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government committed to doubling defence spending to two percent of GDP by 2027, and dubbed China the "greatest strategic challenge ever" to Japan's security.

Last week, Japan inked a new defence deal with Britain and agreed to expand its mutual defence treaty with Washington to attacks in space. —AFP

## Japan, India start joint jet drill

**TOKYO:** Japan and India began their first joint fighter jet exercise on Monday near Tokyo as the countries upgrade defence and security ties with an eye on China's growing military might. The 11-day joint exercise will involve eight Japanese fighter jets, with India sending four fighters, two transport aircraft and an aerial refuelling tanker, Japan's defence ministry said.

Around 150 Indian Air Force personnel are taking part in the exercise at the Hyakuri Air Base in Ibaraki prefecture, northeast of Tokyo. The drill was agreed by the two countries dur-

## 15 Thai officials charged after raid suspects walk free

**BANGKOK:** Thailand has charged 15 officials with corruption after two Chinese suspects walked free from a raid on a passport-forging den, police said Monday. The case comes as concerns in Thailand grow over so-called "grey businesses"-illegal operations run by Chinese nationals.

Police raided the former consulate of Pacific island Nauru in Bangkok late last month following allegations that Chinese citizens were squatting there. Inside officers found two Chinese men-both wanted by Beijing-forging passports for fellow nationals, Deputy National Police Chief Surachet Hakpal said.

But the two managed to escape, he

told reporters, with the collusion of five officials from the Department of Special Investigation as well as nine police officers and a military sergeant. The officials, along with a translator, extracted a 10 million baht (\$245,000) bribe from the suspects for their help, Surachet said.

The scheme came to light, Surachet said, when the translator confessed after being caught attempting to flee to Malaysia and a lost hard disk containing the original evidence was discovered. Official reports said around 2.5 million baht was seized during the raid, but footage found on the hard disk and corroborated by the translator showed around eight million baht had been discovered.

"They told the Chinese that it was not enough and asked for four million more baht," Surachet told a press conference. All 16 men were charged with corruption, or asking for a bribe, and the 15 officials-excluding the translator-were charged with abuse of power. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Two migrants die, 88 rescued

**PRAIA:** Rescue teams in Cape Verde have saved 88 migrants adrift in a canoe, but two others aboard the vessel have died, the national press agency Inforpress reported. The motorised canoe, known as a pirogue, was spotted by a lighthouse keeper on Saturday on the coast of the northern island of Boa Vista, it said. The migrants come from Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, Inforpress said on Sunday, quoting local police. Six have been hospitalised with dehydration, it said. Cape Verde is a former Portuguese archipelago located around 600 kilometres (350 miles) off the coast of West Africa. It has previously picked up migrants in distress trying to make the crossing to the Spanish islands of Canaries-a gateway to the European Union-but high numbers are rare. According to the newspaper Expresso das Ilhas, the canoe had left The Gambia 25 days before but ran out of fuel.

#### Germany summons Iran envoy

**BERLIN:** German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on Monday summoned Iran's ambassador to Berlin for the second time in a week over a rash of executions by Tehran, her spokesman said. The spokesman, Christoffer Burger, confirmed the move when asked about reports the envoy had been summoned "over massive human rights violations and a wave of executions". Iran said Saturday it had executed a British-Iranian dual national sentenced to death for spying for the United Kingdom, drawing strong condemnation from Western governments and international rights groups. Alireza Akbari, 61, was hanged after being convicted of "corruption on earth and harming the country's internal and external security by passing on intelligence", the judiciary's Mizan Online website said.

#### Surge in journalists' killings

**PARIS:** Killings of journalists and media workers surged 50 percent in 2022 to reach 86 worldwide, marking one death every four days, UN cultural body UNESCO said Monday. Last year's increase followed three years with lower violence against reporters, with an average of 58 killings annually in 2019-21. "After several years of consecutive declines, the steep rise in the number of journalists killed in 2022 is alarming," UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay said in a statement. "Authorities must step up their efforts to stop these crimes and ensure their perpetrators are punished, because indifference is a major factor in this climate of violence," she added. UNESCO found that no one was brought to justice in 86 percent of cases. Motives for killings of journalists included "reprisals for reporting on organised crime, armed conflict or the rise of extremism, and covering sensitive subjects such as corruption, environmental crimes, abuse of power and protests," UNESCO said. At 44, more than half the journalists killed in 2022 were in Latin America and the Caribbean.

#### China chemical plant explosion

**BEIJING:** A chemical plant explosion in China has left at least five people dead and eight missing, state media reported Monday. The blast happened on Sunday afternoon at a factory in northeastern Liaoning province's Panshan County, according to state broadcaster CCTV, which reported the fire at the facility was under control. An earlier tally put the number of dead and missing at two and 12 respectively, along with 34 injured. Videos and photos published earlier in the day by CCTV showed a cloud of thick smoke and flames rising from the factory, and a group of firefighters in helmets outside the plant. CCTV said more than 330 firefighters had been dispatched to fight the blaze. Industrial accidents are common in China due to lax safety standards and poor enforcement. —AFP

# Business

TUESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2023

## UAE bullish on hydrogen technology

Gulf country aims to be one of 10 hydrogen-producing countries globally

**ABU DHABI:** The United Arab Emirates, the Arab world's second-largest economy, aims to be among the top 10 hydrogen-producing countries globally, a Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure official said.

Sharif Al-Olama, the UAE ministry's undersecretary for energy and petroleum affairs, told the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week on Monday that the UAE had taken "great strides" in developing clean hydrogen technologies to reduce the cost of hydrogen as a sustainable source of energy.

"We in the UAE aim to capture 25 percent of the low carbon hydrogen key markets and aspire to be one of the top 10 hydrogen producing countries in the world within this decade," stated Al-Olama. "Global hydrogen demand is seen rising to over 600 million metric tons a year by the year 2050, which represents 12 percent of the total global energy demand."

The UAE is bullish on hydrogen and has been drawing up a comprehensive roadmap to position itself as an exporter of the clean fuel and tap into its future potential. Hydrogen, which can be produced using renewable energy and natural gas, is expected to play a key role in the coming years as economies and industries transition to a low-carbon world to mitigate climate change. French investment bank Natixis estimates that investment in hydrogen will exceed \$300 billion by 2030.

Siemens Energy is developing a Dh50 million (\$13.6 million) hydrogen pilot project with Dubai Electricity and Water Authority. The pilot project aims to demonstrate how hydrogen can be produced from solar power and how to store and re-electrify the clean fuel. "Waste-to-energy is another promising clean energy option that we are already taking serious steps to achieve with our first waste-to-energy plant delivered by Beeah in conjunction with Masdar and three more projects are on the way in the coming few years," said Al-Olama.

The region's first waste-to-energy plant, processing up to 300,000 tons of waste every year from landfills, was set up by Emirates Waste to Energy, a joint venture between Sharjah environmental management company Beeah and Abu Dhabi renewable energy company Masdar. First announced in 2018, the plant will enable Sharjah to increase its landfill diversion rate from 76 percent currently to 100 percent.

The Emirates is investing Dh600 billion in clean and renewable energy projects over the next three decades as it aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.



**ABU DHABI:** Laurent Fabius, President of the Constitutional Council of France (2nd L) speaks with guests on the opening day of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week (ADSW 2023), at Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC).

It is building the Mohammed bin Rashid Solar Park in Dubai with a 5 gigawatt capacity. Abu Dhabi, which is developing a 2 gigawatt solar plant in its Al Dhafra region, has set a target of 5.6 gigawatts of solar PV capacity by 2026. By 2025, the Barakah nuclear power plant is set to produce 85 percent of Abu Dhabi's clean electricity and will be the biggest contributor to reducing the UAE power sector's carbon emissions.

The UAE and US on Sunday said they would allocate \$20 billion to fund 15 gigawatts of clean and renewable energy projects in the US before 2035, in the first wave of investment under their \$100 billion clean energy

partnership. The investments will be led by Masdar and a consortium of US private investors, it was announced at a briefing on Sunday for business and climate leaders during Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week. The two nations signed a strategic partnership in November 2022 to invest \$100 billion to produce 100 gigawatts of clean energy globally by 2035. "We are actively driving the deployment of renewable energy solutions with many mega projects already operational and with many more under development," said Al-Olama.

"Today, the UAE is one of the world's largest investors in global renewable energy and has invested

\$50 billion in renewable energy projects in over 70 countries, including 31 island developing states that are most vulnerable to climate change. "The UAE has also committed an additional investment of \$50 billion over the next decade to accelerate the clean energy transition." Investment in renewable energy needs to double to more than \$4 trillion by the end of the decade to meet net-zero emissions targets by 2050, the International Energy Agency said in its World Energy Outlook last year. Renewables accounted for almost 81 percent of all new energy capacity last year, but we must now "scale this up", Al-Olama said. —Agencies

## Marks and Spencer plans 3,400 new jobs after COVID axe

**LONDON:** British food-to-clothing retailer Marks and Spencer on Monday announced plans for more than 3,400 new jobs thanks to store openings, following sizeable shop closures and job losses during the pandemic. M&S said in a statement that it would open 20 new large stores across the UK. It comes after the group axed 7,000 jobs as Britain suffered COVID lockdowns.

The group on Monday said it would invest £480 million (\$585 million) in the latest project. The changes would result in more than "3,400 new jobs" by next

year, the statement added. "It comes after M&S reported a bumper Christmas period," noted Victoria Scholar, head of investment at Interactive Investor.

"However, cost pressures and macroeconomic headwinds continue to be key challenges." Scholar said shares in M&S had lost about one third of their value since a year ago. Like a number of Western companies, M&S last year exited from Russia following the country's invasion of Ukraine. In 2021, M&S decided to shut more than half of its shops in France, as Britain's departure from the European Union affected post-Brexit supplies of fresh and chilled food products. Shares in the group were up 2.7 percent at almost 150 pence in London trading Monday. "Whether it can maintain the momentum as the headwinds provided by rising costs and increased pressures on household budgets continue to bear down on the business is the key test facing management," said AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould. — AFP



## EU investigators hear Lebanese over CB chief

**BEIRUT:** European investigators began questioning high-profile witnesses in Lebanon as part of a probe into central bank governor Riad Salameh's wealth, a judicial official told AFP Monday. France, Germany and Luxembourg in March seized assets worth 120 million euros (\$130 million) in a move linked to a probe by French investigators into 72-year-old Salameh's personal wealth.

Salameh—who denies wrongdoing and remains in his post despite a travel ban—is also being investigated by Lebanese authorities on suspicion of financial mis-

conduct including possible embezzlement, money laundering and tax evasion. Investigators from the three European countries on Monday questioned Saad Andary, a former central bank vice governor, said the judicial official, requesting anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to the media. The long-serving central bank chief is among top officials widely blamed for monetary policies that have led to Lebanon's economic crisis, dubbed one of the worst globally in modern history by the World Bank. Investigators were also supposed to question a former employee at the banking control commission Monday, but he did not appear, citing medical reasons, the official said.

Two Lebanese judges "asked questions on behalf of the Europeans", he said, adding that the investigators will question Lebanese bankers as well as current and former employees of the central bank as part of their probe. On Tuesday, they are set to hear Lebanese banker Marwan Kheireddine and former vice governor



## Qatar named the safest country in the world in 2023

**DOHA:** Qatar has been named the safest country in the world in 2023 with a safety index of 85.2, according to Numbeo, the world's largest database of user-contributed data about cities and countries worldwide. Qatar was not the only Arab country in the list, as it was followed by UAE in 2nd place, Oman in fifth, Bahrain in 10th, and Saudi Arabia in 12th, to round up a strong presence for the Gulf nations, according to Qatarmoments.

1. Qatar, 2. UAE, 3. Taiwan (China), 4. Isle Of Man, 5. Oman, 6. Hong Kong (China), 7. Armenia, 8. Japan, 9. Switzerland, 10. Bahrain, 11. Slovenia, 12. Saudi Arabia, 13. Monaco, 14. Croatia and 15. Iceland.

The Safety Index is calculated based on surveys that are taken of the residents from these countries. Qatar's ranking shows that the fear of robbery and vandalism is the lowest in the country and that Qatar is considered to be a very safe place when it comes to walking in the streets at night, Qatarmoments added.

Ahmad Jachi as witnesses. Salameh will not be questioned at this stage of the investigation, the official said. Last month an official had confirmed to AFP that investigators from the three countries would visit Lebanon in January to conduct investigations into financial affairs linked to Salameh. Lebanon opened a probe into Salameh's wealth last year, after the office of Switzerland's top prosecutor requested assistance with an investigation into more than \$300 million allegedly embezzled out of the central bank with the help of his brother.

In June, a Lebanese prosecutor probing Salameh on suspicion of financial misconduct requested charges be leveled against him based on preliminary investigative findings, a court official said at the time. The suggested charges include embezzlement of public funds, money laundering, illicit enrichment, tax evasion, fraud and forgery, the official said. Both Salameh brothers have repeatedly denied —AFP

## World stocks mostly rise

**LONDON:** World equities mainly rose Monday on growing global optimism as inflation slows and China reopens, while gas prices hit an 18-month low on receding supply fears. Frankfurt, London and Paris stocks climbed after broadly positive Asian trade, while the dollar rose against its main rivals.

Bitcoin shot above \$20,000 as investors became more willing to take riskier bets. New York markets were shut for Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday. Gas prices in Europe hit a 16-month low on easing winter supply fears and unusually warm weather, having surged last year when key producer Russia invaded Ukraine. Oil also fell.

"The panic-like situation from last year has been replaced by confidence that Europe will get through this winter without any (gas) supply issues," Energi Danmark analysts said in a client note.

"Demand is low due to the mild weather while storages are filled much more than usual at this time of the year." Equities have won solid support this year on easing recession fears, after data last week showed US inflation at its lowest since October 2021.

The news boosted hopes that the Fed would lift interest rates by 0.25 percentage points next month after a string of larger hikes. That eased worries about a possible recession for the world's top economy and beyond. Markets took a battering last year on surging inflation and aggressive interest rate hikes from the US Federal Reserve and other central banks.

While China is expected this week to report its worst annual growth since 1976 — excluding pandemic-ravaged 2020 — its emergence from zero-COVID and pledges to boost key sectors are raising hopes for a strong rebound. Signs that Beijing was taking a lighter touch on the tech sector after a long-running crackdown were also lifting confidence and giving a boost to market majors, including Alibaba and Tencent.

China's emergence from almost three years of strict virus containment measures is widely expected to give a major boost to the global economy. —AFP



**TOKYO:** Electronic quotation boards display the Japanese yen's rate against the US dollar at a foreign exchange brokerage in Tokyo on January 16, 2023. — AFP



Business

# Economic slowdown will force workers into worse jobs: UN

## Inflation gobbles up real term wages, prices rise faster than incomes

GENEVA: A global economic slowdown will force more workers into accepting lower quality, poorly paid jobs in 2023, while inflation gobbles up real term wages, the United Nations warned Monday. As prices rise faster than incomes, the cost-of-living crisis risks pushing more people into poverty, the UN's International Labor Organization said, while unemployment around the world is set to rise.

The ILO said deficits in decent work had been worsened by multiple, overlapping crises, including Russia's war in Ukraine, emerging geopolitical tensions, an uneven recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and continuing supply chain bottlenecks. "Together, these have created the conditions for stagflation—simultaneously high inflation and low growth—for the first time since the 1970s," the agency said in its annual World Employment and Social Outlook report.

ILO director general Gilbert Houngbo said the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic was particularly patchy in low- and middle-income countries, and was further hampered by climate change and humanitarian challenges. "Projections of a slowdown in economic and employment growth in 2023 imply that most countries will fall short of a full recovery to pre-pandemic levels in the foreseeable future," the former prime minister of Togo said in the report. "Worse still, progress in labor markets is likely to be far too slow to reduce the enormous decent work deficits that existed prior to, and were exacerbated by, the pandemic."

### No COVID recovery before 2025

Global employment grew by 2.3 percent last year, but is expected to expand by just one percent this year,



GENEVA: A global economic slowdown will force more workers into accepting lower quality, poorly paid jobs in 2023, while inflation gobbles up real-term wages, the United Nations warned Monday.

to nearly 3.4 billion people with work. The projected rise is down on the 1.5 percent the ILO had previously predicted, adding to the gloomy outlook. "The slowdown in global employment growth means that we don't expect the losses incurred during the Covid-19 crisis to be recovered before 2025," the ILO's research chief Richard Samans said in a statement.

Global unemployment is projected to reach 208 million people this year, an unemployment rate of 5.8 per-

cent. The projection is up from 205 million in 2022, with the ILO saying most of the shock of the economic slowdown has been absorbed by "rapidly falling real wages" due to accelerating inflation, rather than job losses. Global unemployment was at 192 million in 2019 before surging to 235 million in 2020 as the COVID pandemic kicked in.

Meanwhile the global jobs gap stood at 473 million in 2022. This number comprises unemployment plus

those who want work but are not seeking a job, either due to being discouraged by previous failed attempts or having other obligations such as care responsibilities.

The 2022 global jobs gap was around 33 million above the 2019 level, with a rate of 15 percent for women and 10.5 percent for men.

### Informal economies

"The current slowdown means that many workers will have to accept lower quality jobs, often at very low pay, sometimes with insufficient hours," the ILO said.

The report said people aged 15 to 24 were facing "severe difficulties" in finding and keeping decent employment. The ILO called for an investment surge in education and training, saying two-thirds of the global youth labor force was "without a basic set of skills", which limited their job prospects and pushed them into lower-quality work. Around two billion workers worldwide were in informal employment last year. "Given the substantial rise in uncertainty regarding the future course of the global economy, employment expansion is fastest among informal workers," the ILO said, with the informal sector driving most of the COVID-19 employment recovery.

In 2022, an estimated 214 million workers, or 6.4 percent of all those employed, were in extreme poverty, earning less than the equivalent of \$1.90 a day. The report said the long-term slowdown in productivity growth in advanced countries had spread to major emerging economies—"a matter of much concern" since growth in productivity could combat the concurrent crises in purchasing power, well-being and ecological sustainability. —AFP

## Five key shifts that are converging in today's data era

By Samer Saber

KUWAIT: Digital Transformation is a key pillar for Kuwait as it adopts digital technologies to escalate its services, drives the economy and improves quality of life, while increasing operational efficiency and performance of key sectors. Kuwait's ICT sector is estimated to be one of the emerging markets of the future. Global Data valued the global ICT market in Kuwait at \$20.61 billion in 2021 and predicts it to grow at a CAGR of 8.2 percent. In 2026, it is expected to touch \$30.58 billion.

Data is an essential element of digital transformation process and can be used to create benchmarks and baselines for the journey to transformation, it is the foundation of an intelligent business. But data, data consumers and the business expectations of data have changed. These shifting realities call for a higher level of data maturity and the right technologies to achieve better outcomes and digitally differentiate. As every organization races to transform, there are five key shifts that are converging in today's data era:

### 1. Exponential growth of structured and unstructured data

Fueled by an abundance of smart devices and IoT sensors, worldwide data creation has been soaring for more than a decade. A study from IDC cites that from 2021-2025, new data creation will grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 23 percent, resulting in approximately 175 Zettabytes (ZB) of data creation by 2025. To put this into context, a single zettabyte is equivalent to a trillion gigabytes or as Wikipedia describes it, "a zettabyte is so large that it would take about a million supercomputers (or a billion powerful home computers) to store this amount of data." Add to that, more data forms - including unstructured and streaming data types like loose files, PDFs, photos, audio and video clips - are growing at an unprecedented rate and organizations are finding it hard to extract value from the data they're collecting. The same IDC report states that 80 percent of worldwide data will be unstructured by 2025.

### 2. Emerging technologies are sparking a new era of intelligence at scale

Edge computing, 5G, artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are transforming how data is being collected, processed and used. For the first time in history, we're meeting the explosion of data with intelligent infrastructure, software and algorithms to rapidly turn it into actionable information. This data can be used to create new value and drive better user experiences at the edge. There's a symbiotic relationship between the advanced, connected technologies being deployed to thrive in the digital economy and the wealth of new data waiting to be uncovered. Likewise, there's a symbiosis between success with edge technologies and data management. By enabling organizations to act on data near the source, edge technology can both improve efficiency and help create new experiences. Coupled with AI, the edge will change how machines share and react to data - and this is where businesses will find the opportunities to create new value.

### 3. Decentralized data

The adoption of emerging technologies leads to more distributed locations where data originates. As data's center of gravity rapidly moves toward the

edge, data is increasingly being stored, processed and acted on closer to its source. But as more functions take place at the edge, you need to manage data differently and consistently - from the core to across edge and hybrid clouds. That requires changes to your computer, network, storage and application architectures.

### 4. Rising consumer expectations

Today's consumers are more empowered than ever and are demanding more data-rich, personalized, real-time experiences. In the past, you could take days to come up with new data insights, but today that's far too long. The increasing reliance on AI and ML to make real-time decisions in a distributed environment can strain even the most advanced data management strategies. Most organizations don't have the IT capabilities to keep up because their data management is fit for an outdated world where insights and outcomes can be delivered in hours or days. To be able to rapidly turn data into insights, organizations must evolve their expectations and data processing capabilities.

### 5. Data breaches vs regulatory environment

Cybersecurity threats are more sophisticated, and the number of data breaches are skyrocketing. Consequently, the regulatory environment is evolving, mandating more resilient data security, privacy and governance. As more data is collected, stored and processed in multiple locations, the attack surface for malicious activity also grows, making compliance with global data laws and regulations more complex. In addition, customers want to do business with organizations they can trust with their data. These trends underscore the ways data users and consumers have changed, and how organizations are adapting to stay relevant.

With such a tremendous influx of data, it is critical to be business-ready faster, accelerating data movement across the multi-cloud landscape - turning insights into actions and driving speedy outcomes. Today we have zettabytes of data at our fingertips every second, but also intelligent compute infrastructure, software and algorithms to rapidly turn that data into meaningful insights. Now more than ever, organizations need to rethink data management if they are to become an intelligent business with a leadership position in the data era. Note: Samer Saber is General Manager, Kuwait at Dell Technologies.



Samer Saber



## China's giant Didi reopens to new users after \$1.2bn fine

BEIJING: Chinese ride-hailing company Didi accepted new users on Monday for the first time since 2021, after authorities fined the company for data security violations. Didi was one of the highest-profile targets of a sweeping crackdown on China's tech sector launched in 2021, which wiped billions of dollars off the value of homegrown companies. Some companies were targeted over monopolistic behavior, and others—such as Didi—for cyber and national security concerns. Didi was forced by regulators to pull its app from online stores and stop registering new users in July 2021, when investigators found its user data collection to be in "serious violation" of regulations.

The company was hit last year with a \$1.2 billion fine, after China's cyberspace authority found "conclusive evidence" that Didi had committed violations including illegally storing drivers' ID information in unsecured formats and covertly analyzing passenger details. Didi on Monday said in a statement that it had "carried out comprehensive rectification" of its security issues.

"The company will take effective measures to ensure the security of the platform's functions and big data, and protect national cybersecurity," Didi said. The announcement comes as China's tech crackdown appears to be easing, with the country scrambling to boost economic growth battered by three years of headline COVID curbs. Premier Li Keqiang last May urged support for tech companies to list both domestically and abroad.—AFP

## Inflation bites into Sierra Leone's cookerries

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone: Jariatu Kargbo hauls a wooden spoon longer than her arm through a vat of rice as customers patiently wait their turn to buy lunch on the side of a busy road.

The 38-year-old widow runs a stall called a "cookerie"—the cheapest option for many Sierra Leoneans to grab what is often their only meal of the day. Cookeries in this impoverished West African state are a crucial part of the economy as well as a social safety net. But the cherished institution is under pressure from a brutal external force: inflation.

"Prices for major food items—rice, cooking oil, onion, sugar and flour—have quadrupled," Kargbo told AFP, as the smell of boiled beans wafted over from behind her. Cookeries in Freetown, the capital, sell rice and stew at a fraction of what they would cost in a restaurant. "These predominantly women are kind of the backbone of the city in terms of keeping it fed, because a lot of people... don't have the facilities to cook at home", said Jamie Hitchen, a researcher.

But the densely-populated metropolis does not have any urban agriculture, so food is trucked in from the countryside or imported from abroad. Ever since the COVID pandemic and war in Ukraine sent global inflation soaring, that has become painfully expensive. As of November, the latest month on record, inflation had risen 35 percent year-over-year in Sierra Leone.

"We were buying a cup of rice for 1,500 leones

(\$0.08) in 2021 — now its 3,500 leones," said Kargbo, who opened her business to support her six children after her husband died of Ebola in 2014.

Sierra Leone in July slashed three zeros off its currency hoping to restore confidence in the inflation-hit leone. Many, including Kargbo, still quote prices in the former denomination.

### Riots

In August, riots broke out over the rising cost of living in the Shell Old Road Junction neighborhood where Kargbo lives and works. Twenty-seven civilians and six police officers were killed.

Kargbo's customers consist mainly of motorcycle taxi drivers known as "okada" men, street hawkers and, occasionally, office workers. "My family depends

on the cookery to eat for dinner during the week—we only cook at home on weekends due to rising cost of living", said Francis Koroma, a teacher who was holding two plastic bowls to fill for his family of five.

Often, cookery meals are more affordable than buying products from the market. But the stalls have had to increase prices. Kargbo now sells her dishes of rice with potato leaf sauce or groundnut soup for 8,000 leones (43 US cents), up from 5,000 leones in 2021.

Market vendors, too, are not turning as much profit. "We have slow sales", said Haja Marie Bob-Kandeh, head of the Sierra Leone Market Women Association. "People are now prioritising what they should (spend) for the day because of inflation." She said vendors were worried about the cost of fresh vegetables, which



FREETOWN: People walk through a market in Freetown. Cookeries in Sierra Leone are a crucial part of the economy as well as a social safety net.

have a short shelf life, and instead focussed on selling ingredients for basic meals, such as rice with sauce.

### Fuel prices

At a large cookery in the more affluent Hill Cot Road area, Fatmata Bangura, 48, sits on a low wooden bench and cuts up "cow kanda"—cow skin—while her daughter, Isata Dumbuya, and four employees stir onions, plantain, cabbage and beans in large metal pots over wood and coal fires.

They have been awake since 3:30 am, when Dumbuya, 32, sets out each day for the market.

By 6 am she is at the roadside shop and beginning to cook the day's meals: cassava leaf, beans or "tola" stew for breakfast, often "crain crain"—a local dish made with okra-for lunch. Their business is stable, but their bottom line has nonetheless taken a hit. "The palm oil was sold at 200,000 leones, now it's 585,000 leones", Dumbuya said. "The rice, before, we bought it at 280,000, but now the price is 550,000." But there is a limit to how much of the cost increase can be passed on to customers, say stall holders.

Sitting on a picnic bench outside Dumbuya's shop, Hassan Mohamed Vamboi, a 29-year-old motorcycle driver, digs into a plate of green, leafy stew. He eats here at least once a day. Vamboi has been feeling the pinch of rising fuel prices and has had to extend his workdays from 12 to 16 hours to get by. "It's very challenging in the country presently", he said. He has also moved his wife and two children to his village to save money. "My pocket cannot uphold them here," Vamboi said. But for now, he continues to eat at Dumbuya's. And she continues to cook. "If people come to my shop and eat my food and say, 'Oh you know how to cook', it inspires me," she said. "So every day I do the same thing, for people to come and eat." —AFP

## Business

# As Davos opens, Oxfam urges 'billionaire busting' policies

## 'Survival of the Richest' report says billionaires doubled wealth over last 10 years

**DAVOS:** The number of billionaires should be reduced by half by 2030 through higher taxes and other policies to make the world more equal, Oxfam said Monday as global elites meet in Davos.

The aid group made its plea as the Swiss Alpine village hosts political leaders, CEOs and celebrities for the week-long World Economic Forum starting Monday. In a report titled "Survival of the Richest", Oxfam said billionaires had doubled their wealth over the last 10 years, with the wealthiest one percent gaining 74 times more than the bottom 50 percent.

The very wealthy have grown richer amid the cost-of-living crisis sparked by the COVID pandemic and soaring food and energy prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the report said. Since 2020, billionaire wealth has surged by \$2.7 billion a day even as inflation outpaced the wages of at least 1.7 billion workers worldwide, Oxfam said. Food and energy companies, it noted, had more than doubled their profits last year. Oxfam called for taxes at rates that progressively redistribute wealth and reduce extreme inequality.

For starters, it said, "the world should aim to

halve the wealth and number of billionaires between now and 2030, both by increasing taxes on the top one percent and by adopting other billionaire-busting policies". Such steps would bring billionaire wealth and numbers back to levels last seen in 2012.

"The eventual aim should be to go further, and to abolish billionaires altogether, as part of a fairer, more rational distribution of the world's wealth," it said. Oxfam said higher taxes on dividends as well as "one-off solidarity" wealth and windfall taxes should be introduced "to stop crisis profiteering".

It also called for a permanent tax increase on the richest one percent, with a minimum 60 percent tax on their income from labor and capital. Citing a report by the US investigative news group ProPublica, Oxfam said many of the world's richest people paid hardly any taxes, with Tesla boss Elon Musk facing a "true tax rate" of just 3.2 percent between 2014-2018 and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos paying less than one percent.

In a stark comparison, a market trader in Uganda who works with Oxfam pays 40 percent of her profits in tax, the charity said. —AFP



## Al-Qenae appointed head of KPMG MESAC

**KUWAIT:** The KPMG Middle East, South Asia, and Caspian (MESAC) region's Board appointed Dr. Rasheed Al-Qenae as its Chairman effective January 2023. In this capacity, Dr Rasheed will also represent the MESAC region on the KPMG Global Council and the KPMG Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMA) region's Board.



Dr Rasheed Al-Qenae

This is the first time in the history of KPMG that a Senior Partner from Kuwait has been appointed to this prestigious role which covers the entire GCC region, parts of South Asia and the Caspian countries.

Dr Rasheed Al-Qenae is presently the Managing Partner of the KPMG member firm in Kuwait, a role which he has been holding since 2010. Dr Rasheed was appointed to the KPMG MESAC region's Board in 2018. He took additional responsibilities as the Chairman of the MESAC Tax Steering Group and as the Head of Tax for the MESAC region in 2017. He also played an active role in the region's leadership development centers and strategic corridor program.

Dr Rasheed holds a PhD in Accounting from the University of Essex in the UK, a Master of Professional Accounting from the University of Miami in Florida, and a Bachelor of Commerce from Kuwait University. He was the chairman of the Kuwaiti Association of Accountants and Auditors in the year 2011/2012.

Commenting on the appointment, Dr Rasheed said, "I am deeply honored to be appointed Chairman of the KPMG MESAC region. I want to thank the MESAC Board, which bestowed their confidence and trust in me, and to my fellow KPMG partners and teams for their unprecedented support." "My predecessors have helped the MESAC region tremendously in its growth journey and I intend to continue this momentum. Our focus remains on clients' priorities, recruiting and nurturing talent, investing in relevant technology, strengthening our alliance and corridor ecosystem, and making a meaningful impact on our communities," he added. In FY21, KPMG member firms in the MESAC region witnessed an increase in aggregate revenue, doubling to 18.3 percent in local currency terms for FY22, while its talent pool exceeded 10,000 people for the first time.

The KPMG MESAC region is one of the largest and fastest growing sub-regions within the KPMG network of member firms, and covers more than 30 office locations across 21 countries and territories, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bahrain, Egypt, Georgia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Maldives, Palestine, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, the United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan.

## Credit Suisse could cut 10% of European investment bankers

**GENEVA:** Credit Suisse could slash more than 10 percent of its investment banking staff in Europe, the Financial Times newspaper reported, with the beleaguered Swiss lender declining to comment Monday. Switzerland's second-biggest bank "already let hundreds of staff go in London and Zurich last month", the British financial daily reported on Saturday.

The Zurich-based bank declined to comment when contacted by AFP. "Consultations over the next round of redundancies started before Christmas, with more than 10 percent of investment banking jobs in Europe under discussion," the FT said, citing unnamed sources with knowledge of the talks.

"A final decision is expected next month," the newspaper said. Credit Suisse launched a vast restructuring plan in October, including shedding 9,000 jobs by 2025 — more than 17 percent of its workforce.

Shaken by a string of scandals, the bank intends to refocus on the most stable parts of its business and radically overhaul its investment banking arm, which has suffered heavy losses. Among the



changes, it is reviving its First Boston brand, named after a US investment bank it absorbed in 1990, where its capital market and advisory activities will be brought together.

Credit Suisse is due to release its annual results on February 9. But the bank has already said it expects a pre-tax loss of up to 1.5 billion Swiss francs (\$1.6 bil-

lion) in the fourth quarter. The bank is pinning the loss on restructuring costs, shocks on the capital markets which will weigh on its investment bank, and on customers withdrawing capital. Credit Suisse shares were up 0.74 percent at 3.15 Swiss francs at 0920 GMT, while the Swiss stock exchange's main SMI index was up 0.44 percent. —AFP

## Ukraine grain deal ship briefly halts Bosphorus traffic

**KYIV:** A cargo ship carrying Ukrainian peas ran aground in Istanbul due to a rudder failure Monday,

briefly suspending traffic in the Bosphorus, officials said. The Palau-flagged MKK-1 cargo vessel was carrying 13,000 tons of peas from Ukraine under a UN-backed agreement that Turkey helped broker between Moscow and Kyiv in July.

It ran aground on the Asian side of Istanbul early Monday, suspending traffic in both direction of one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, the Istanbul governor's office said. Media reports said it was refloated with the help of Turkish tugboats a few hours later.

Marine traffic websites showed the ship slowly moving through the Bosphorus later on Monday.

The narrow Istanbul strait witnesses numerous accidents that briefly suspend traffic and require intervention from Turkish coast guards. The July agreement has allowed Ukraine to export more than 17 million tons of grain and other foodstuffs from three ports, helping reduce a spike in global food prices caused by Russia's invasion. The deal was extended for 120 more days in mid-November. —AFP

## Elon Musk shed \$182bn from his net worth

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Elon Musk has broken the world record for the biggest wealth loss in history after shedding \$182 billion from his net worth since November 2021, according to a report by Guinness World Records.

Musk, co-founder of Tesla and the owner of social media platform Twitter as well as Space X, started 2023 with a net worth of \$138 billion, a sharp drop from the peak of his wealth of \$320 billion in 2021, Forbes magazine data shows. However, Musk's current net worth has edged up to \$146 billion and he is ranked as the world's second-richest person, the Forbes Real-Time Billionaires List showed on Monday. "Even though Musk has lost more money than any human in history, he won't be going hungry any time soon - he's still the world's second-richest person," Guinness World Records said.

Global economic uncertainty - exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine war, high inflation and rising interest rates - has increased volatility in financial markets, resulting in the world's wealthiest billionaires losing nearly a combined \$2 trillion in 2022. Musk was not the only billionaire to suffer a record loss to his personal wealth in 2022, according to Forbes.

"In a year of unprecedented wealth destruction, four other billionaires fell by record sums as tech stocks tanked," Forbes said.

Here, is the list of the top five biggest net-worth billionaire losers of 2022.

### 1. Elon Musk

Peak wealth: \$320 billion (November 2021). Musk, 51, was the world's richest person for 14 months, but lost his crown to Bernard Arnault, chairman of French luxury group LVMH, on December 12.

This is because the majority of Musk's personal fortune is tied to Tesla stock, which has lost about 67 per cent in value since January 2022, when it was trading at \$399.93. The Nasdaq-listed company ended trading on Friday at \$122.40.



Shareholder concerns also deepened over Musk's distraction with Twitter, which he bought in October for \$44 billion.

### 2. Jeff Bezos

Peak wealth: \$211 billion (July 2021). Amazon founder Jeff Bezos started 2022 as the world's second-richest person with a net worth of \$194.2 billion. Once the world's richest person, Bezos lost \$87.6 billion, or 45.5 per cent, of his personal fortune in 2022, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

His current net worth is \$118 billion, driven down by the value of Amazon stock over the past year, Forbes said. Amazon's decreased stock value comes during a slowdown in sales for the world's biggest e-commerce retailer as high global inflation continues to affect consumers.

Meta Platforms chief executive Mark Zuckerberg is the world's 26th-richest person after dropping \$77 billion from his net worth last year.

### 3. Mark Zuckerberg

Peak wealth: \$140 billion (September 2021). Perhaps the biggest fall out of the world's top 10 richest list is that of Mark Zuckerberg, chief execu-

tive of Meta Platforms, formerly known as Facebook. With a current net worth of \$48.2 billion, Zuckerberg is now the world's 26th-richest person - down from a high of number three in 2021. Zuckerberg dropped \$77 billion from his net worth in 2022 after shares of his social media company tumbled 64 per cent, Forbes said.

### 4. Larry Page

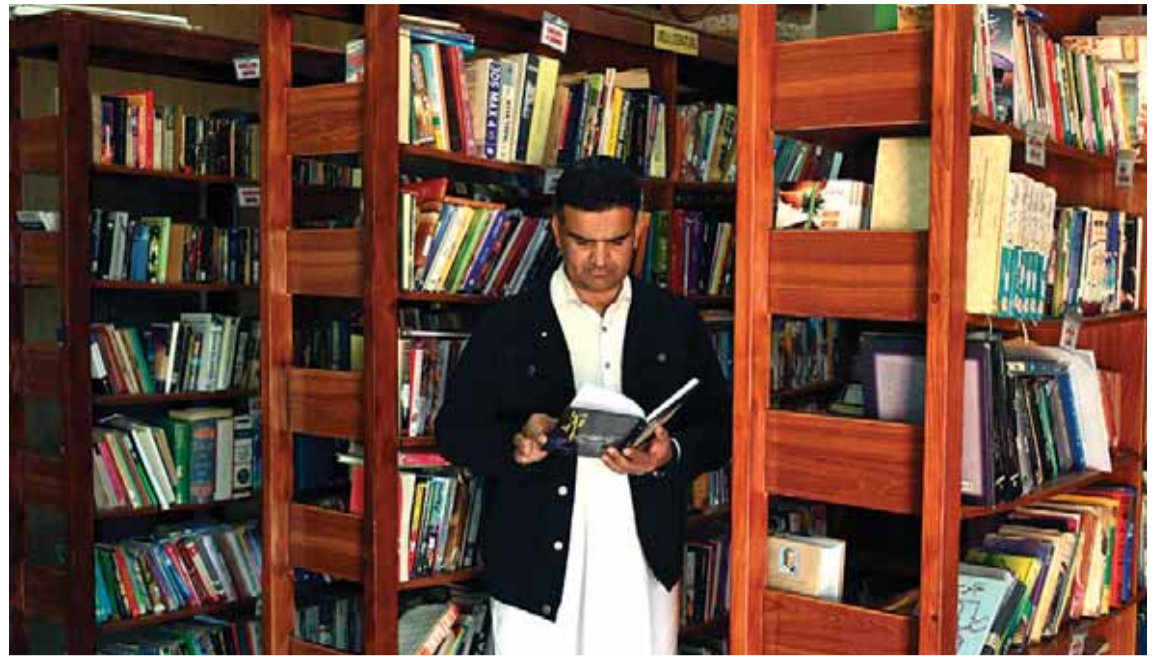
Peak wealth: \$129.5 billion (December 2021). The tech stock rout in 2022 also dragged down the personal wealth of Larry Page, who co-founded Google with Sergey Brin in 1998. Google parent Alphabet's shares sank by 39 per cent in 2022, causing the billionaire to lose \$46 billion from his net worth, Forbes said. He now has a net worth of \$80 billion and is the 10th-richest person in the world, according to Forbes.

### 5. Sergey Brin

Peak wealth: \$124.6 billion (December 2021). Brin joined the exclusive \$100 billion club in April 2021, as tech stocks surged during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, he lost his centibillionaire status after losing \$45 billion from his personal fortune in 2022, according to Forbes.



In this photograph an arms dealer Hakimullah Afridi puts a locally-made automatic gun on display at his shop in Darra Adamkhel, some 35 kilometres (20 miles) south of Peshawar.



A former arms dealer and founder of Darra Adam Khel Library, Raj Muhammad looks at a book inside the library in Darra Adamkhel town.

# LIBRARY THRIVES IN PAKISTAN'S 'WILD WEST' GUN MARKET TOWN

When the din of Pakistan's most notorious weapons market becomes overwhelming, arms dealer Muhammad Jahanzeb slinks away from his stall, past colleagues test-firing machine guns, to read in the hush of the local library. "It's my hobby, my favorite hobby, so sometimes I sneak off," the 28-year-old told AFP after showing off his inventory of vintage rifles, forged assault weapons and a menacing array of burnished flick-knives. "I've always wished that we would have a library here, and my wish has come true."

The town of Darra Adamkhel is part of the deeply conservative tribal belt where decades of militancy and drug-running in the surrounding mountains earned it a reputation as a "wild west" waypoint between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It has long been known for its black market bazaars stocked with forged American rifles, replica revolvers and rip-off AK-47s.

But a short walk away a town library is thriving by offering titles including Virginia Woolf's classic "Mrs Dalloway", installments in the teenage vampire romance series "Twilight", and "Life, Speeches and Letters" by Abraham Lincoln. "Initially we were discouraged. People asked, 'What is the use of books in a place like Darra Adamkhel? Who would ever read here?'" recalled 36-year-old founder Raj Muhammad. "We now have more than 500 members."

## Tribal transformation

Literacy rates in the tribal areas, which were semi-autonomous until 2018 when they merged with the neighboring province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, are among the lowest in Pakistan as a result of poverty, patriarchal values, inter-clan conflicts and a lack of schools. But attitudes are slowly changing, believes

soft-spoken 33-year-old volunteer librarian Shafiqullah Afridi: "Especially among the younger generation who are now interested in education instead of weapons."

"When people see young people in their neighbourhood becoming doctors and engineers, others also start sending their children to school," said Afridi, who has curated a ledger of 4,000 titles in

47 at the door but keeping his sidearm strapped on his waist, and joins a gaggle of bookworms browsing the shelves. Alongside tattered Tom Clancy, Stephen King and Michael Crichton paperbacks, there are more weighty tomes detailing the history of Pakistan and India and guides for civil service entrance exams, as well as a wide selection of Islamic teachings.



People read books inside the Darra Adam Khel Library in Darra Adamkhel town.

three languages - English, Urdu and Pashto. Despite the background noise of gunsmiths testing weapons and hammering bullets into dusty patches of earth nearby, the atmosphere is genteel as readers sip endless rounds of green tea while they muse over texts.

However, Afridi struggles to strictly enforce a "no weapons allowed" policy during his shift. One young arms dealer saunters up to the pristinely painted salmon-coloured library, leaving his AK-

## 'Education not arms'

Libraries are rare in Pakistan's rural areas, and the few that exist in urban centres are often poorly stocked and infrequently used. In Darra Adamkhel, it began as a solitary reading room in 2018 stocked with Muhammad's personal collection, above one of the hundreds of gun shops in the central bazaar. "You could say we planted the library on a pile of weapons," said Muhammad-a prominent local academic, poet and teacher hailing

from a long line of gunsmiths. Muhammad paid 2,500 rupees (\$11) for the monthly rent, but bibliophiles struggled to concentrate amidst the whirring of lathes and hammering of metal as bootleg armourers plied their trade downstairs.

The project swiftly outgrew the confines of a single room and was shifted a

150 rupees (\$0.66) a year, while students enjoy a discount rate of 100 rupees (\$0.44), and youngsters flit in and out of the library even during school breaks.

One in 10 members are female-a figure remarkably high for the tribal areas-though once they reach their teenage years and are sequestered in the home male family members collect books on



Gunsmiths work in an arms shop at Darra Adamkhel.

year later to a purpose-built single-storey building funded by the local community on donated land. "There was once a time when our young men adorned themselves with weapons like a kind of jewelry," said Irfanullah Khan, 65, patriarch of the family who gifted the plot.

"But men look beautiful with the jewel of knowledge, beauty lies not in arms but in education," said Khan, who also donates his time alongside his son Afridi. For the general public a library card costs

their behalf. Nevertheless, on their mid-morning break schoolgirls Manahil Jahangir, nine, and Hareem Saeed, five, join the men towering over them as they pore over books. "My mother's dream is for me to become a doctor," Saeed says shyly. "If I study here I can make her dream come true." — AFP



School students walk past the Darra Adam Khel Library in Darra Adamkhel town.



An arms dealer Muhammad Jahanzeb checks an automatic gun at his shop in Darra Adamkhel town.



School students read books inside the Darra Adam Khel Library in Darra Adamkhel town.



People read books inside the Darra Adam Khel Library in Darra Adamkhel town.



An arms dealer Hakimullah Afridi reads a book at the Darra Adam Khel library.



US-Australian actress Cate Blanchett poses in the press room with the Best Actress award for "Tár" during the 28th Annual Critics Choice Awards at the Fairmont Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

## Blanchett slams 'patriarchal' awards shows after accepting best actress prize

Cate Blanchett criticized the "patriarchal pyramid" of Hollywood awards shows as she accepted a best actress gong from the Critics Choice Association in Los Angeles on Sunday. The Australian actor and Oscars frontrunner, whose performance as an ambitious, morally dubious conductor in classical music drama "TAR" is sweeping awards, told a packed ballroom that she wished the whole "structure" of awards shows could be changed. "It's like, what is this patriarchal pyramid where someone stands up here?" she said, collecting her

prize from North America's largest critics organization.

"Why don't we just say there's a whole raft of female performances that are in concert and in dialogue with one another, and stop the televised horse race of it at all?" "Because can I tell you, every single woman-whether it's television, film, advertising, tampon commercials, whatever-you're all out there doing amazing work that is inspiring me continually. "So thank you. I share this with you all." Blanchett has previously accepted two Oscars for her work in "Blue Jasmine" and "The Aviator."

She won a Golden Globe for her performance as a fictional lesbian conductor in "TAR" last week, but did not attend that ceremony. Several other awards shows, including the Film Independent Spirit Awards, the MTV Movie and TV Awards, and music's Grammy Awards, have switched to gender-neutral acting prizes. The Critics Choice Awards, like the

Oscars and most other Hollywood shows, still divides its acting prizes between male and female categories.

## 'In the wilderness'

Blanchett's comments came moments after Brendan Fraser gave a highly emotional, choking speech in which he thanked voters for his best actor prize for "The Whale." Fraser, a major Hollywood star in the late 1990s and early 2000s with hits such as "The Mummy," had endured a long fallow period before his performance as a morbidly obese teacher in his new drama drew widespread acclaim. "I was in the wilderness. And I probably should have left a trail of breadcrumbs. But you found me," Fraser told director Darren Aronofsky.

"If you-like a guy like Charlie who I played in this movie-in any way struggle with obesity, or you just feel like you're in a dark sea, I want you to know that if you too can have the strength to just get to

your feet and go to the light, good things will happen," Fraser said to a standing ovation. The Critics Choice Awards are one of a raft of major award shows in the build up to the Oscars, which take place this year on March 12.

Surreal sci-fi "Everything Everywhere All at Once" won best picture at Sunday's high-profile critics awards, boosting its hopes for the top Academy Award prize. The film finished the night with the most film wins on five, including best director for Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, best original screenplay, best editing, and best supporting actor for Oscar favorite Ke Huy Quan. Among the night's television prizes, the sixth and last season of "Breaking Bad" spinoff "Better Call Saul" finally claimed its first best drama series win, as well as best actor for Bob Odenkirk and best supporting actor for Giancarlo Esposito. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



# THE GREAT PYRAMIDS: IMMORTAL SPLENDOR, SITE FOR INT'L EVENTS



**S**prawling across the Nile's western bank is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Entombing long-gone pharaohs, the Great Pyramids are worthy of the listing as they have withstood the test of time and retained the air of wonder for

more than 2,500 years BCE. More recently, the historical site has been attracting wide media attention as it has been hosting cultural and artistic exhibitions, sporting events and international fashion shows. These events are a golden opportunity

to flaunt the mesmerizing beauty of the scenery as well as the Egyptian heritage, and a chance to promote the tourism sector and the Egyptian economy as a whole. — KUNA



## Tiger escapes farm, attacks man in South Africa

**A**tiger is on the loose after escaping an exotic farm near Johannesburg in South Africa, attacking a man and several other animals, police and a community leader said Monday. The eight-year-old female Bengal tiger escaped its enclosure at the private farm on Saturday after an unknown person cut the fence, according to Gresham Mandy, a member of a local policing forum. The big cat went on to attack a man, two dogs, and a deer kept at the same farm in the Walkerville area, 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the economic hub of Johannesburg in Gauteng, the country's most populous province.

The 39-year-old man survived the attack, however one dog and the deer were killed, and the second dog was so badly injured it had to be put down, said Mandy. "The search is still on," for the tiger, police spokesman Dimakatso Sello, told AFP. About 40 people from the police, nature conservation organizations and local community groups are involved in the hunt for the tiger.

"We are using drones, (a) helicopter

...but it's proving a little difficult with the density of the bush," Mandy told AFP. The striped and endangered big cats are not native to South Africa, but in recent years tiger breeding has become common in the country. South Africa has no official count of its tiger population. A report by global animal rights charity, Four Paws, showed that 359 tigers — almost a tenth of the world's tiger population — were exported from South Africa from 2011-2020, most of them sold to zoos. — AFP



## 'The Way of Water' stays afloat atop N America box office

**"A**vatar: The Way of Water" easily stayed atop the North American box office for a fifth straight week, taking in an estimated \$38.5 million on a long holiday weekend, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. That brought the domestic total for the Disney/20th Century blockbuster the story of a blue-skinned race on a distant moon to an impressive \$570 million, on top of an international total of \$1.33 billion.

"The Way of Water," a sequel to the 2009 film that was the top grosser ever, could be the first film to hit \$2 billion worldwide since the COVID pandemic struck, Variety reported. In second place over the four-day Martin Luther King Jr. weekend was scary-doll thriller "M3GAN," from Universal and Blumhouse, at an estimated \$21.2 million. The humanoid doll in question, designed as a companion to a young orphan girl, takes on a creepy life of her own Universal's family-oriented "Puss in Boots: The Last Wish," an animated "Shrek" spinoff, again placed third, taking in \$17.3 million. Fourth place went to

"A Man Called Otto," at \$15 million. The Sony film, a feel-good adaptation of Swedish novel "A Man Called Ove," stars Tom Hanks as a world-class curmudgeon forced to deal with some caring neighbors.

remote Philippine jungle controlled by armed militias. Rounding out the top 10 were:

- "House Party" (\$4.5 million)
- "Black Panther: Wakanda Forever" (\$2.6 million)



And in fifth was a new Lionsgate release, action-thriller "Plane," at \$11.6 million. Gerard Butler stars as a pilot who has to work with a convicted killer (played by Mike Colter) to protect passengers after the plane crash-lands in a

- "The Whale" (\$1.8 million)
- "Whitney Houston: I Wanna Dance With Somebody" (\$1.4 million)
- "Waltair Veerayya" (\$1.2 million)

—AFP

## Sports

# LeBron James passes historic 38,000-pt mark as Lakers lose

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James became only the second player in NBA history to score more than 38,000 career points on Sunday but his Los Angeles Lakers fell to a third straight defeat with a 113-112 loss to the Philadelphia 76ers. James is now second only to fellow Laker Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's record of 38,387 points on the NBA's all-time career scoring list and he is expected to surpass that total in the coming weeks.

James put up 35 points, 10 assists and eight rebounds for the Lakers, passing the 38,000-mark in the first quarter, and his achievement was acknowledged by the crowd and players. But after the game ended in defeat for the Lakers, with Joel Embiid getting 35 points and 11 rebounds for the 76ers, James was in no mood to reflect on his personal milestone.

Asked whether he had thoughts on the achievement he replied simply in the negative and chose to reflect on his team's disappointing form. "It's just frustrating to get into those positions and not come out with a victory," said James. Russell Westbrook was unable to make a play in the final seconds of the game for the Lakers. "We got a stop, gave ourselves a chance to win the game and didn't," he said.

Nikola Vucevic produced a 43-point masterpiece as the Chicago Bulls overpowered the slumping NBA champion Golden State Warriors 132-118 on Sunday. Montenegrin star Vucevic bagged his ninth straight double-double after stepping up in the absence of injured DeMar DeRozan to help the Bulls snap a three-game losing streak at Chicago's United Center.

Vucevic's performance was the centerpiece of a balanced all-round offensive display by Chicago, who saw six players finish with double-digit points tallies. Zach LaVine added 27 points while Alex Caruso and Ayo Dosunmu had 12 points apiece. Coby White added 15 from the bench. "I got going really early," said Vucevic after going 18-for-31 from the field with five three-pointers. "It's hard to explain. You just get this feeling within yourself that it's kinda gonna be your night and you just play."

"We really moved the ball. We really played aggressively offensively and I was able to get into my spots."



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers dribbles as Joel Embiid of the Philadelphia 76ers defends at Crypto.com Arena on Jan 15, 2023. —AFP

The victory was the perfect tonic for the Bulls (20-24) as they now head to Paris next week for a regular season fixture against the Detroit Pistons on Thursday.

## Alarm bell

But the loss was another alarm bell for the struggling Warriors, the reigning NBA champions who are in eighth place in the Western Conference standings with a 21-22 record. Klay Thompson led the Golden State scoring with 26 points but the Warriors were left counting the cost of 23 turnovers. "We're having trouble stacking good decision upon good decision," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "You can make all kinds of excuses but it doesn't matter," Kerr added. "Everybody's got excuses, everyone's got injuries with

guys in and out of the rotation. We just got to do better." The Western Conference leading Denver Nuggets beat the Orlando Magic 119-116 with Nikola Jokic getting the deciding three-pointer with 1.2 seconds left. Jokic produced his 12th triple double of the season with 17 points, ten rebounds and 14 assists. Julius Randle scored a season-high 42 points as the New York Knicks bagged their third straight victory with a 117-104 defeat of Detroit. Randle also hauled in 15 rebounds while team-mate Jalen Brunson finished with 27 points in a comfortable victory for the Knicks, who are sixth in the Eastern Conference table. Damian Lillard scored 40 points for the Portland Trail Blazers as they beat the Dallas Mavericks 140-123. Mavericks' Slovenian star Luka Doncic was rested for the game. —AFP

## Bills, Giants and Bengals advance from thrilling round

NEW YORK: The Buffalo Bills, the New York Giants and the Cincinnati Bengals all advanced from the wildcard round of the NFL playoffs after thrilling battles on Sunday. Josh Allen shrugged off an error-strewn display to lead the Bills to a 34-31 victory over the Miami Dolphins in the NFL playoffs while the New York Giants upset the Vikings 31-24 in Minnesota. The Bengals met some stern resistance from AFC North rivals the Baltimore Ravens but emerged victorious thanks to a 98-year fumble return from Sam Hubbard - the longest fumble return in playoff history.

With only Monday's mouth-watering clash between the Dallas Cowboys and Tom Brady's Tampa Bay Buccaneers remaining, the field is almost set for next weekend's divisional round games. The Giants will travel to AFC East rivals the Philadelphia Eagles on Saturday while the Bills and Bengals will meet again after their regular season game earlier this month was canceled following the on-field cardiac arrest for Bills safety Damar Hamlin.

The Jacksonville Jaguars travel to Kansas City to face the Chiefs while the San Francisco 49ers will host the winners of the Dallas-Tampa Bay contest. Bills quarterback Allen threw two interceptions and gave up a fumble touchdown to effectively gift underdogs Miami 24 points before finally leading Buffalo to victory at Highmark Stadium.

The heavily favored Bills looked to be motoring towards a comprehensive win after a dominant start. Allen connected with Dawson Knox from six yards for the opening score and then James Cook rushed over from 12 yards to put the Bills ahead before a Tyler Bass field goal made it 17-0. But Miami, with third choice

Skylar Thompson at quarterback, got back into the game with three field goals from Jason Sanders to trim the Bills' lead to 17-9.

An Allen interception then handed Miami good field position at the Buffalo 18-yard line and Thompson found tight end Mike Gesicki for a touchdown. A two-point conversion leveled the score at 17-17 before another Bass field goal allowed Buffalo to regain the lead at 20-17 at the break. But Miami came roaring back at the start of the third quarter, with Eric Rowe flattening Allen to force a fumble. Dolphins defensive tackle Zach Sieler scooped up the loose ball and gleefully scampered into the end zone to help Miami take a 24-20 lead.

## Art of survival

Allen steadied the ship however with back-to-back touchdown drives to put Buffalo 10 points clear at 34-24. Miami set up a tense finale when Jeff Wilson rushed over from close range early in the fourth quarter to put the Dolphins within a field goal at 34-31 but Buffalo's defense held firm. Quarterback Dan Jones led the Giants to their first playoff victory since 2011, delivering a near immaculate display, throwing for 301 yards and two touchdowns while rushing for 78 yards.

Jones, allied with the powerful rushing of running-back Saquon Barkley, who had two touchdowns, triumphed in a game where both offenses dominated. Vikings quarterback Kirk Cousins opened the scoring with a one-yard run but the Giants responded strongly with Barkley bursting 28 yards down the left to score and then put themselves 14-7 up with Jones finding Isaiah Hodgins with a 14-yard pass.

New York extended their lead with a field goal before the Vikings reduced the deficit before half-time with Cousins connecting with K.J. Osborn on a nine yard touchdown pass. Jones led the Giants to a 10-point lead with a nine-yard pass to Daniel Bellinger but the Vikings kept themselves in contention with an Irv Smith reception on a three-yard pass from Cousins after an eight-play drive. —AFP



CINCINNATI: Tyler Huntley of the Baltimore Ravens fumbles the ball that is recovered by Sam Hubbard of the Cincinnati Bengals to score a 98 yard touchdown at Paycor Stadium on Jan 15, 2023. —AFP

## Sarfaraz cried after Australia Test snub

NEW DELHI: Indian batting sensation Sarfaraz Khan said he wept after being ignored for the first two Test matches against Australia despite having a first-class batting average second only to Sir Donald Bradman. The 25-year-old has been one of the most consistent performers in the local Ranji Trophy competition this season, scoring 431 runs in five games for Mumbai so far. Last summer, Sarfaraz amassed 982 runs in six games at an average of 122.75, including four centuries.

In 36 first-class games so far, the middle-order batsman has accumulated 3,380 runs at an average of 80.47. Only late Australian great Bradman (95.14)

boasts a higher first-class average among batsmen who have played at least 50 innings. "When the team was announced and my name wasn't there, I was sad the whole day, when we travelled from Guwahati to Delhi, I was feeling very lonely. I cried too," he was quoted as saying by the Times of India.

Sarfaraz then called up his father Naushad Khan, a coach, for help during the low phase. "I called my dad to Delhi. He spoke to me, I practiced with him, and then felt better." Indian selectors announced a 17-member squad on Friday for the first two Tests of the four-match series against Australia at home beginning on Feb 9.

Explosive batsman Suryakumar Yadav won a maiden Test call-up while Ishan Kishan, another white-ball specialist, was also named in the side with first-choice wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant recovering after a car accident. Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah was left out over fitness concerns. —AFP

## Nadal victorious but Kyrgios suffers Open heartbreak

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal launched his Australian Open title defense with a four-set victory over Britain's Jack Draper on Monday, as home hope Nick Kyrgios quit through injury without hitting a ball. In the women's draw, top seed Iga Swiatek survived a tough examination while Jessica Pegula and teenage prodigy Coco Gauff were both emphatic winners on the first day of action.

Spanish great Nadal, 36, had been in poor form by his sky-high standards, losing six of his last seven matches stretching back to defeat in the last 16 at the US Open. In fast-rising Draper, 21, the 22-time Grand Slam champion faced a stern test to start his campaign at a sweltering Melbourne Park. Top seed Nadal recovered from a second-set wobble - and a bizarre incident when a ball boy accidentally took his racquet - to defeat the 38th-ranked Briton 7-5, 2-6, 6-4, 6-1 at Rod Laver Arena.



MELBOURNE: Spain's Rafael Nadal hits a return against Britain's Jack Draper on day one of the Australian Open on Jan 16, 2023. —AFP

Nadal, who recently became a father, faces American Mackenzie McDonald in round two. "Very exciting, new beginning, just super-happy to be back at Rod Laver with a victory I needed," he said after grinding down Draper. "Last couple of months have not been easy for me."

Nadal was on court when Australia's talented but temperamental Kyrgios called a hastily arranged press conference and announced that he was out of the tournament with a knee injury. "I'm devastated, obviously," said the Wimbledon finalist, who was considered an outside bet to win a maiden Grand Slam crown. "I've had some great tournaments here, winning the doubles last year and playing the tennis of my life probably going into this event. "I'm just exhausted from everything, and (it's) obviously pretty brutal." —AFP



Virat Kohli

## 'King is back': Cricketers hail Kohli masterclass

NEW DELHI: India's Virat Kohli won praise from the cricketing world on Monday after his third one-day international century in four matches silenced critics doubting his place in the team. Kohli, 34, smashed an unbeaten 166 to lead India to the biggest-ever ODI win by 317 runs against Sri Lanka on Sunday, his 46th ODI ton and 74th in all formats. The former captain ended last year with an ODI century against Bangladesh and began 2023 with another 113 in the Sri Lanka opener to announce his return as a run machine in style.

Kohli went through an extended lean patch last year, failing to reach three figures in over 1,000 days. He quit as T20 skipper in late 2021 and in January 2022 was sacked from the ODI captaincy and gave up leading the Test side too. "King Kohli" last week spoke again about his mental struggles during his dry phase, including how he had been "snappy" around his Bollywood actress wife Anushka Sharma.

"In my case, in denial, frustration was creeping in. I was very cranky, very snappy in my space," Kohli told the Indian cricket board's website bcci.tv. "It was not fair on Anushka, my close ones, it's not fair on the people who support you. So I had to take responsibility and kind of put things in perspective."

But he hit his first century after 1020 days in the Asia Cup Twenty20 tournament in September last year and hasn't looked back since. Veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle said, "the king is back to doing what he does best, scoring hundreds". Kohli's long-time IPL friend and former teammate at Royal Challengers Bangalore AB de Villiers tweeted: "Virat Kohli! Different level." "It's wonderful to see Virat Kohli back at his best in white-ball cricket, this unbeaten 166 was special even by his lofty standards," batting great VVS Laxman wrote on Twitter. —AFP



HONOLULU: Kim Si-woo of South Korea poses with the trophy after winning the Sony Open at Waialae Country Club on Jan 15, 2023. —AFP

## Kim's late birdie blast seals Sony Open victory

HONOLULU: South Korea's Kim Si-woo produced a barnstorming birdie-birdie finish to snatch a one-shot victory at the PGA Tour's Sony Open in Hawaii on Sunday. The 27-year-old from Seoul clinched his fourth career PGA Tour title - and first for two years - after carding a second straight six-under-par 64 at Waialae Country Club in Honolulu.

Kim's closing final round saw him squeeze past third-round leader Hayden Buckley, who had been chasing his first title on the tour. A see-saw finale saw Kim and Buckley match each other shot-for-shot, with little to choose between the two players and the possibility of a playoff looming. Buckley looked poised for victory after a birdie putt on the 16th saw him move to 17 under for a one-shot lead.

But Kim, playing in the group ahead, hit back moments later to regain a share of the lead after brilliantly chipping in from 27 feet. The Korean was in no mood to surrender the initiative, and conjured another moment of magic on the par-five 18th to take sole possession of the lead at 18 under. After finding a fairway bunker with his tee-shot, Kim blasted a superb iron out of the sand onto the green to give himself a long eagle chance.

He rolled a perfectly weighted putt just short to set up a tap-in for birdie. That piled the pressure on Buckley, who could only par the 17th, meaning he would need to birdie the last to force a playoff. Buckley, who had eagled the same hole on Saturday, was in trouble off the tee, finding the right rough down the fairway and then his second came up short of the green. His chip rolled 12 feet past the hole, leaving him with an awkward birdie putt which he duly missed to finish with a two-under-par 68, leaving him on 17 under with a 72-hole aggregate 263. Kim, who started the day three off the pace, said patience had been the key to his round. —AFP



Sarfaraz Khan

## Sports

# 'Spectacular' Gavi shines as Barcelona beat Madrid to win Spanish Super Cup

RIYADH: Barcelona convincingly beat Real Madrid 3-1 in Saudi Arabia on Sunday to win the Spanish Super Cup, their first trophy since coach Xavi Hernandez took over. Inspired by teenager Gavi, who scored himself and set up goals for Robert Lewandowski and Pedri Gonzalez, the Catalans produced one of their best performances in years against their bitter Clasic rivals.

Having enjoyed great success as a player at Barca, Xavi returned in November 2021 and after a summer of heavy spending this emphatic victory is a sign his project is moving in the right direction. Karim Benzema netted a late consolation for Madrid, who have been far from their best since the World Cup break and also fell three points behind Barcelona in La Liga last weekend.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti suffered his first defeat in a final since 2014, with Los Blancos surrendering the trophy they earned last season to Barcelona, who have now won the Super Cup a record 14 times. "We knew it was a chance we had to take, we have lived through an era of changes at the club and in the dressing room, and this will reinforce us to keep fighting for more titles," Barca captain Sergio Busquets told Movistar.

Xavi crucially deployed four central midfielders, with 18-year-old Gavi drifting inside off a nominal starting position on the left and frequently giving Madrid right-back Dani Carvajal the slip. Barcelona broke the deadlock when Busquets pressed well after a loose Antonio Rudiger pass, leading to Lewandowski feeding Gavi, who slotted home confidently.

Gavi turned provider for the second, running on to De Jong's pass and sliding the ball across for Lewandowski to finish clinically. "(Gavi) is a kid

that excites us all, when you see him compete like that, putting his soul out there, he's a character that is contagious for the team, he has an innate capacity for leadership," Xavi told a press conference. "It comes from inside him, it's spectacular. At 18, I have said it many times, but don't let it stop, he has no ceiling this boy."

## Real 'weaknesses'

Gavi, who won the Golden Boy award in 2022, was the game's outstanding performer and showed Barcelona are in good hands both now and for years to come. Madrid's own young star Vinicius Junior was shackled by Ronald Araujo, the Uruguayan playing at right-back to directly subdue the Brazilian's threat. "Today I think we were lacking, we went out there giving 90 percent, 80 percent, and in a final against a rival like this, you can't do that," Madrid midfielder Fede Valverde told Movistar.

Courtois denied Dembele after a brilliant Alejandro Balde run and the overworked Belgian stopper was keeping Madrid's slim hopes alive. By contrast, Barcelona's Marc-Andre ter Stegen went untested until the 70th minute, by when his side had netted their third. Lewandowski released Gavi, who crossed for Pedri to tap home at the back post as Barcelona romped to a compelling victory.

The only blot on Barcelona's copybook was a late Benzema strike, finishing after his first effort was blocked. "To say it was humiliation is disrespectful," Ancelotti told a news conference. "We lost a game against Barcelona like we beat them in the league. They played better and they deserved it, full stop." The biggest blow for Madrid may prove to be the morale boost the victory is for



RIYADH: Barcelona's players celebrate on the podium after winning the Spanish Super Cup final against Real Madrid at the King Fahd International Stadium on Jan 15, 2023. —AFP

their rivals.

Although Xavi will ultimately be judged on his performance in major competitions - and Barcelona have already been eliminated from this season's Champions League - he was thrilled by the victory. "It brings a lot of calm, confidence,

because what we planned worked brilliantly, we beat Madrid, dominating the whole game," said Xavi. "I'll take how we played from this, it is very important to me. The trophy, yes, but how (we won it). We have three trophies to play for this season and this gives us confidence." —AFP

## Chelsea splash out to beat Arsenal to €100m Mudryk

LONDON: Chelsea swooped to beat Arsenal to the signing of Ukrainian international winger Mykhailo Mudryk from Shakhtar Donetsk for a fee that could rise to 100 million euros (\$108 million) on Sunday. Shakhtar confirmed that Mudryk will cost the Blues an initial 70 million euros with a further 30 million in performance related add-ons. The 22-year-old has signed an eight-and-a-half year deal at Stamford Bridge.

A long-term target for the Gunners, Mudryk looked set to join the Premier League leaders but Arsenal refused to match Shakhtar's 100 million euro valuation. "We always want to improve the squad," said Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta after his side's 2-0 win at Tottenham on Sunday. "The club is the first one that is trying to do everything we can

to improve the players. But I think as well we have to have some discipline."

Chelsea had no such reservations as another huge deal takes their spending on transfers in the first season under the ownership of Todd Boehly's consortium above £400 million. "We are delighted to welcome Mykhailo to Chelsea," said Boehly and Chelsea co-owner Behdad Eghbali in a club statement. "He's a hugely exciting talent who we believe will be a terrific addition to our squad both now and in the years to come. He will add further depth to our attack and we know he'll get a very warm welcome to London."

Mudryk draped himself in the Ukrainian flag as he was presented at half-time of Chelsea's 1-0 win over Crystal Palace. He scored 12 goals in just 44 first team appearances for Shakhtar, including three in the group stages of this season's Champions League. "I'm so happy to sign for Chelsea," said Mudryk. "This is a huge club, in a fantastic league and it is a very attractive project for me at this stage of my career. I'm excited to meet my new teammates and I'm looking forward to working and learning under Graham Potter and his staff." —AFP



LONDON: Chelsea's new signing, Ukrainian midfielder Mykhailo Mudryk, is introduced to the crowd at half-time at Stamford Bridge on Jan 15, 2023. —AFP



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's French goalkeeper Hugo Lloris dives to concede a second goal against Arsenal at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Jan 15, 2023. —AFP

## Lloris howler puts Arsenal on course for derby delight

LONDON: Arsenal powered to their first Premier League win at Tottenham in nine years as the leaders took advantage of Hugo Lloris' blunder to seal a 2-0 victory in Sunday's north London derby. Mikel Arteta's side were gifted the lead by Tottenham goalkeeper Lloris, who pushed Bukayo Saka's cross into his own net early in the first half. Martin Odegaard added Arsenal's second goal with a superb long-range strike before the interval.

Arsenal's first league double over their bitter rivals since 2013-14 moved them eight points clear of second placed Manchester City after the champions' defeat at Manchester United on Saturday. As Arsenal's unexpected title charge gathers pace, their trip up the Seven Sisters Road to fifth placed Tottenham was a significant test of their mettle.

They passed with flying colors at a venue which had been a house of horrors for the Gunners, who had lost all three games at Tottenham's plush new stadium since it opened in 2019. Last season's 3-0 collapse was especially painful, with Tottenham going on to snatch a top four finish at their neighbours' expense. But Arsenal no longer have to worry about scrapping for a top four berth after taking the Premier League by storm this season.

Even losing out to Chelsea in the race to sign Shakhtar Donetsk winger Mykhailo Mudryk on Sunday could be dismissed as a minor inconvenience thanks to this statement success. Unbeaten in their last 12 league games, the Gunners are in pole position to win the title for the first time since Arsene Wenger's Invincibles reigned supreme in 2004. —AFP

## Mbappe back but PSG beaten by Rennes

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe made his return from a post-World Cup holiday but Paris Saint-Germain went down 1-0 away to Rennes in Ligue 1 on Sunday, a result which leaves them just three points clear at the top of the table halfway through the season. Rennes captain Hamari Traore scored the game's only goal in the 65th minute in the rain in Brittany to condemn PSG to a second successive away league loss after they went down 3-1 at second-placed Lens on New Year's Day.

Prior to that they had gone unbeaten through their first 23 matches this season in all competitions and this latest setback gives their rivals hope in the title race. "I am disappointed with our performance because we conceded too many chances and created nothing," said PSG coach Christophe Galtier, who complained of a "total absence of a presence in the penalty box" after opting to leave Mbappe on the bench at kick-off. This was the first time that Mbappe, Lionel Messi and Neymar had appeared on the pitch together since PSG's superstar attacking trio returned from the World Cup. Messi had been afforded an extended holiday after guiding Argentina to glory in Doha and scored on his return in a 2-0 win against Angers in midweek. Mbappe, scorer of a hat-trick for France in the World Cup final as they lost on penalties to Argentina, had played in his club's first two games after the tournament before missing their last two as he took a holiday in New York with teammate Achraf Hakimi. He was expected to start on Sunday but instead began on the bench as the 20-year-old Hugo Ekitike played in front of Messi and



RENNES: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe fights for the ball with Rennes' Malian defender Hamari Traore at the Roazhon Park stadium on Jan 15, 2023. —AFP

Neymar. Without their leading scorer PSG were blunted up front and Rennes goalkeeper Steve Mandanda did not have a save of note to make until he kept out a Danilo Pereira header three minutes into the second half.

Mbappe replaced Ekitike in the 56th minute and did so to applause from the home fans. Yet Rennes went ahead soon after as their Malian right-back Traore swept in a cutback from Adrien Truffert, and Mbappe-making his 200th Ligue 1 appearance - then squandered a chance to equalize when he burst through on goal but blazed over with just the goalkeeper to beat. —AFP

tom-of-the-table Elche, and could not bounce back from their defeat by Barcelona last weekend. "We had a lot of chances to score," Atletico defender Mario Hermoso told DAZN.

"You are left with a strange feeling when you aren't capable of winning. If we had scored three clear chances in the first half and three in the second, the game would have been more comfortable, and with a bigger scoreline, they had two chances." Atletico had taken the lead in the 18th minute after a clever dummy by Antoine Griezmann allowed Correa to run on to Geoffrey Kondogbia's pass. The Argentine fired home at the near post to record his 50th league goal for the Rojiblancos.

Sergio Akieme lashed over as Almeria searched for an instant response, more than holding their own in the first half. Eventually the hosts levelled before the break through Toure, netting his fourth league goal of the season with a powerful header from Lucas Robertone's cross. The Mali international found space behind Axel Witsel and capitalised brilliantly. —AFP

## Atletico drop more points in Almeria draw

ALMERIA, Spain: Atletico Madrid dropped two more points in an increasingly frustrating campaign with a 1-1 draw at Almeria on Sunday in La Liga. The visitors went ahead through Angel Correa but El Bilal Toure pegged back Diego Simeone's side, fourth and 13 points behind leaders Barcelona. Atletico should have won the game in the second half but Almeria goalkeeper Fernando Martinez made stunning saves to deny Alvaro Morata and Correa.

Sergio Reguilon, who came on as a substitute, was sent off for Atletico for two yellow cards in under five minutes in the final stages. Simeone's side have now won just one of their last six league games, against bot-



ALMERIA, Spain: Atletico Madrid's Spanish midfielder Marcos Llorente fights for the ball with Almeria's Portuguese midfielder Samu Costa at the Mediterranean Games Municipal Stadium on Jan 15, 2023. —AFP

## Atalanta stick 8 past Salernitana, coach sacked

ROME: Atalanta demolished Salernitana 8-2 on Sunday as they became the first team to score eight times in a Serie A game since Inter Milan in 1996. Ademola Lookman struck twice with six other players on the scoresheet for Atalanta, who are three points away from the Champions League places in sixth. Jeremie Boga put Atalanta into an early lead with his first goal for the club since signing from Sassuolo in the close season.

Boulaye Dia equalized for Salernitana but Lookman converted a penalty to put the hosts back on top. Giorgio Scalvini, Teun Koopmeiners - who tucked away the rebound from his spot-kick - and Rasmus Hojlund added further goals before half-time. Lookman netted again on 54 minutes with Hans Nicolussi Cavaglia then pulling one back for Salernitana. Ederson bagged Atalanta's seventh and Nadir Zortea completed the rout.

Atalanta are level on points with both Lazio and Roma. They go to Juventus next weekend with a chance to break into the top four. "It will be a difficult match but one which can give us an indication about our growth," Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini told DAZN.

Salernitana sacked their coach Davide Nicola, the club announced on Monday. Nicola arrived at the club last February when the team was in bottom spot. He generated a revival that saved them from relegation and earned him a contract extension. "The club thanks the coach for his passion and dedication (and) for achieving the historic goal of staying in Serie A and wishes him the best for the continuation of his career," Salernitana said in a statement. "After such a loss there's really no analysis to be done, it just means you didn't have enough determination," Nicola had said after watching his team's winless run increase to six games.

## Dybala at the double

Paulo Dybala grabbed both goals for Roma in their 2-0 home win over Fiorentina, who played over an hour with 10 men after Brazilian defender Dodo was sent off. World Cup winner Dybala volleyed Roma ahead from the edge of the area. His second came late on after Tammy Abraham burst free down the right and squared for the Argentine to tap home. Lazio recovered from the early exit of captain Ciro Immobile to injury to earn a 2-0 win at Sassuolo.

Mattia Zaccagnini opened the scoring before the break by converting a penalty awarded after Sassuolo defender Jeremy Toljan handled the ball at a corner. Felipe Anderson added a second deep into injury time with Lazio, in fifth, staying in touch of third-placed Juventus and Inter Milan, and four points adrift of champions AC Milan. Maurizio Sarri's side took advantage of second-placed Milan's 2-2 draw at Lecce, with Juventus on Friday crushed 5-1 by Napoli, who are top of the standings with a healthy nine-point advantage. —AFP

Sports

# Zain awards stars of Dawri Zain's latest three rounds

Company presented its 'Best Player' award to Al-Salama, Al-Mutairi and Al-Enzi



Al-Houti, Sulaiman and Al-Musaibeeh with the stars.



Jumaa Aboud receiving Bandar Al-Salama's award on his behalf.

**KUWAIT:** Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, awarded the winners of its 'Best Player' award in the latest three rounds of the Kuwait Premier League (Dawri Zain) in recognition of their outstanding performance on the pitch. The company dedicates the award to players who contribute to adding elegance to the league and ultimately elevating Kuwaiti football.

Zain announced the winners: Al-Arabi Sports Club player Bandar Al-Salama, winner of the ninth round (award received on his behalf by his colleague Jumaa Aboud), Al-Sahil Sports Club player Rashid Al-Mutairi, winner of the tenth round, and Al Nasir Sports Club player Mohammed Daham Al-Enzi, winner of the eleventh round. The recognition took place at Zain's headquarters, attended by the technical committee's head Saad Al-Houti, committee member Wael Sulaiman, and Zain Kuwait's Corporate Relations Department Manager Hamad Al-Musaibeeh.

Zain offers KD 50,000 of prizes for athletes and fans per season, which is the biggest prize pool ever to be distributed in the Kuwaiti League's history. By dedi-

cating cash prizes for athletes, the company seeks to encourage players to pursue excellence and elevate the league's performance. Zain has started presenting the prizes from the ninth round of the current season.

Zain's cash prizes for athletes are as follows: Player of the Season Prize: KD 10,000, Player of the Round Prize: KD 500, Season's Top Scorer Prize: KD 5,000, Season's Best Goalkeeper Prize: KD 5,000, Season's Best Coach KD 3,000, and Season's Rising Star Prize: KD 2,000.

A special committee has been formed in coordination with the Kuwait Football Association to outline the standards and criteria on which the winners are selected. The committee is membered by former Kuwaiti international players Saad Al-Houti (as the committee's head), Wael Sulaiman, Osama Hussain, and Mohammed Benyaan.

Zain is the Official Sponsor of the KFA's competitions for the next four seasons (2022-2026), including the Kuwaiti Premier League (now known as Dawri Zain) and the First Division League. Zain



Rashid Al-Mutairi receiving his award.



Mohammed Daham Al-Enzi receiving his award.

is also supporting HII the Amir's Cup, HII the Crown Prince's Cup, and the KFA Cup (Zain Cup).

Zain's role centers around three main areas: supporting athletes with cash prizes, launching social events and interacting with fans at stadiums, and an all-new surprise: the first-ever Fantasy Football League in Kuwaiti football's history.

These contributions and more go in line with the KFA's vision to further enrich the local football scene, given that it is the most beloved sports among Kuwaitis.

Zain firmly believes that the private sector has a vital and active role in developing the local sports and youth sectors, and it makes this belief a reality

by sponsoring and supporting some of the biggest sports programs in the nation. This partnership with Kuwait's top football competition comes to strengthen the leadership role Zain plays in the local sports scene and is perfectly in line with the company's sustainability and social responsibility strategy towards the sports and youth sectors.

## Iraq beat Qatar to reach final

**BASRA:** Iraq qualified on Monday for the final of the 25th edition of the Arabian Gulf Cup (Khaleeji Zain 25) after defeating Qatar 2-1 in the semifinal. The first half witnessed all the goals, as Iraq led with a goal by Ibrahim Bayish in the 19th minute, then Qatar scored the equalizer in the 28th minute through Amr Siraj, while Iraqi player Ayman Hussein decided his team's qualification after scoring the winning goal in the 43rd minute. The final will be played on Thursday, Jan 19. —KUNA



BASRA: Iraq's midfielder Hussein Jabbar fights for the ball with Qatar's midfielder Assim Madibo during the Arabian Gulf Cup semifinal match at the Basra International Stadium on Jan 16, 2023. —AFP

## Kuwait eyes hosting of deaf World Cup

**KUWAIT:** Vice President of the Deaf International Football Association Jaber Al-Kandari said he is trying in cooperation with DIFA to organize the first World Cup for the deaf in Kuwait this or next year with 24 countries participating according to FIFA rules. Kandari spoke during a reception on the occasion of his election to vice president of DIFA, which is under the auspices of FIFA.

Kandari said Kuwait has the infrastructure including fields and facilities that qualify it to host such a major event. He said his current position allows to work for having Kuwait hosting the first World Cup for the deaf. He hoped to receive support from the government through the Public Authority for Sport and Kuwait Olympic Committee as well as the private sector to make Kuwait the first country in the world to organize such an event.



## Women's futsal teams eye semis

**KUWAIT:** Fatat futsal team defeated Fatayat Al-Oyoun 8-1 in the 9th and final round of their URC league. Fatat ended their campaign with 22 points, while Fatayat Al-Oyoun remain pointless. The second match saw Tadhamon defeating Kuwait 1-0, raising their point total to 21. Tadhamon are in second place and Kuwait in third with 10 points. The semifinals will be held on Jan 28.



## Kharafi wins fifth round of KEF league

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Riding Center's international rider Ali Jasim Al-Kharafi continued his outstanding performance and won the fifth round of Kuwait Equestrian Federation (KEF) league following strong challenge by other riders on Friday and Saturday. Kharafi completed his run in the 140cm height without faults in 38.13 seconds, defeating Antonio and Al-Fuzaie.

Kharafi - last year's champion - maintained his lead of the league. Ali Al-Kharafi also won in the 130cm height, defeating Anaz Al-Anaz, Ghazi Al-Jraiwi, Abdullah Al-Awadhi and Fawaz Al-Subaie. KEF Secretary Nabila Al-Ali said competition is very tough in the league's rounds and all riders are doing their best in competing for top places.



# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

#### Hospitals

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

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804

Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### Change of Name

**I, ALI ASGAR**, holder of Passport No. L1458574, do hereby change my name to ALI ASGAR (as Given name) MAIMOON (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name ALI ASGAR MAIMOON and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2835)

**I have changed my name** from Hojafa holding Indian passport no. P6320762 to Huzaifa Bohra for all purposes. In future be called and known by new name. Flat No. 105, Ali Udayar, Soniyo Ka Nohra, Boharwadi, Udaipur, Raj. (C#2836) - 17-01-2023

**I, SAIFUDDIN** (current name in passport) holder of Indian Passport No. Z3810159 having permanent Address NAJAMPURA, SAGWARA, DISTT. DUNGARPUR, RAJASTHAN, INDIA, PINCODE NO. 314025 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: SAIFUDDIN and Surname: BURAKSHA (C#2833) - 16-01-2023

**I, DIANA AGNELA FALEIRO**, holder of Passport No. L3856658, do hereby change my name to DIANA AGNELA (as Given Name) PEREIRA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name DIANA AGNELA PEREIRA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#2832) 15-1-2023

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## Qualifiers for BNK Padel Open conclude



Bader Al-Kharafi (center), his wife Sana Al Naqeeb (left) and Former Minister Khaled Al-Roudan (right) watch Mohammed Abdal in action. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Bader Al-Kharafi (left) and former minister Khaled Al-Roudan

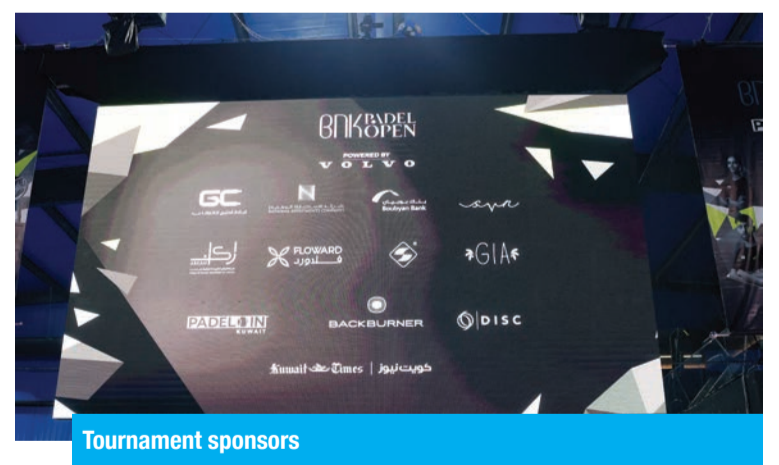
**KUWAIT:** The qualifying tournament of BNK Padel Open took place at Padel IN Sports Club from Jan 13 to 15. The final two teams qualified to play against the top 10 World Padel Tour-ranked athletes on Jan 20 and 21. BNK Padel and Volvo Kuwait are the official sponsors of the tournament that features World Padel Tour top-ranked players hosted by Padel IN. The Tour-ranked players will partner and compete with GCC players at The Arena in 360 Kuwait. The World Padel Tour (WPT) is the premier professional Padel tour in the world. It features top players from around the globe competing in tournaments held at various locations.



Bader Al-Kharafi (right) and Abdullah Boftain



Najeeb Al-Awadhi and Bader Bu Khamseen



Tournament sponsors



Players Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi (right) and Abdullah Jawad

