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# Kuwait condemns burning of Holy Quran in Stockholm

Turkey cancels Swedish minister's visit as tensions deepen over NATO bid

## Heavy fog envelops Kuwait



KUWAIT: This aerial picture shows a view of the Liberation Tower and other skyscrapers amid heavy fog in Kuwait City early on Jan 21, 2023. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Saturday strongly condemned and denounced the burning by an extremist of a copy of the Holy Quran in front of the Turkish embassy in Stockholm, which hurt Muslims' sentiments across the world and marks a serious provocation.

In a press statement, the minister called on the international community to shoulder responsibility by stopping such unacceptable acts, denouncing all forms of hatred and extremism and bringing the perpetrators to account. He also called for differentiating between politics and religion, promoting the values of dialogue, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among peoples and preventing any form of blasphemy of all divine religions.

Turkey on Saturday cancelled a visit by the Swedish defense minister over the demonstration by the anti-Islamic extremist in Stockholm, sparking a fresh crisis over Ankara's blocking of Sweden's bid to join the NATO military alliance. Turkish officials denounced the permission granted to Rasmus Paludan, a right-wing Swedish-Danish politician, to stage a protest in front of its embassy in the Swedish capital.

Last year, Paludan's announcement of a Holy Quran-burning "tour" during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan sparked riots across Sweden. A

day after summoning the Swedish ambassador over Paludan's latest demo, Ankara said it had called off the visit by Defense Minister Pal Jonson for Jan 27, aimed at overcoming Turkey's objections to Sweden's NATO bid.

The meeting "has lost its significance and meaning, so we cancelled", Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said. Jonson said the decision to postpone was made jointly with Akar on Friday at the US military base in Ramstein, Germany, where Ukraine's allies were meeting to discuss further weapon supplies for Kyiv. "Our relations with Turkey are very important to Sweden, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue on common security and defense issues at a later date," Jonson tweeted.

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom also blasted Paludan's protest. "Islamophobic provocations are appalling," he said. "Sweden has a far-reaching freedom of expression, but it does not imply that the Swedish government, or myself, support the opinions expressed."

The protest by Paludan went ahead on Saturday under heavy police protection, according to an AFP journalist, with around 100 people - including a large number of reporters - gathered near the Turkish embassy in Stockholm.

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## News in brief

### Iraq extends visa-free entry

**KUWAIT:** Iraqi authorities at Safwan border port informed their Kuwaiti counterparts that they have extended until Friday, Jan 27, the period to enter Iraq without a visa after the facility was introduced earlier this month for the Arabian Gulf Cup. Procedures are ongoing to finalize a mechanism for granting a visa at a nominal fee to those who wish to visit Iraq through the Safwan border crossing.

### MoCI issues warning

**KUWAIT:** The ministry of commerce and industry warned Friday against marketing or selling any product or publication bearing the image of HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince or state emblem of Kuwait. Undersecretary Mohammad Al-Enezi warned inspection teams are carrying out sudden raids on stores to catch violators, adding inspectors had already registered a number of violations. — KUNA

### Zionist kills Palestinian man

**SDE EFRAIM:** A Zionist civilian shot dead a Palestinian Saturday at a settler farm in the occupied West Bank, the army said. The Palestinian health ministry said 42-year-old Tariq Maali was killed "after the occupation opened fire on him" near the Palestinian village of Kafr Nama. The farm is known as a wildcat settlement. — AFP

## Saudi rules out normalization with Zionists

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia will not normalize ties with the Zionist in the absence of a two-state solution with the Palestinians, the kingdom's top diplomat has said, according to a tweet by the foreign ministry on Friday. The comments by Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud on the sidelines of the World

Economic Forum in Davos came as Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu discussed normalization with Saudi Arabia in talks with White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Jerusalem on Thursday.

"True normalization and true stability will only come through... giving the Palestinians a state," Prince Faisal told Bloomberg at the summit. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, is a close partner of the United States but it has repeatedly refused to normalize ties with US-ally, the Zionist entity, due to its occupation of Palestinian territories.

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Prince Faisal bin Farhan

## British PM fined for not wearing seatbelt in video

**LONDON:** British police on Friday fined Prime Minister Rishi Sunak for failing to wear a seatbelt in a moving car while filming a social media video. Lancashire Police said in a Twitter statement not directly naming Sunak: "We have today issued a 42-year-old man from London with a

conditional offer of fixed penalty." A fixed penalty means Sunak can pay a fine to avoid a court hearing.

Downing Street said in a statement that Sunak "fully accepts this was a mistake and has apologized". "He will, of course, comply with the fixed penalty," it said. The BBC reported that the fine for not wearing a seatbelt as a car passenger would be £100 (\$124). If the case went to court, Sunak could pay £500.

In Thursday's video, produced for distribution on Sunak's social media channels, the beltless Conservative leader speaks from the back seat of

Continued on Page 6



Rishi Sunak

## Hipkins vows to win election as next NZ PM

**AUCKLAND:** New Zealand's incoming prime minister Chris Hipkins vowed Saturday to "get things done" and win a looming October general election after being chosen as his party's only candidate to replace Jacinda Ardern. The 44-year-old red-headed politician emerged as the sole nominee to lead the ruling Labour Party in a meeting of fellow members of parliament, and

now faces what is seen as the mere formality of a confirmation by his colleagues on Sunday.

As leader of the party, he will take over as the country's 41st prime minister following Ardern's shock resignation on Thursday. Ardern said she would step down by February 7 but could do so earlier given that her successor was chosen in barely 48 hours. "I like to think I am pretty decisive and I can get things done," said Hipkins, who became a household name for leading the nation's COVID-19 crackdown for nearly two years.

With his party lagging in the opinion polls under criticism over rising prices, poverty and crime rates, reporters gathered outside parliament in Wellington asked if he can win general

Continued on Page 6



WELLINGTON: New Zealand's new Prime Minister Chris Hipkins speaks to the media outside parliament on Jan 21, 2023. — AFP



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## Local

# A first for Mideast, Jaber Hospital performs 'scarless tummy tuck'

'Three-in-one operation,' a scientific revolution in plastic and reconstructive surgery

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Dr Humoud Al-Rashidi, Specialist General, Laparoscopic and Obesity Surgeon at Jaber Hospital, described a scientific revolution in plastic and reconstructive surgery introduced at Jaber Hospital. A "three-in-one operation" was carried out at Jaber Hospital using a new method for the first time in Kuwait and Middle East.

He said this method is called "scarless tummy tuck" and is performed for those who complain from abdominal muscle separation without sagging skin and without resorting to the traditional large horizontal incision. Dr Rashidi said the new method concentrates on coordination between laparoscopic and plastic surgery, adding this will revolutionize the world of reconstruction and plastic surgeries. He said the surgery will soon be published in several medical journals.

Dr Rashidi said the operation takes three hours and is unique by using the VASER liposuction system and skin tightening with smaller incisions for

laparoscopic muscle tightening with lesser pain, adding the largest group that will benefit from this operation are women after giving birth.

The head of plastic surgery unit at Jaber Hospital Dr Sarah Al-Youha said the hospital has several specialties that work in tandem, as this cooperation will allow innovation in the hospital and give doctors the opportunity to add to their skills, enhance their abilities and increase opportunities to develop new techniques. She said this operation has three separate surgical techniques that work together and form something innovative.

Meanwhile, head of the surgical department at the hospital Dr Sulaiman Almazeedi congratulated the surgery department for this achievement, which is considered the first of its kind as far as cooperation between several specialties is concerned. He said this kind of achievement goes in line with the health ministry's vision to present the best health services for citizens under the leadership of Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha.



The Jaber Hospital team.



KUWAIT: An aerial view shows skyscrapers above a thick expanse of fog on Saturday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Fog engulfs Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** A thick fog blanketed Kuwait on Saturday reducing visibility drastically and covering the ground including roads with moisture. Motorists had to negotiate through Kuwaiti roads in near zero visibility. According to forecasts the fog is expected to continue until Sunday. The authorities called on citizens and residents to exercise maximum caution in view of the poor visibility on roads. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Motorists drive through fog-covered roads.



## Kuwait lawmakers urge more Arab social legislation

**CAIRO:** Kuwait's National Assembly MP Ahmad Lari Saturday stressed the importance of raising more awareness and enacting pieces of legislation regarding social status in Arab countries. Lari made this statement on the sidelines of the Arab Parliament social affairs committee meeting in preparation for the general session due on Sunday.

The meeting dealt with a "questionnaire" about the social status to generalize it in the Arab member states to collect data and then get results, Lari, who is also an Arab Parliament member, said. The social status includes several axes in education, health, climate and children, he elaborated. He referred to a plan to insert such matters in the curricula to create culture among the current generation on preserving natural resources and playing a role in making balance between climate and environment. The second topic is related to climate, which catches global attention, he stated, referring to playing a role in the social side in terms of this matter.

The Kuwaiti MP highlighted that the Gulf countries have a salty water challenge to address. In addition, the meeting discussed holding a seminar on protecting social values to reach a document of values to be adopted by the Arab countries, Lari elaborated. The committee agreed on setting up relevant legislative database on social, educational and cultural affairs, and women and youth, he noted. He pointed out that the National Assembly seeks to enact key pieces of legislation like comprehensive medical insurance to all citizens or setting up government companies to run hospitals for better services.

Meanwhile, MP Khaled Al-Otaibi said Saturday it was imperative to consider pieces of Arab legislation to be more flexible in order to attract investors. Al-Otaibi made the statement to KUNA at the end of the Arab Parliament's economic affairs committee meeting in preparation for the general session due on Sunday.

During Saturday's meeting, a memo was submitted on an Arab draft law aiming at boosting renewable energy investment in the Arab world, he said. A report on some Arab laws was prepared to serve this matter and would be sent to the Arab League for further consideration, Al-Otaibi noted. Other topics, like the 2023 Arab Parliament budget, were covered in the meeting, he stated. — KUNA



Ahmad Lari



Khaled Al-Otaibi

## MoE approves studies in Turkey, Cyprus universities

**KUWAIT:** Education Minister Hamad Al-Adwani issued a decision regarding the registration and enrollment of Kuwaiti students at two universities in Turkey and one in Cyprus. "Students wishing to study in the Bachelor of Human Medicine program in the Republic of Turkey are allowed to enroll in the following higher education institutions: Koc University and Hacettepe University," the decision said. "Moreover, students wishing to study for their bachelor's degree or a higher degree at Cyprus University are allowed to enroll, except for majors related to medicine," the ministry announced.

The study program that the students will join must follow the traditional education system, with regular attendance during the week. The study program that students will join must have passed the study period specified for granting the degree, by graduating the first batch of the college that offers this program.

The decisions regulating enrollment and the study system in higher education institutions outside Kuwait must be taken into consideration, and it must be taken into account that academic degrees have met the requirements for obtaining them in accordance with the regulating decisions issued by the higher education ministry in Kuwait.

## 38,400 cigarette cartons seized at Nuwaiseeb port

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Customs at Nuwaiseeb port on the southern border with Saudi Arabia halted the smuggling of 38,400 cartons of different brands of cigarettes from the country. "A 13-meter (refrigerated) truck arrived at Nuwaiseeb port on its way to leave for the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It contained household utensils (foam cans), but the inspection and warehouse control men had suspicions about the truck while it was in the outgoing cargo inspection yard at the port," Director of Nuwaiseeb Customs Sami Al-Sharaf said.

"The truck and the cargo were referred to the radiation detection device, and upon careful inspection, it was revealed that there were 768 boxes hidden behind the boxes of household items. Each box contained 50 cigarette cartons, equivalent to 38,400 cartons of a variety of brands," he added. He said the accused, who is of Arab nationality, was arrested and referred to concerned authorities to proceed with legal procedures.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Fire Force received a report that a fire had broken out in a building in Bneid Al-Gar. "The central operations department directed Shuhada and Hilali firefighting squads to the site. When teams arrived, it was found the fire had broken out on the eighth floor of the nine-storey building, which was also the site of a medical clinic. The fire was in an office room of the clinic," the public relations department at KFF said. Firefighters immediately evacuated the building and put out the fire without any injuries.



## Conflict of interest law takes effect

**KUWAIT:** The law regarding conflict of interest has officially come into force after it was published in Kuwait Al-Youm newspaper. The law included 21 articles organizing its force.

This law pertains to provisions on public officials in government agencies, public bodies and institutions, or persons entrusted with a public service as well as workers in companies if the state or one of the public bodies or public institutions contributes to them by not less than 25 percent of their capital.

In addition, the law 1970 was amended after incorporating some provisions of the penal code implemented in 1960 with regard to the criminal liability of the private person so that he/she can be punished with several penalties stipulated by the law.



Local

# 'My health in sports' race kicks off

Public Authority for Minors Affairs organizes sports activity



'My health in sports' running race



Race for 6-9 years old runners.

**KUWAIT:** 'My health in sports' running race kicked off on Saturday with the participation of 160 runners. The competition began at a yard opposite Jaber Al-Ahmad Stadium, with competitors, professional and amateurs, jostling on the 2,500-m-long track.

Referees are certified by the Public Authority for Sports, co-organizer of the sports event with the Patients Helping Fund Society.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Minors Affairs held on Saturday a sports event to boost their talent. The event was organized at Ahmed Suleiman Al-Rashdan Athletics Track, which included many sports and recreational activities. — KUNA



Runner Abdulaziz Hamad wins the race in the 6-9 years category and Minister Al-Majed awaits him at the finishing line. —KUNA photos

## Diving team, KUNA volunteers clean beaches

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti diving team of the Environmental Voluntary Foundation removed two tons of plastic and other waste on Saturday from the coast at Kuwait Towers as part of a campaign it organized to clean the beach in cooperation with the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

Head of the team, Waleed Al-Fadhel told KUNA: "The team organizes these campaigns periodically to encourage all institutions to participate in cleaning the country's coasts and to call for awareness in

preserving the environment and its components. KUNA is one of the first government institutions to take the initiative to participate with its employees in the campaign launched by the diving team starting today, indicating that it is the first cooperation of its kind between the two sides."

"The team continues its environmental campaigns as it organizes 40 similar campaigns for all government institutions to enhance community participation in preserving the marine environment. The coast of the Towers was chosen as the front of Kuwait, and it must be clean, beachgoers must protect the coasts and not to throw plastic materials and waste on the beaches and put them in the designated places," he added.

"Plastic is a threat to living organisms and annually kills one million seabirds in the world, in addition to 150,000 marine creatures, especially turtles,

which are threatened with extinction, pointing to the need to reduce pressure on the environment and tighten penalties for violators," he stressed.

He mentioned that the campaigns of the team continue on a daily basis, even before the blessed month of Ramadan, and are supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, the Public Authority for Youth, the Kuwait Municipality, the Environment Public Authority, the Kuwait Ports Corporation, and others.

Al-Fadhel also stated that the Kuwaiti diving team cleans all the coasts of the country from north to south, in addition to the Kuwaiti islands, and removes all kinds of waste that pose a threat to marine organisms and navigation. It also has international partnerships with organizations interested in protecting beaches and oceans. —KUNA



In my view

## Women and the law



By Atyab Al-Shatti

Local@kuwaittimes.com

In principle, the rules of international law, including international treaties and conventions, constitute binding rules for the administration or public authorities, provided the rules contained therein are ratified by the competent authority in the state, on the understanding that upon ratification and publication, they shall become part of the internal law of the state. Thereupon, both the public authority and individuals must respect them.

In practical terms, the rank of provisions contained in the treaty or international convention - in terms of its superiority to the constitution or not - differs from one country to another, and the reason for this superiority is due to the inclusion of the supremacy of these international treaties or conventions in the constitution, and accordingly, their application as a mandatory force that surpasses national laws, including the constitution.

Recognizing this issue, Kuwait took a middle path when it gave the treaty - according to article 70 of the constitution - the force of law after its conclusion and ratification, that made the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) subject to both the interpretation of the legislations and discretionary management.

Consequently, Kuwait's commitment to international conventions and treaties has emerged as a moral and non-binding obligation in the framework of practical application, in addition to the legislator's failure to implement the articles of the constitution itself in many provisions, including constitutional provisions that are compatible with CEDAW.

Returning to the provisions contained in the Kuwaiti constitution that are consistent with international standards regarding citizenship, justice and equality, and despite the ratification by Kuwait of many conventions in this regard, including CEDAW, women's rights in Kuwait are still far from practical application, since any Kuwaiti parliamentarian, or any decision of an administrative employee, can simply impair women's rights.

This is a clear distraction from the principle of constitutionalism, which makes the administration subject to the law by obliging it to the principle of the sequence of legal rules in the context of issuing or refraining from administrative decision by the control of the adherence to the principle of legitimacy, which stipulates that legal rules are graded with different ranks starting with treaties, international conventions, the constitution, law, then internal regulations, and ending with administrative decision as a legal action issued by the competent administrative authority and by its individual will, with the intent to cause legal effects by the creation, amendment or cancellation of legal rights and duties, or more precisely by the creation, amendment or cancellation of legal centers in the country.

In order for individuals to obtain their rights, this process is regulated by judicial oversight over the actions of the administration, thus the legal elements of the state are completed by the oversight of the actions of various authorities, as this task is carried out by courts of all kinds, whether regular or administrative, depending on the nature of the judicial system applied in the state, whether it is a uniform judicial system or a dual judicial system.





Saad Al-Tami addressing the graduation ceremony.



Saad Al-Tami in the elementary school.

## News in brief

## MoH issues new surgery norms

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Health Dr Ahmed Al-Awadhi issued a ministerial decision regarding the approval of the requirements and controls that must be met in authorizing cardiac surgeries and use of diagnostic and therapeutic catheters in the private medical sector. He also issued another decision regarding the adoption of technical requirements for laboratory specifications in the private medical sector. This includes the approval regulations for "heart surgeries," "laboratories," and "psychiatry" in the private sector. In addition, Al-Awadhi issued a decision approving the conditions and controls regulating the practice of the psychiatric profession in the private medical sector.

## Woman's body found in Naayem

**KUWAIT:** A woman was found dead at Barr Al-Salmi, near Al-Naayem Bridge and detectives at Taima area in Jahra have begun investigating the case. The Ministry of Interior (MoI) received a report that a corpse was found. The detectives on reaching the spot found traces of burns on various parts of her body. The identity of the dead woman has not been determined yet.

## Kuwait crude oil drops

**KUWAIT:** Price of the Kuwaiti crude oil dropped by \$2.49 to \$83.51 per barrel Thursday against \$86 pb Wednesday, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation said in a statement on Friday. In international markets, data have shown unexpected rise of US crude reserves for the second consecutive week, deepening jitters that demand for the crude might drop. Meanwhile, future contracts of the Brent crude edged down by 73 cents to settle at \$84.25 pb. Likewise, those of the American Intermediate crude, edging down by 86 cents and settling at \$78.62 pb. — KUNA

# Saad Al-Tami: An inspirational story of sheer perseverance

## Kuwaiti youth surmounts ADHD challenges to emerge victorious in life

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti national Saad Al-Tami suffered from Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a neurodevelopmental disorder, and stuttering since childhood but with the passage of years he succeeded in rising up to the challenge and his efforts peaked with his address to the graduates' ceremony at Elliott School of International Affairs George Washington University.

Much of the credit goes to his parents and teachers who have never given up, supporting Saad with all possible resources and moral support to pursue his life regularly and attain studies, like his peers in classes. Saad's mother works as a social instructor and his father, holder of a PhD in educational management, was a member of the National Assembly (parliament) and head of the parliamentary committee for internal and defense affairs.

His teachers in the intermediate level sensed his brightness, but they complained of his recurring hyperactivity. A single teacher, Nora Al-Mraikhi Al-Qahtani, dedicated much efforts to help him overcome the difficulty. Sensing the need for encouraging Saad, she named him master of the school ceremonies, despite opposition from the administration. With her backing, he succeeded in addressing the crowds several times.

Moreover, Saad took the initiative to partake in programs in the school radio station, and later in the television children program. It was not until 2018 that Saad realized that he was suffering from ADHD when a specialist examined him after suffering from

sleeping disorders during his academic studies at Toledo University in Ohio - although his parents had learnt about his condition a long time ago. The doctor had prescribed medicines for Saad, however he opted to count on his will and senses, regularizing his tasks and coping with others as required. His efforts were fruitful, graduating from the university with a BA in administrative sciences with a Beta Gamma mark, dedicated for only ten percent of excellent students of this specialty at the global level. He proceeded to George Washington University to attain a Master's degree in political sciences.

Having made all these accomplishments, he addressed the graduation ceremony, drawing applause from various quarters and setting an example to follow for all people of special needs. — KUNA



Saad Al-Tami as a speaker during a seminar.



Saad Al-Tami in the elementary school.



Saad Al-Tami with some of his colleagues.

## Kuwait discusses overhauling tourism with WTO

**MADRID:** Kuwait has held talks with the World Tourism Organization (WTO) seeking its expertise to overhaul the sector in the Gulf State. Saud Al-Khaldi, the assistant undersecretary of the tourism sector, held the discussions with the organization secretary general, Zurab Pololikashvili, and Basmah Al-Mayman, the Middle East regional director at

the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), on the fringes of the International Tourism Trade Fair (FITUR), hosted by Madrid. In remarks to KUNA, Al-Khaldi indicated that the talks dealt with consultation, expertise exchange and possible dispatch of a delegation to Kuwait to examine the country's needs in the sector.

Among the discussed ideas was holding an exhibition in Kuwait to promote the country's tourist potentials and means of developing the sector, in addition to training national cadres and prospected overhaul of the hotels' sector. Al-Khaldi expressed hope that cooperation at this level be promoted, noting that Kuwait is one of the organization's founders. — KUNA



Assistant undersecretary of the tourism sector Saud Al-Khaldi with the Middle East regional director at the (UNWTO) Basmah Al-Mayman. — KUNA

## Italian official hails Kuwait's efforts for diversification

**ROME:** Carlo Bonomi, President of the General Confederation of Italian Industry (Confindustria), has lauded Kuwait's efforts to diversify the economy and attain objectives of its development strategy, Kuwait Vision 2035.

In an interview with KUNA, Bonomi praised the approach "to create an effective government administration, develop a diversified economy, an integrated infrastructure, increase contribution of the private sector and lure international entrepreneurs." The Confindustria chief said top Italian companies desire to contribute to Kuwait's development, establish partnership with private Kuwaiti companies and offer expertise for renovating businesses in the country.

There are already Italian business agents and distributors for Italian brands particularly clothes and entertainment, said Bonomi, indicating that the Italian entrepreneurs would execute ventures they had won through tenders. The Italian companies, in 2019, won contracts worth \$672 million but in 2020, they won a single one valued \$87.5 million, he said, indicating that the investments shrank due to the coronavirus outbreak.

At the commercial level, Bonomi said the Italian exports to Kuwait, in 2022, rose to \$1.52 billion, by double as compared to 2021. The Italian exports to Kuwait include aircraft, aerial devices, computer and electronic chips, medical equipment, watches and food products. — KUNA



Carlo Bonomi



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vow to boost  
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## Iran Islamic Revolutionary Guards warn EU terror label would be a 'mistake'

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RAMSTEIN AIR BASE: German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius (R) gives a statement during the Ukraine Defence Contact Group meeting at the US Air Base in Ramstein. Germany has refused to deliver powerful Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine. — AFP

# Germany refuses to give Ukraine tanks

## Germany face a strong backlash from allies

**KYIV:** Germany faced a strong backlash from allies on Saturday over its refusal to supply Ukraine with its vaunted Leopard tanks to boost its fighting capacity in the nearly year-long war with Russia.

On Friday, some 50 nations agreed to provide Kyiv with billions of dollars' worth of military hardware, including ample armoured vehicles and munitions needed to push back Russian forces. But German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius told reporters on the sidelines of the event at the US Ramstein Air Base that despite heightened expectations, "We still cannot say when a decision will be taken, and what the decision will be, when it comes to the Leopard tank."

On Saturday, several allies echoed Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in saying that the tanks were essential to Ukraine's fight with its much larger neighbour. In a joint statement—and a rare public criticism of Europe's top power—the foreign ministers of the three Baltic states said they "call on Germany to provide Leopard tanks to Ukraine now."

"This is needed to stop Russian aggression, help Ukraine and restore peace in Europe quickly. Germany as the leading European power has special responsibility in this regard," said the statement, tweeted by

Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics.

Germany has been hesitant to send the Leopards, or allow other nations to transfer them to Kyiv, with reports earlier in the week saying it would agree to do so only if the US provided its tanks as well. Washington has said it could not provide its Abrams tanks to Ukraine, citing difficulties in training and maintenance.

US Senator Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina who is currently visiting Kyiv, called on both sides to supply the machines.

"To the Germans: Send tanks to Ukraine because they need them. It is in your own national interest that (Russian President Vladimir) Putin loses in Ukraine."

"To the (US President Joe) Biden Administration: Send American tanks so that others will follow our lead," he said. Expectations had grown ahead of Friday's Ukraine Contact Group meeting, a grouping of some 50 US-led countries that are providing weapons to Ukraine, that Germany would at least agree that other countries operating Leopards would be permitted to transfer them to Kyiv's army.

### Funeral

In Kyiv on Saturday, Zelensky attended the funeral of

his interior minister and other officials who were killed in a helicopter crash outside the capital Wednesday.

Denys Monastyrsky, who as interior minister was one of Zelensky's top aides, became the highest-ranking Ukrainian official to die in the war that Russia launched on February 24, 2022.

The cause of the helicopter crash that killed him and 13 others when the chopper crashed near a kindergarten, was still under investigation. US officials said Ukraine still faces an uphill battle against Russian forces, who still occupy one-fifth of the country, 11 months after invading.

But they spoke of a possible campaign in the coming weeks by Ukraine to retake parts of its land. US Joint

Chiefs Chairman General Mark Milley pointed to the substantial amount of equipment—much of it armoured vehicles and artillery—that Ukraine was being pledged at Ramstein, as well as the large-scale training of its forces by allies.

"I do think it's very possible for the Ukrainians to run a significant tactical or even operational-level offensive operation to liberate as much Ukrainian territory as possible," Milley said. But the Kremlin warned Friday that Western tanks will make little difference on the battlefield. "One should not exaggerate the importance of such supplies in terms of the ability to change something," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.—AFP

## Royale Hayat Hospital holds Kuwait's first patient experience conference

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** Royale Hayat Hospital, in collaboration with the Healthcare Interest Group of the Saudi Quality Council, held on Saturday Kuwait's first patient experience conference as part of the hospital's endeavor to provide "Care Beyond Boundaries", which is the title the conference highlighted.

The conference was chaired by Dr Abubakr Elmardi, Chief Strategy Officer and Head of Obstetrics & Gynecology at Royale Hayat Hospital, with the participation of Dr Nashat Nafouri, Chair and Executive Officer of Healthcare Interest Group and Member of the Saudi Quality Council board, Dr Ashraf AlSahafi, Deputy Executive Director, Clinical Service, Consultant Pediatric Hepatologist, King Abdulaziz Medical City, Jeddah, Samer T Abu Ghazaleh, Chief Experience Officer, Chairman Healthcare Council, Jeddah, Jehan Al-Fannah, Manager Health Services Evaluation Unit, Department of Quality and Patient Safety, Royal Hospital, Muscat, and Sara Al-Rumikhani, Director Patient Experience and Patient Experience Advocate, Saudi Arabia.

The conference helped to disseminate recent trends and exchange information by experts on the importance of patient experience, as it was attended by more than 100 delegates representing healthcare service providers and leaders from private and ministry hospitals, including patients.

The speakers emphasized the relevance of engaging patients in care delivery, especially in this rapidly changing situation, and highlighted the importance of employing new tools and techniques to measure patient experience, in addition to discussing the science and technology that is moving faster than ever before, how the tools used in improving healthcare delivery are evolving rapidly, and stressing on the expectations of patients that are also on the rise. The conference provided an excellent opportunity to share future strategies in

addressing this relevant issue that improves the outcome of care delivery.

Meanwhile, the highlight of this conference was the participation of a patient who narrated her own experience in healthcare domain. In addition, one of the outcomes of this conference was to strengthen collaboration amongst various hospitals and healthcare professionals in Kuwait, as there were many stimulating ideas that emerged that expressed interest in patient engagement and collaboration amongst healthcare professionals.

Dr Elmardi told Kuwait Times that the hospital's message from conducting this conference is not only providing medical care to patients, but also emphasizes the importance of giving the right care to the patients through improving their service journey. Regarding the participation of Saudi Arabia and Oman in the conference, he said: "They are highly advanced in the area of healthcare, quality and patient experience, and inviting them will improve our experience so we can join these GCC countries' development at this field by offering the right care."

Patient Fatima Al-Abduljalil told Kuwait Times about her experience at Royale Hayat Hospital. "I have been a patient at Royale Hayat for the last 13 years, where I had my first delivery in 2019, and had a few operations at the hospital. Royale Hayat offered me the best services compared to other private national and international hospitals. They care about patient satisfaction as they make sure to get feedback about their services," she said.

Dr Nafouri said this conference speaks about the experience of patients, which is fundamental nowadays in healthcare. "We are delighted that this hospital set the ground for such a conference in Kuwait and highlighted the importance of the topic of patient experience," she said. Dennis Joseph, Quality Director, and Vanitha Rajakumar, Chief Nursing Officer at Royale Hayat Hospital, presented papers during the conference. The organizers had to close registration one week prior to the conference due to an overwhelming response.



KUWAIT: Group picture of Royale Hayat Hospital team with Dr Abubakr Elmardi (fifth from left), Chief Strategy Officer and Head of Obstetrics & Gynecology.



AREQUIPA: Demonstrators light a fire at the Anashuayco bridge, near the Rodriguez Ballon airport, in Arequipa, Peru, during a protest against the government of President Dina Boluarte and to demand her resignation. — AFP

## Peru protests rage despite pleas for calm

**LIMA:** Stone-throwing protesters fought pitched battles with police at fresh demonstrations demanding the resignation of Peruvian President Dina Boluarte on Friday, while several hundred tourists were left stranded near Machu Picchu. Civil unrest since the ouster of Boluarte's predecessor, Pedro Castillo, in early December has left 45 people dead and prompted the government to impose a state of emergency in violence-hit areas. On Friday, security forces fired tear gas at demonstrators using slingshots in the flashpoint southern city of Arequipa. Crowds tried for a second consecutive day to invade an airport runway that has been closed and put under the guard of security forces.

A mob burned down a district police station and set fire to a customs post in Desaguadero, a southern town on the border with Bolivia, local television reported. Clashes also erupted in the northern region of La Libertad, despite a plea by Boluarte for calm.

In the capital Lima, thousands of protesters branded Boluarte a "murderer" and chanted "This democracy is not a democracy!" as they took to the streets again. "We want Dina's resignation. If she doesn't resign, the people will not be at peace," said Olga Mamani, 50.

The airport in the popular tourist destination of

Cusco reopened, prompting travelers to queue up for flights. But rail services to the famed Machu Picchu remained suspended, leaving at least 300 people stranded in the town closest to the Inca citadel pleading to be evacuated.

"We're uncertain as to whether a train is going to come to pick us up," Alem Lopez, a visitor from Chile, told AFP. In December, around 200 stranded tourists were flown out of the area by helicopter. The protesters are trying to keep up pressure on the government, defying a state of emergency that now covers almost one-third of the country. The violence has left 44 civilians and one police officer dead.

On Thursday, thousands of people marched through the capital Lima in a large anti-government rally punctuated by clashes with police. "Dina listen, the people disown you," they chanted, while others called for the president to be assassinated. Castillo, a former rural school teacher, was removed from office and arrested on December 7 after attempting to dissolve the country's legislature and rule by decree, amid multiple corruption investigations. The crisis also reflects the huge gap between the capital and the rural provinces, which supported Castillo and saw his election as revenge for Lima's contempt. Rural villagers saw Castillo, who hails from the Andean region of Peru and has Indigenous roots, as one of their own running the country.

Boluarte, who was Castillo's vice president, succeeded him, but even though she is from the same left-wing party, Castillo supporters rejected her, even calling her a "traitor." Boluarte appealed for dialogue in a message broadcast on state television. — AFP



## International

## Iran Islamic Revolutionary Guards warn EU terror label would be a 'mistake'

## French-Irish citizen held in Iran suspends hunger strike: Sister

TEHRAN: Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on Saturday warned the European Union against making a "mistake" by listing it as a terror group, after the bloc's parliament called for the measure. Members of the European Parliament voted on Wednesday to include the IRGC on the 27-nation bloc's terror list in "light of its terrorist activity, the repression of protesters and its supplying of drones to Russia". The vote is non-binding but comes with EU foreign ministers already due to discuss tightening sanctions on the Islamic republic next week. "If the Europeans make a mistake, they must accept the consequences," IRGC chief Major General Hossein Salami said, according to the Guards' Sepah News website, in his first remarks on the EU move.

The European Union "thinks that with such statements it can shake this huge army", Salami said. "We are never worried about such threats or even acting on them, because as much as our enemies give us a chance to act, we act stronger," he added. The Guards oversee the volunteer Basij paramilitary force, which has been deployed against protests since mid-September triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini, 22, after her arrest for allegedly violating Iran's dress code for women. Authorities in Iran say hundreds of people, including members of the security forces, have been killed and thousands arrested in the unrest. The Guards, formed shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, answer to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and boast their own ground, naval and air forces.

The United States has already placed both the IRGC and its foreign arm, the Quds Force, on its list of "foreign terrorist organisations". Salami's comments came as he received Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, a former commander of the Guards air force. "We in the parliament are ready to deal firmly with any action that tries to harm the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and distort the truth," Ghalibaf was quoted as saying by Sepah News. Meanwhile, a French-Irish citizen held in Iran has suspended his dry hunger strike at the request of his family, who fear for his life, his sister told AFP on Friday.



TEHRAN: Picture provided by the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA) shows Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf (R) meeting with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) chief Hossein Salami, in the capital Tehran. The IRGC warned the European Union against making a "mistake" by listing it as a terror group, after the bloc's parliament called for the measure. — AFP

Bernard Phelan, detained in Iran since early October, will accept food and fluids again, Caroline Masse-Phelan said, but remains "determined", and will "start again if there is no progress". Phelan, a Paris-based travel consultant and one of seven French nationals held by Iran, was arrested while travelling and is being held in Mashhad in northeastern Iran.

Iran accuses him of anti-government propaganda, a charge he has denied. He started refusing food on January 1, and fluids on Monday. Phelan, who suffers from a heart condition and a chronic bone issue, was judged to be in critical condition by Wednesday. Masse-Phelan said earlier in the week the family had managed to pass messages to her brother through diplomatic channels. "Bernard has agreed to read our

messages and has suspended his hunger and thirst strike," she said Friday.

"His life is still in danger," she said, adding that her brother had received no medical attention, and was "not well", suffering from "an enormous drop in blood pressure". The Iranian authorities have so far refused to release Phelan on medical grounds despite repeated requests from the French and Irish authorities, a French diplomatic source has said. Phelan is one of two dozen foreigners who are being held in Iran, according to activists, who describe the detainees as "hostages" seized to extract concessions from the West. Phelan was travelling through Mashhad during the ongoing protests against Iran's clerical regime when he was arrested. Fellow French national Benjamin Briere, who was sentenced last year to eight years in prison on spying charges, is being held in the same prison. "We are extremely worried for Bernard Phelan," a French foreign ministry official told AFP on Friday. — AFP

## Canada to repatriate 23 citizens from Syria

MONTREAL: Canada will repatriate twenty-three citizens who have been detained in northeast Syria in camps for family members of Islamic State group fighters, officials and a lawyer said Friday.

It would be the largest such repatriation of IS family members yet for Canada, and it comes after the families challenged the government in court, arguing Ottawa was obliged to repatriate the group under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Earlier Friday, the foreign ministry announced its decision to repatriate six Canadian women and 13 infants. And a court later ruled that four men seeking repatriation as part of the group must also be sent back to Canada, said lawyer Barbara Jackman, who is representing one of the men.

"I've spoken to the parents and they're really, really happy," Jackman said of the court decision, adding that the judge requested that the men be repatriated "as soon as reasonably possible." The foreign ministry said in a statement: "The safety and security of Canadians is our government's top priority." "We continue to evaluate the provision of extraordinary assistance on a case by case basis, including repatriation to Canada, in line with the policy framework adopted in 2021," it said.

Up until now the government of Justin Trudeau has treated the detained IS families on a case-by-case basis, and in four years only a handful of women and



HASAKEH: File photo shows the Kurdish-run al-Hol camp, which holds relatives of suspected Islamic State (IS) group fighters in the northeastern Hasakeh governorate. Canada will repatriate six women and 13 infants who have been detained in northeast Syria in camps for family members of Islamic State Group fighters, Ottawa announced. — AFP

children have been repatriated.

Since the destruction of the so-called Islamic State "caliphate" across Syria and Iraq in 2019, more than 42,400 foreign adults and children with alleged ties to the Islamic State group have been held in camps in Syria, according to Human Rights Watch.

Repatriating them is a highly sensitive issue for many countries, but rights groups have denounced their reluctance to bring back their own nationals from the camps, controlled mostly by Syrian Kurds. Human Rights Watch said around 30 Canadian citizens, including 10 infants, remain in the camps. Farida Deif, the

group's head in Canada, said that Global Affairs Canada has informed a number of them by letter that they fulfill the requirements for repatriation. However, she said, "none of the men have been notified of anything or have been part of any agreements thus far." The authorities did not say when the 19 would come to Canada or whether any of them would face legal proceedings for their association with Islamic State. Last October Canada brought back two women and two children from Syria. In 2020, Ottawa allowed the return of a five year old orphan girl from Syria after her uncle initiated a legal action against the Canadian government. — AFP

## Kuwait condemns burning of Holy...

Continued from Page 1

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu vented fury at Swedish authorities' failure to ban the protest. "It's a racist action, it's not about freedom of expression," he said. A small pro-Turkey demonstration also took place, on the other side of the embassy, while a pro-Kurdish rally called by the Rojava Committee of Sweden and others also took place in Stockholm, drawing several hundred people.

Swedish police gave their authorization for the demo Friday after determining it was protected by the country's liberal freedom of speech laws. But Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said allowing the protest was "encouraging hate crimes and Islamophobia". "The attack on sacred values is not freedom but modern barbarism," he tweeted

on Saturday.

Devlet Bahceli, head of the nationalist MHP party that is the junior partner in President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's governing coalition, vowed that "Sweden's NATO membership will not be approved by the parliament". Turkey had already summoned Sweden's ambassador on Friday to "condemn this provocative action which is clearly a hate crime - in strongest terms," a diplomatic source said.

It was the second time this month that Sweden's Turkey envoy had been summoned. On Jan 12, he was called to answer for a video posted by the pro-Kurd Rojava Committee of Sweden. Both Sweden and its neighbor Finland are hoping to join NATO, dropping decades of military non-alignment in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

But they need the consent of Turkey, a member of the alliance, to join. Ankara says its approval is conditional on Swedish steps to extradite people it accuses of terrorism or of having played a part in the 2016 coup attempt against Erdogan. Turkey says Sweden has not done enough to crack down on Kurdish groups that Ankara views as "terrorist". — Agencies

## Hipkins vows to win election...

Continued from Page 1

elections to be held on Oct 14. "Yes," he replied. Ardern, a global figurehead for progressive politics, stunned New Zealand by announcing her abrupt exit from office, less than three years after securing a second term in a landslide election win.

The 42-year-old - who steered the country through natural disasters, the COVID pandemic, and its worst-ever terror attack - said she no longer had "enough in the tank". Ardern said her decision to step down was "tinged with sadness" but after having made the announcement she had "slept well for the first time in a long time". Political commentators have

lined up to condemn the social media abuse that was increasingly directed at Ardern before her resignation. Hipkins praised Ardern as "the leader we needed at the time that we needed it", but agreed that she had been on the receiving end of "absolutely intolerable vitriol". Ardern's successor is widely seen as a safe pair of hands with more than 14 years in parliament. Hipkins told reporters he was feeling "energized and enthusiastic" about the new job.

"It's a big day for a boy from the Hutt," he said, referring to the Hutt Valley region near Wellington. "My parents came from relatively humble beginnings and worked really hard to provide a good life for my brother and I." Hipkins added, vowing to give New Zealanders the opportunities to improve their lives. The incoming prime minister said he had already spoken to Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. He declined to give policy or ministerial plans beyond saying that he did plan to keep Finance Minister Grant Robertson in place.

## Saudi rules out normalization...

Continued from Page 1

The US-brokered Abraham Accords in 2020 saw the kingdom's neighbors - the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain - establish full diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity. Netanyahu has repeatedly expressed his desire to see Saudi Arabia join the list. In their talks on Thursday, Netanyahu and Sullivan dis-

## British PM fined for not wearing...

Continued from Page 1

a moving car about his policies for boosting growth during a trip to Lancashire in England's north. Sunak apologized for an "error of judgement" soon after the video came out on

Thursday, according to Downing Street, and it has been removed from Instagram.

Opposition leader Chris Luxon of the center-right National Party congratulated Hipkins but said: "The reality is that he's been a critical part of a government that has failed to get anything done. Just changing the leadership of the Labour Party doesn't do enough for the New Zealand people."

Hipkins' selection quashed speculation that Justice Minister Kiri Allan, one of Labour's senior Maori MPs, might have become the country's first Maori prime minister. Allan praised Hipkins as decisive and said she believed he would be "an incredibly strong prime minister". Hipkins won plaudits for his near two-year term as the COVID response minister in a country that shut down its borders to keep the coronavirus out, only fully reopening in August last year. He conceded last year that people were fed up with the strict pandemic restrictions, describing the border closures as "tough going".

Hipkins told reporters Saturday that he likes cycling, gardening, DIY and being outdoors but con-

## Tunisia detains anti-president MP: Lawyer

TUNIS: Plainclothes security officers in Tunisia detained a prominent critic of President Kais Saied in the early hours of Saturday after a military court ruling, his lawyer told AFP. Seifeddine Makhlof had been found guilty of insulting police during a standoff at Tunis airport in March 2021. Makhlof, head of Islamist nationalist party Al-Karama, shouted "down with the coup" and "long live Tunisia" before being bundled into a car, according to a Facebook video posted by the lawyer.

Rights groups say military trials of civilians have become increasingly common in Tunisia since a power grab by Saied. Tunis military appeals court on Friday sentenced Makhlof to 14 months in prison with immediate effect, his lawyer Ines Harrath told AFP. A court had initially sentenced him to five months' jail. "Around 25 officers in plainclothes surrounded his house at 11:00 pm," Harrath said. After a two-hour standoff, "they came into the house and he left with them".

Makhlof has been a prominent critic of Saied, who in July 2021 froze parliament and seized far-reaching executive powers in what critics have called a "coup" and an attack on the only democracy to have emerged from the Arab Spring uprisings more than a decade ago. Saied later took control of the judiciary and pushed through a new constitution giving his office almost unlimited powers.

Makhlof in March 2021 led a group of Al-Karama MPs to Tunis airport in a bid to force authorities to lift a travel ban against a woman barred from boarding her flight, sparking a standoff that was widely shared online. The court on Friday also sentenced several other Al-Karama members and a lawyer to shorter prison sentences, but they were not immediately detained.

The head of the National Salvation Front opposition alliance told journalists on Saturday that the rulings reflected "a mentality of vengeance". "We're seeing the killing of freedoms and the destruction of democracy," Ahmed Nejib Chebbi said. "There's a desire to decapitate the leadership of the civilian and political opposition."

A statement on the presidency's Facebook late on Friday called for efforts to "tackle all the corrupt and those who believe they are above the law". Makhlof also received a year-long suspended prison sentence last February for "attacking the dignity of the army", after losing his parliamentary immunity following Saied's power grab. He was also banned from working as a lawyer for five years.

A military court upheld the one-year prison sentence in June but his lawyer in that case said he would appeal. "Putting civilians on trial in military courts is an attack on freedoms," Harrath said. "This case is related to the defendants' positions on Kais Saied." — AFP

cussed "measures to deepen the Abraham Accords... with an emphasis on a breakthrough with Saudi," the Zionist leader's office said.

The West Bank and the Gaza Strip plus Zionist-annexed east Jerusalem were long touted as the basis of a Palestinian state in a "two-state" solution to the long-running conflict. But that goal has become ever more distant, with the occupied West Bank fragmented by Zionist settlements. Netanyahu plans to pursue a policy of increased settlement expansion in the West Bank, with ultra-Orthodox Zionist parties in his coalition advocating the annexation of some of the territory. — AFP

Thursday, according to Downing Street, and it has been removed from Instagram.

Sunak's transportation habits were already a talking point in the United Kingdom. His political rivals have taken aim at his use of a private jet to make multiple short flights in recent days. This is not the first time Sunak has been slapped with a police fine. He was fined while serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer for attending a Downing Street party in June 2020 that violated the government's rules on social distancing. — AFP

ceded: "Maybe I don't have the best fashion sense in parliament." Asked about whether being a red-haired prime minister would be a historic moment, he said: "I think it was about time we had a ginger at the top."

The incoming New Zealand leader studied politics and criminology at Victoria University and then worked in the industry training sector. Before becoming an MP in 2008, he worked as a senior adviser to two education ministers and former prime minister Helen Clark. Although known as a personable and laid-back operator, Hipkins was involved in some high-profile spats with Australia's former conservative government.

In 2021, he accused Australia of "exporting its garbage" to New Zealand - a reference to Canberra's controversial policy of deporting criminals back to their country of birth. Hipkins was admonished by Ardern in 2017 after he was accused of playing a role in a dual citizenship scandal in the Australian parliament. — AFP



## International

# US, Philippines vow to boost security cooperation to address 'flashpoints'

## If something goes wrong here we are going to suffer: Marcos

**MANILA:** The United States and the Philippines vowed Friday to "invigorate" defence cooperation to address shared security concerns including disputes over the South China Sea. Manila hosted a high-level security dialogue with its top defence ally as part of efforts by President Ferdinand Marcos to restore a seven-decade partnership that was unsettled by his predecessor Rodrigo Duterte.

The allies agreed "to invigorate defence and security cooperation and ensure the alliance adapts effectively to face new and emerging challenges", a joint statement said. "I can assure you that during our conversations, the important issues related to the South China Sea were central to our conversations," US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink told a news conference.

China and the Philippines are at odds over the South China Sea, with Beijing claiming sovereignty over almost the entire area despite an international court ruling that its claims have no legal basis. The Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei have overlapping claims to parts of the sea. "We agreed on several important initiatives that demonstrate our unwavering commitment to our alliance and partnership," Philippine Foreign Undersecretary Maria Theresa Lazaro told the news conference.

The two countries, bound by a 1951 mutual defence treaty, agreed to hold talks in mid-2023

that would allow their governments to "plan ahead for and ensure more coordinated responses to potential flashpoints". They also agreed to speed up the completion of projects that allow US forces to store equipment at select Philippine military bases, as well as to identify "additional agreed locations" for the purpose.

Washington will host a "maritime dialogue" with Manila this year to identify potential joint maritime activities. Poorly armed Manila also agreed Friday to take steps to "streamline technology transfer" and develop a "roadmap for defence modernisation".

On Wednesday President Marcos expressed renewed concern over the South China Sea including tense interactions between US and Chinese warships in the area. "If something goes wrong here we are going to suffer," Marcos said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. During his 2016-2022 presidency, Duterte repeatedly made public his doubts that the United States would come to the aid of the Philippines in the event of armed conflict with China, despite their defence pact.

He worked to build ties with Beijing to bring in trade and investment, while setting aside the territorial dispute. Kritenbrink reiterated Friday what he called "America's ironclad commitment to the security of the Republic of the Philippines". — AFP



**MANILA:** Foreign Affairs Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs Theresa Lazaro (L) and US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel J. Kritenbrink (R) attend a press conference during 10th US-Philippines Bilateral Strategic Dialogue in Manila. — AFP

## Arizona dismantles shipping container wall on border

**HEREFORD:** A wall of shipping containers installed just a few months ago by the then-governor of Arizona at a \$100 million cost to US taxpayers was being dismantled Friday. Republican Doug Ducey ordered the huge line of shipping containers to be placed at the frontier between the United States and Mexico, during the final months of his administration, in what he said was a bid to stem illegal immigration.

But after being sued by Washington for putting the containers on federal land in the Coronado National Forest, Ducey—who has since been succeeded by Democrat Katie Hobbs—agreed in December to remove them. "I couldn't believe that Governor Ducey thought that it was a good idea," said Debbie McGuire, as a truck barreled down a dusty road carrying an empty container away. "It's absolutely ludicrous. To put containers that weren't going to work ever to keep anybody out," she told AFP.

"I just can't believe he thought it was a good idea. Ridiculous, and a total waste of taxpayer money." Ducey's container wall effort began in the middle of 2022, and quickly ran into opposition, with critics slamming it as a cynical political move that would damage the environment and make no difference to the number of illegal border crossings.

Opponents said the corrugated containers, which snaked like a huge cargo train for four miles (seven kilometers) through federal lands, divided an



**HEREFORD:** Workers secure one of a long row of shipping containers, stacked to create a wall between the United States and Mexico, onto a flatbed truck for removal in the Coronado National Forest near Hereford, Arizona. — AFP

important conservation area. They also pointed out that the terrain is so difficult to traverse that people traffickers have never really used it.

In practice, the double-stacked containers were ill-suited to keeping people out—their rigid shape means they didn't always line up, leaving gaping holes between boxes easily big enough for a person to fit through. In some areas, the terrain was too steep to accommodate them, and workmen had

to leave spaces. "It's just political gamesmanship," said Bill Wilson from nearby Sierra Vista, as he watched the wall being dismantled on Friday.

"It's a travesty and a waste of government money, tax money, time and effort," the 77-year-old told AFP. Arizona shares around 370 miles (600 kilometers) of border with Mexico, including environmental preservation areas, national parks, military zones, and indigenous reservations. — AFP

## Estonia comes to aid of HIV-positive Ukraine refugees

**TALLINN:** When Svitlana fled war-torn Ukraine for Estonia, she not only had to contend with all the usual challenges of being a refugee, she also had her HIV treatment to worry about. The 45-year-old, whose husband unknowingly infected her when they met, had been managing her illness for years with medication and now, in a new country, needed to ensure her supply.

"I was running out of pills... I tried to register for a doctor's appointment on my own, but the waiting list was really long," the mother-of-three told AFP. Fortunately, at the refugee centre she came across information about the Estonian Network of People Living with HIV (EHPV), an NGO offering assistance.

Svitlana had come to the right place. The organisation is well-versed in the ins and outs of the illness, having been around for nearly two decades as the country fought to rein in its transmission rate. "I called the volunteer and told them about my problem... A few days passed and they got me a doctor's appointment (and) went there with me."

"Right now, I'm on therapy I got in Estonia. I feel good, my test results are really good... My immunity is good and the viral load is zero," she said. "I'm not dangerous for society, other people. Neither in everyday life nor at work, anywhere."

The spread of HIV was once out of control in Estonia. For years the small Baltic state had the highest transmission rate within the European Union. "We had a very difficult situation, a concentrated epidemic among injecting drug users," said Lachin Aliyev, EHPV board chairman. "But in 20 years we've been able to stabilise the situation," Aliyev told AFP. — AFP

## UN highlights 'huge step backwards' for Afghan women

**UNITED NATIONS:** Apparent exemptions granted by the Taliban to harsh restrictions placed on Afghan women are not sufficient to reverse the "huge step backwards" for their rights, the United Nations said Friday as top officials wrapped up a trip to the country.

The Taliban seized power in August 2021, promising a softer version of their brutal 1996-2001 rule that was infamous for human rights abuses. But they have squeezed women out of almost all areas of public life, recently banning them from secondary and higher education, public sector work and from visiting parks and baths.

"It's very clear that what we've seen in terms of basic rights for women and girls is a huge step backwards," Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman to the UN secretary-general, told reporters. "And so having a couple of steps forwards after that is not sufficient," he said. The UN delegation — which arrived Monday and includes Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and Sima Bahous, executive secretary of UN Women — met with Taliban officials during a four-day visit to Kabul and Kandahar.

At the end of December, Afghanistan's hardline Islamist rulers banned women from working in non-governmental organizations, leading several to suspend their activities in the country. Some, however, were able to partially resume activity after receiving assurances from authorities that women would still be able to work in the health sector.

Although there have been recent exemptions for humanitarian organizations "to continue — and in some cases resume — operations," these "remain limited to few sectors and activities," a UN statement said. Deputy Secretary-General Mohammed said in the statement that: "While we recognize the important exemptions made, these restrictions present Afghan women and girls with a future that confines them in their own homes, violating their rights and depriving the communities of their services." — AFP



**WASHINGTON:** Thousands of anti-abortion activists participate in the annual "March for Life" in Washington, DC. — AFP

## US anti-abortion groups dig in for fight ahead

**WASHINGTON:** It was their first march through the US capital since the Supreme Court gave them what they had been demanding for half a century—but for anti-abortion activists gathered in Washington Friday, the mood was more dogged than triumphant.

Seven months after the nation's highest judicial body gutted federal protections for nationwide abortion access, protesters outside the conservative-led institution allowed themselves a modest victory lap—but most were focused on the fights ahead.

"We have a lot of work to do," said George Muench, a 74-year-old Catholic in a "March for Life" hat. The march began in 1974 as a challenge to Roe v. Wade, a landmark Supreme Court ruling the previous year that guaranteed the right of American

women to terminate their pregnancies.

Every January, activists from across the United States have descended upon the capital to walk to the courthouse's iconic front steps to urge the justices inside to reverse that decision. On June 24 last year they got their wish. The high court, which had lurched to the right under hardline Republican former president Donald Trump, relented—giving states the freedom to pursue their own abortion bans.

More than a dozen states immediately rushed to do exactly that. For Barbara Countryman, who has not missed a "March for Life" in 20 years, the ambience was a touch more jubilant and the crowd a little younger than in previous years.

"We are celebrating the end of Roe, but we still have to convert all people's minds," she told AFP, surrounded by college students and teenagers, many of whom had been bussed in by their Christian schools, with some brandishing banners that read: "I am the post-Roe generation."

But for 61-year-old Countryman, who regularly prays in front of clinics in her home state of Maryland, the slog is only beginning. "I'll be here every year until I die. It's never going stop—it will always be a battle," she said gravely. — AFP

## Gabon FM dies of heart attack

**LIBREVILLE:** Gabon's Foreign Minister Michael Moussa Adamo died on Friday after suffering a heart attack while waiting to go into a cabinet meeting, the government and a presidential source said. Moussa Adamo, 62, a long-standing ally of President Ali Bongo Ondimba, suffered a heart attack and died "despite efforts by specialists" to revive him, the government said in a brief statement.

He "sat down in the waiting room" just before the start of the cabinet meeting "in the presence of some of his government colleagues and began to feel unwell", a source close to the presidential palace told AFP.

He was taken to a military hospital while unconscious but died just after midday (1100 GMT), the source who spoke on condition of anonymity said. Reacting to his death, President Bongo described Moussa Adamo on Twitter as "a great diplomat, a true statesman". "To me, he was firstly a friend, loyal and faithful, on whom I have always been able to count. It's a huge loss for Gabon," he added. Moussa Adamo was born in the northeastern town of Makokou in 1961 and started out as a presenter on national television.

In 2000, he was made chief of staff for the defence minister, who at the time was Bongo. When Bongo was elected president on the death of his father Omar Bongo Ondimba in 2009, Moussa Adamo served as his special advisor. After a decade as Gabon's ambassador to the United States until 2020, he became, first, defence minister and then foreign minister in March last year.

Moussa Adamo held a master's degree in international relations and communications from Boston University. He had just been reappointed foreign minister on January 9 when Bongo appointed a new prime minister, Alain-Claude Bilie-By-Nze, in one of the frequent cabinet reshuffles in the oil-rich central African state. — AFP



# Business

SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2023

## Zain 'Best Telecom Company' and 'Best Digital Transformation Telecom Company' in Kuwait

Company recognized with two accolades from Int'l Finance Magazine in Dubai

**KUWAIT:** Zain, Kuwait's leading digital service provider, was named 'Best Telecom Company' and 'Best Digital Transformation Telecom Company' in Kuwait for the year 2022 during the annual excellence awards hosted by business magazine International Finance in Dubai.

Zain participated in the awards ceremony held in Jumeirah Emirates Hotel, attended by the Consul General of Kuwait in Dubai and the Northern Emirates Ali Salem Al-Thaidi and Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti. This is the fourth recognition from International Finance Magazine, highlighting Zain's leadership in the local market and its continuous efforts to empower digital transformation within the nation's most vital industries in both the public and private sectors. The awards come to shed more light on the company's outstanding success, innovation, and relentless pursuit of excellence to serve its customer base, the biggest in Kuwait. Zain is proud of this recognition from

International Finance Magazine, which also reflects the achievements of Kuwait's private sector organizations in contributing to national economy. This year's awards, which celebrated its 10th anniversary, honored top companies and institutions that have delivered success, innovation and excellence, as well as those that have made a vital contribution to the vibrancy of business within Kuwait and the region.

This recognition further strengthens Zain's role as a leader in the Kuwaiti private sector and reinforces the company's commitment in maintaining the values of its brand. Zain will continue its pledge to provide exclusive services to meet the needs of its customers and facilitate their personal and professional needs. Zain always aspires to new levels of excellence in all services it offers to its customers. The company affirms its continuous efforts in meeting customers' needs and aspirations to deliver its promise and offer the best services and latest technologies.



**KUWAIT:** Ali Salem Al-Thaidi presenting awards to Waleed Al-Khashti.

## In Davos, warmer days seen for world economy

**DAVOS:** An air of optimism for the global economy blew through Davos this week after fears that the war in Ukraine, an energy crisis and soaring inflation could trigger a global recession. "It is less bad than we feared a couple of months ago," IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said at the final panel discussion for the World Economic Forum in the Swiss ski resort on Friday.

Georgieva signalled that the International Monetary Fund may raise its previous forecast of 2.7 percent global growth for this year when it publishes an update at the end of the month. But she cautioned against high expectations. "Less bad doesn't quite yet mean good," Georgieva said.

"Be careful not to get on the other side of the spectrum, from being too pessimistic to being too optimistic," European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde was similarly upbeat for the eurozone economy, saying the "news has become much more positive in the last few weeks". The rhetoric has shifted from talk of a recession in the 20-nation club to "a small contraction", she said.

The ECB is expecting 0.5-percent



**DAVOS:** Netherlands' Queen Maxima speaks at the Congress centre during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on January 19, 2023. — AFP

growth in the eurozone in 2023, according to its latest forecast. "So it's not a brilliant year but it is a lot better than what we had feared," Lagarde said. A drop in energy prices that had soared following Russia's invasion of Ukraine has fuelled the optimism. A mild winter has also eased fears of gas shortages. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told Bloomberg that his country, which was heavily reliant on Russian gas

before the war, will avoid a recession that had been previously predicted for Europe's biggest economy. The world economy may also get another boost from China's decision to scrap its zero-COVID policy. Vice Premier Liu He told the WEF that the situation in his country has "comprehensively returned to normal".

Liu invited "international friends" to visit his country, which has dropped quarantine requirements for

overseas travel. Official data this week showed that the world's second-biggest economy and major driver of global growth expanded by just 3.0 percent in 2022, its weakest performance in 40 years. But Liu said the Chinese economy would "see a significant improvement" in 2023.

Lagarde said China's COVID policy shift "will kill many people" but will "also revive the economy". It will be both "positive for China" and the rest of the world, she added.

### Tech layoffs

But the world economy is not out of the woods just yet. China's economic rebound could put more pressure on inflation as demand in the country surges back. Inflation has started to ease in the United States and Europe after central banks unleashed a wave of jumbo interest rate hikes to get prices under control. Investors hope that central banks will slow their monetary tightening, but a resurgence of inflation would probably prompt the US Federal Reserve and others to maintain their headline stance. Rate increases slow economic activity as borrowing costs rise.

The US tech sector is already feeling the effects of the economic slowdown, with companies announcing tens of thousands of layoffs. Google's parent company Alphabet announced 12,000 job cuts on Friday, just days after Microsoft said it would slash 10,000 positions. — AFP

## Europeans to quiz Lebanon central bank chief Salameh

**BEIRUT:** European investigators will question Lebanon's central bank chief Riad Salameh next month as part of a probe into his and his brother's affairs, a judicial official told AFP on Friday. Investigators from France, Germany and Luxembourg heard witnesses in Beirut this week as part of the case of suspected financial misconduct including possible money laundering and embezzlement.

Salameh and his brother Raja both deny any wrongdoing.

The central bank chief, in office for three decades, is widely blamed for monetary policies that contributed to an unprecedented economic crisis in Lebanon, but he has dismissed such criticism.

"The European judges will return next month to complete their investigations with 18 financial and banking figures... including Salameh and people close to him," said the official on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to the press.

On Friday, the investigators heard former interior minister Raya El Hassan, who also chairs the board of directors of Lebanese lender Bankmed.

They had already heard evidence for more than eight hours Tuesday from Ahmad Jachi, a central bank vice governor from 2003 to 2008, as well as Marwan Kheireddine, who heads Al-Mawarid Bank.

They also questioned former vice governor Saad Andary on Monday. The bankers were asked about accounts held by Raja Salameh, as well as "money transfers to the brothers' accounts abroad", a judicial official told AFP earlier this week. Investigators also examined the central bank's ties to Forry Associates Ltd, a British Virgin Islands-registered company that listed Raja Salameh as its beneficiary.

Forry is suspected of having brokered Lebanese treasury bonds and Eurobonds at a commission, which was then allegedly transferred to Raja Salameh's bank accounts abroad.

France, Germany and Luxembourg last 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. Lebanon opened its own probe into Salameh's affairs last year, after the office of Switzerland's top prosecutor requested assistance with an investigation into more than \$300 million allegedly embezzled from the central bank with the help of his brother.

Since the financial crisis hit Lebanon in late 2019, leaving the country bankrupt, Lebanon's currency has lost more than 95 percent of its value and much of the population has been plunged into poverty. — AFP



**Riad Salameh**

## IMF: Western climate subsidies risk hitting emerging markets

**DAVOS:** The head of the IMF warned Friday that Western subsidies to combat climate change and encourage the transition to clean energy sources risked hitting the economies of the developing world.

The United States under President Joe Biden has passed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) which contains sweeping subsidies and tax cuts worth around \$370 billion for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, making it the largest-ever US program to combat climate change. The European Union is considering responding in kind amid fears that the IRA will encourage businesses to move factories and production to the United States at a time when it is trying to strengthen its industrial base.

"My biggest concern is that something that in principle is very good to accelerate the transition to the green economy by using public money to step up private investment... may not serve well the emerging markets and the developing world," IMF head Kristalina Georgieva said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. She warned that subsidies needed to be accompanied by technology transfers from the rich world to emerging countries.

"If we are to strive to get the industrialized world clean and we don't think about the emerging markets, we are all cooked," she said. Speaking alongside Georgieva, French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire defended government backing for efforts to accelerate the transition away from fossil fuels.

"The key question is not 'China first' or 'America



**DAVOS:** French Minister for the Economy and Finances Bruno Le Maire talks to the press at the Congress centre during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos on January 20, 2023. — AFP

first', or 'Europe first': the key question is climate first," he told the audience. Also speaking in Davos on Tuesday, EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen announced plans for a "sovereignty fund" and a "Net Zero Industry Act" to defend Europe's industrial base from US and Chinese industrial subsidies.

Von der Leyen said she saw "aggressive attempts to attract our industrial capacities away to China and elsewhere." She said the EU had been "working with our US friends to find solutions" to the risk of

US subsidies distorting transatlantic trade.

US climate envoy John Kerry argued that countries complaining about the act should instead try to imitate the United States—even though this would not be possible for emerging countries with smaller government budgets. "The reaction of other countries shouldn't be, 'oh my god, you shouldn't be doing that, that's putting us in an unfair position'. Do it, too. Everybody's got to do the same thing to accelerate this process even more," Kerry told a panel discussion in Davos on Tuesday. — AFP



Business



A group photo of Gulf Bank's employees during the draw.

# Gulf Bank announces Al-Asfour as its 19th Al-Danah millionaire

KUWAIT: During a wonderful evening filled with culture and entertainment at the Yarmouk Club Theater in Mishref, Gulf Bank announced Moza Abdulwahab Ali Al-Asfour, the lucky winner of its Al-Danah millionaire account's grand prize: KD 1,500,000. The winner was announced following Gulf Bank's comedic play, "A Successful Deposit" in the presence of representatives from both the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young.

The Al-Danah millionaire is one of the most rewarding savings accounts

Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, Mohammed Al-Qattan, said: "At Gulf Bank, we are always pleased to provide our customers with an exceptional and noteworthy banking experience that complements our societal role of encouraging a culture of savings: by rewarding savers with monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual draws, we hope to motivate our customers and reinforce their saving habits, encouraging others to do the same. Moreover, our draws are subject to supervision by the Ministry Commerce & Industry and Ernst &

ous channels and products designed to help customers adopt this approach.

She stated that the bank launched the 2023 calendar year under the slogan "Together with you always in the 'Year of Savings' 2023." She added that together in the year of savings, Gulf Bank and its community can cultivate hope and habits that will assist them in moving forward and achieving their dreams - after all, the journey to becoming a millionaire starts with one dinar.

### Youth empowerment

The Deputy General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, Ahmed Al-Ameer, said: "Today we enjoyed an innovative experience in announcing our newest Al-Danah millionaire, reflecting Gulf Bank's keenness to consolidate sustainability principles in society, in line with guidelines from the Central Bank of Kuwait and our goal of strengthening the relationships we have built with our customers for the past 60 years."

He pointed out that Gulf Bank is keen to support various segments of society, especially local youth people, in all its projects, services and events as part of the bank's social sustainability framework. Al-Amir pointed out that the Bank's sponsorship of the play "A Successful Deposit" constitutes support for the growing cultural movement in Kuwait and a well-versed team of local talent.

He concluded his remarks by saying, "At the end of this wonderful evening, I would like to point out that this Gulf Bank continues to make millionaires. In fact, we will be announcing our next Al-Danah millionaire on July 13, noting that the last date to deposit for the chance to enter in the semi-annual draw and win KD 1 million is March 31. The draw for the Al-Danah grand prize of KD 1.5 million will take place on January 18, 2024, with the last date to deposit for the chance to win on September 30, 2023.

### Opening an Al-Danah Account

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an Al-Danah account and deposit more than the minimum balance are automatically entered into the Al-Danah draws and are eligible to win.

To enter the upcoming draws, Gulf Bank customers can open an Al-Danah millionaire account at any time. To increase their chances of winning, account holders must either maintain the minimum deposit amount of KD 200, or increase their Al-Danah savings - the higher the balance in an account, the more chances are accumulated over time. Opening an Al-Danah millionaire account is also easier than ever, with customers able to open their accounts online through Gulf Bank's online and mobile Banking services.

The Al-Danah millionaire account is one of the oldest and most prestigious savings accounts in Kuwait, and was designed to encourage a culture of savings in society and reward customers for their commitment to saving on a regular basis. Gulf Bank encourages everyone to open an Al-Danah millionaire account to start saving and to enjoy the multitude of benefits the account has to offer.

### A multitude of benefits

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah millionaire account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty by providing loyalty chances and transfers your chances of winning from the previous year to the next year, as part of a program that rewards customers for their loyalty to Gulf Bank. Accordingly, all chances gained by existing Al-Danah clients in 2021 (from January 1 to December 31, 2021) have been transferred and added to the 2022 chances. Terms and conditions



Gulf Bank's direct sales team.

apply. The Al-Danah millionaire account provides a multitude of valuable services to its customers, including access to an exclusive Al-Danah ATM card, ideal for depositing money into their accounts at any time. Account holders can now also calculate their chances of winning the monthly, quarterly and annual draws using the Al-Danah Calculator, available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking App.

To deposit into an Al-Danah account, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches, or transfer directly through Gulf Bank's online/mobile banking services. Customers can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives, or call the

Customer Contact Center on the same number. In addition, customers can visit the dedicated Al-Danah account website to learn more about the account and its winners.

### "A Successful Deposit"

The events of the comedic play "A Successful Deposit" revolve around the importance of saving. The main character is a young man who has succeeded in gathering a good amount of money and is searching for the best way to save it. After going through various experiences and adventures starting from Kuwait to India, including a trip in a private plane, he finds his way to deposit his savings in an account that keeps his money and gives him an opportunity to become a millionaire (and perhaps the winner of

KD 1.5 million).

### The savings journey begins with a dinar

In order to complete the picture, and to consolidate the habit of saving in society, piggy banks were distributed to the audience. On the opening night, over 600 attendees received a piggy bank, encouraging them to start saving under the slogan "The Savings Journey Begins with a Dinar."

This Year's winner Moza Al-Asfour, is a role model for customer loyalty.

For nearly 50 years, Moza Al-Asfour has been a loyal Gulf Bank customer. Gulf Bank is keen on elevating customer satisfaction and strives continuously to provide a very special customer experience under the slogan "Always With You."



The winner Moza Al-Asfour announced.

in Kuwait, with its periodic draws that have been creating millionaires since its launch in 1998. Gulf Bank proudly creates two millionaires a year, having announced its first millionaire winner of the year last July.

For the seventeenth year in a row, the Al-Danah millionaire account is proud to have created two millionaires a year. Gulf Bank's Al-Danah millionaire account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1,000,000 and a grand draw prize of KD 1,500,000.

As part of its ongoing support for local youth, and within the framework of the activities Gulf Bank has planned for 2023, the "Year of Savings", Gulf

Young, one of the largest international auditing firms."

He added: "At Gulf Bank, we are keen to provide the best services and products to our esteemed customers, as we strive to continuously increase our customer satisfaction levels. Customer satisfaction was our main motivation for adjusting the new draw structure for the Al-Danah account, and continues to be the main driving factor behind our periodic launches of various products and services that are characterized by growth, simplicity and innovation, as we continue to exceed the requirements and needs of our customers. Our team continues to pay close attention to the smallest of details in keeping with developments in the local and international banking market as we continue to consolidate



Najla Aleisa and Ahmed Al-Ameer in a souvenir photo.



Mohammed Al-Qattan speaking to the media.

Bank announced the winner of its grand Al-Danah millionaire account draw prize at the end of the play "A Successful Deposit." The play highlights a group of prominent young artistic talents who will be performing in the presence of popular public and economic figures in the country; the play is also scheduled to run for 10 consecutive days.

### 2025 strategy

On this occasion, the General Manager of Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, Mohammed Al-Qattan, said: "We would like to congratulate Moza Abdulwahab Ali Al-Asfour, the winner of the Al-Danah millionaire account's grand prize. We would also like to wish the rest of our customers better luck in our future draws - remember, as an Al-Danah client, you will have the opportunity in 2023 to become an Al-Danah millionaire, with a chance to win KD 1 million or even KD 1.5 million."

On this occasion, the General

Gulf Bank's leading position as the Kuwaiti Bank of the Future."

### 2023: "Year of Savings"

For her part, the Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking - Marketing Department at Gulf Bank, Najla Aleisa, said: "We are delighted to witness the joy of our newest Al-Danah millionaire, Moza Abdulwahab Ali Al-Asfour and excited to have announced our grand prize winner at the opening night of the play 'A Successful Deposit,' which is scheduled to run for 10 consecutive days."

She pointed out that Gulf Bank was keen to hold the Al-Danah millionaire draw in a completely novel way in 2023, which the Bank has dubbed the "Year of Savings," through a comedic play that encourages saving habits in society, and is the first of many activities Gulf Bank has planned for the year. Aleisa added that Gulf Bank intends to focus on launching multiple activities and events that are in line with this direction, and introduce vari-

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## Business

## KAMCO Invest Report

# Crude oil reaches \$80/b levels after a poor start to the year

## OPEC production to see spike; China import quotas boost demand

**KUWAIT:** After a rocky start to the new year 2023, crude oil prices witnessed consistent gains during the second week followed by a volatile third week. The first week of the year saw prices once again go below the \$80/b mark resulting in the biggest weekly decline in Brent future prices in four weeks. The decline was led by growing fears of an economic slowdown.

The gains during the second week, however, came after several data points indicated a slowdown in US inflation rates in the near-term as well as higher demand from China. A softening is also eyed as economies try to dodge a full-blown recession during the year. The sudden removal of most of the zero-COVID measures in China resulted in surging new cases; however, fears receded after counter measures were undertaken by the government.

Moreover, a bigger boost to demand came from the latest import quotas released by the Chinese government. The country in its latest quotas permitted a total of 111.82 million metric tons of imports from 44 non-state owned refiners and traders, according to a report from Bloomberg. Aggregate import quotas this year stood at 132 million metric tons of crude imports as against 109 million metric tons at this time last year. Mobility is also set to improve in China that is expected to support crude oil demand from Q2-2023 onwards. The gain in prices last week came despite the latest crude oil inventory report showing significant build-up in stocks in the US.

The inventory report from the US EIA showed a steep jump in inventories last week by 19 million barrels, the third-biggest build in weekly records according to Bloomberg, to reach 439.6 million barrels. This was also the third consecutive week of inventory increase and fourth increase over the last five weeks. The increase reflected higher crude oil production in the US as well as higher imports. That said, the resilience in crude oil prices showed that the higher inventory levels were already priced in after the cold weather disrupted refinery opera-

tions on the US Gulf Coast.

On the supply front, US crude output increased for the second consecutive week by 100 tb/d to reach 12.2 mb/d for the week ended 6-January-2023. On the other hand, oil rig count dropped for the second consecutive week and for the fourth time in the last five weeks. A report from Bloomberg showed that publicly traded E&P companies are adding oil rigs in shale patch while private companies have taken a step back. Oil production in the OPEC regained the 29 mb/d mark last month following higher production mainly in Nigeria. Meanwhile, after imposing a price cap of \$60/b on Russian crude oil, US, EU and their G7 allies are now preparing fresh sanctions on refined petroleum products from Russia.

These sanctions are expected to come into effect on 5-February-2023 and are expected to have a greater impact on Russian economy vs. the muted impact from the crude oil price caps. Strategies like releasing oil from the strategic petroleum reserve by the US and to some smaller extent by other importers had only a minimal and temporary impact on oil prices. Moreover, production disruptions and outages at some key producers resulted in compliance levels of over 100 percent for almost the entire period of the OPEC+ production agreement.

The latest data from Refinitiv showed OPEC compliance to the quotas at over 160 percent mainly led by a fall in production in African crude oil producers. Average OPEC crude oil production was up for the second consecutive year in 2022 to reach 28.9 mb/d, according to OPEC secondary sources. The y-o-y gain was one of the highest on record at 2.5 mb/d vs. 2021 production. This was also the highest average production rate since 2019. Saudi Arabia showed the biggest increase in crude oil production during the year with an average production rate of 10.5 mb/d as compared to 9.1 mb/d reported last year, an increase of 15.5 percent or 1.4 mb/d. Iraq was next with a production growth of 0.4 mb/d to reach an average of

4.45 mb/d followed by UAE and Kuwait with growth of 0.34 mb/d and 0.3 mb/d to an average of 3.1 mb/d and 2.7 mb/d, respectively.

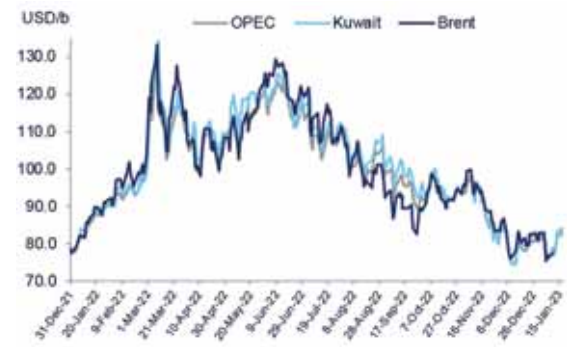
On the other hand, Nigeria showed the biggest decline in production during the year with average production of 1.2 mb/d in 2022 as compared to 1.4 mb/d during 2021. The decline highlighted persistent theft and disruption at oil facilities in Nigeria.

Expectations for 2023 show an increase in OPEC production but would mainly be driven by the trend in oil prices. In terms of market share, OPEC increased its share in global oil market marginally to 28.5 percent during December-2022 as compared to a share of 28.3 percent at the end of 2021. However, with the minimal growth in oil production in the US as well as expectations of a controlled capital expenditure by oil majors in the US, the increase in oil production in the US is expected to be limited as compared to the growth seen during the pre-pandemic years. On the other hand, the spare capacity in the OPEC as well as plans for adding new oil rigs in the OPEC should support higher production and an increase in market share this year.

Oil prices continued to remain volatile at the start of 2023 and went below the \$80/b mark after steep declines on the first two consecutive days at the start of the year that resulted in a weekly decline of 8.5 percent during the first week of the year.

The decline was led by fears of an economic slowdown after several warnings of a recession in 2023 due to a slowdown in the US, the EU and China. The latest PMI figure for China came in at 47.0 points in December-2022, the lowest since February-2020. The PMI for the US also came in at below the growth mark of 50 points for two consecutive months at 48.4 in December-2022 as compared to 49.0 during November-2022.

However, the second week of the year saw hopes of higher demand from China backed by the generous import quotas announced by the government. The country opening up borders for travel



also supported sentiments in the oil market. Moreover, indications that inflation has peaked also helped markets across the globe, including the oil market, that helped Brent crude futures to regain the \$80/b mark to reach \$85.0/b on 18-January-2023. The most recent y-o-y inflation in the US came in at 6.5 percent for December-2022, the lowest reading since October-2021.

Core inflation, excluding food and energy, was up 5.7 percent during the month. The OPEC kept its world oil demand estimates for 2022 unchanged in its latest monthly report. The agency expects demand to have grown by 2.5 mb/d last year to an average of 99.55 mb/d. However, oil demand data for Q3-2022 was lowered in OPEC's latest estimates due to a demand decline in China due to lower mobility and manufacturing activity led by COVID-19 policies. A slight slowdown in demand in OECD countries also resulted in down revisions that were fully offset by upward revision to demand for non-OECD countries outside of China led by better economic growth. For 2023, world oil demand growth forecast was also kept unchanged at 2.2 mb/d to average at 101.77 mb/d. However, upward revisions were made to demand from China on the back of its reopening from the Covid-19 restrictions that were offset by downward revisions to other regions reflecting economic challenges that are likely to weigh on oil demand.

## Global stocks end volatile week on positive note

**NEW YORK:** Stock markets rebounded on Friday after a rocky week dominated by uncertainty over whether the global economy will suffer recession this year as central bankers continue to address inflation. Major indices in New York, which have been under pressure most of this week, enjoyed a buoyant session, led by tech shares following strong Netflix subscription figures.

The streaming giant reported lower quarterly profits, but Netflix shares surged 8.5 percent after subscriber figures topped analyst estimates, as hits such as "Wednesday" and "Harry & Meghan" drew in new viewers. Analysts also cited comments from Federal Reserve Governor Christopher Waller endorsing a 25-basis point interest increase at the Fed's next meeting, smaller than other recent hikes. "After four or five days of down markets, investors probably feel that most of the bad news is already out and perhaps the selling was overdone," said Jack Ablin of Cresset Capital. All three major US indices rose, with the Nasdaq leading with a 2.7 percent jump.

The gains in New York followed earlier up sessions in Asia and Europe. "Having seen such a strong start to the year, there was always the probability that we'd see a little bit of profit taking," said market analyst Michael Hewson at CMC Markets. "However, that doesn't mean that the ... optimism that has been the hallmark of this early year rebound is evaporating, and that we might start to see a sharp move lower."

On currency markets, the yen retreated against the dollar, even as data showed Japanese inflation hit a four-decade high. Analysts are not convinced that despite rising prices, the Bank of Japan will start to raise interest rates. Oil prices meanwhile extended Thursday's gains as investors focused on the recovery in demand from China. Suggestions that the country's COVID infections may have peaked added to the optimism among commodity traders. "The overarching concerns of a global slowdown remain, even though ... investors are still pinning their hopes on a significant boost from the reopening in China," noted Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor.

"This possible division of prospects between Asian and other economies is propping up Chinese markets in particular, albeit amid a rocky start to the year." Google's parent company Alphabet on Friday announced plans to axe about 12,000 jobs worldwide, propelling shares up by nearly six percent. The move came a day after Microsoft said it would reduce staff numbers by 10,000 in the coming months. Similar layoffs by Facebook owner Meta, Amazon and Twitter have also been announced as the previously unassailable tech sector faces a major economic downturn.—AFP

## UK retail sales slide on cost of living crisis

**LONDON:** UK retail sales sank over the key Christmas trading period as consumers tightened belts in a cost-of-living crisis sparked by sky-high inflation, official data showed Friday. Sales by volume dropped one percent in December, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

That marked a second monthly decline in a row after a drop of 0.5 percent in November, the ONS said. "Retail sales dropped again in December, with feedback suggesting consumers cut back on their Christmas shopping due to affordability concerns," said Heather Bovill, ONS deputy director for surveys and economic indicators.

Shoppers also curbed expenditure last month as wintry weather sparked soaring energy bills, while many had made their festive food purchases in November. "Even Santa has bills to pay and when the household budget is feeling uncomfortably tight the only choice available is to spend less," said AJ Bell analyst Danni Hewson. "For most people the fact the inflation number is falling doesn't mean anything."

The outlook darkened further Friday as a key survey showed consumer confidence collapsing close to a near-record low. GfK's Consumer Confidence Index dropped three points in January to minus 45, close to the historic nadir struck in September. Official data on Wednesday showed UK annual inflation slowed slightly to 10.5 percent in December.

However, the rate remains close to a four-decade

## Big Tech unveils new wave of job-slashing

**MOUNTAIN VIEW:** Google's announcement Friday it would slash nearly 12,000 jobs worldwide is the latest in a series of mass layoffs in the once-unassailable tech sector, which is facing a huge downturn.

**Here are the others:**

### Amazon

The online retail giant said on January 5 it would cut more than 18,000 jobs from its workforce, citing "the uncertain economy" and the fact it had "hired rapidly" during the pandemic. During COVID, Amazon had gone on a hiring spree to meet an explosion in demand for deliveries, doubling its global staff between the beginning of 2020 and start of 2022.

It was the largest among the recent workforce reductions in the US tech sector and the biggest for the Seattle-based company. At the end of September, the group had 1.54 million employees worldwide.

### Meta

In what Mark Zuckerberg called "the most difficult changes we've made in Meta's history," the CEO of the company that owns Facebook,



**BOLTON:** A pedestrian wheels a shopper past a shop advertising a closing-down sale in Bolton, north west England on January 20, 2023. —AFP

high that is causing mass strikes by workers, including nurses, teachers and the railway sector as they fight for wage increases to keep pace with inflation.

Energy bills to fall?

Inflation has galloped to its highest level in decades around the world, propelled by surging energy bills after key gas producer Russia invaded Ukraine almost one year ago.

Yet a recent drop in wholesale energy costs has fuelled hope of falling domestic electricity and gas bills this year, soothing inflationary worries in Britain and elsewhere. Bank of England (BoE) gov-

ernor Andrew Bailey on Thursday forecast that inflation would fall "quite rapidly" this year—and that "a corner has been turned" with the December slowdown from 10.7 percent in November.

"That has a lot to do with energy" costs dropping, Bailey told the Business Live website. The UK government led by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is partially subsidizing domestic energy bills but this support ends in March. The government believes the UK economy has already entered recession on fallout from rampant consumer price increases.—AFP

Instagram and WhatsApp announced in November a cut of 11,000 jobs, or some 13 percent of staff. Zuckerberg told his 87,000-strong employees he had expected the boost in e-commerce and online activity during the pandemic to continue, but admitted he had been wrong.

Meta's poor performance in 2022 sent its share price plummeting, as well as a sharp drop in sales and stagnation in its user numbers.

### Microsoft

On January 18, Microsoft announced it would lay off 10,000 employees in the coming months. The cuts were "in response to macroeconomic conditions and changing customer priorities," the maker of the Windows operating system said in a US regulatory filing. The plan followed two smaller rounds of layoffs in 2022, one in July affecting less than one percent of the workforce and a second in October targeting under 1,000 people.

Microsoft, which went on a major hiring spree during the pandemic to meet a surge in demand for its software and cloud computing services, currently has 221,000 employees, including 122,000 in the United States, according to its website.

### Twitter

Just a week after his blockbuster takeover, Elon Musk sacked half of Twitter's 7,500-strong staff in November as part of his major overhaul of the troubled company. Workers around the world were shown the door and took to Twitter to vent their frustration or disbelief and say good-bye to one of Silicon Valley's most iconic companies. The cull is



**NEW YORK:** In this file photo taken on October 15, 2019, a woman holds the Google Pixel 4 phone during a Google product launch event in New York City. —AFP

part of Musk's push to find ways to pay for the mammoth \$44 billion deal for which he took on billions of dollars in debt.

### Snap

At the end of August, Snapchat's parent company Snap let go about 20 percent of its employees, around 1,200 people, in a bid by the photo-centric messaging app to dig itself out amid competition and revenue woes. While its user numbers continue to grow — 363 million daily users in October—it is saddled by diminishing profits and competition from other apps, such as TikTok. —AFP



## Business

# Yellen warns of 'financial crisis' if US defaults on payments

## US takes 'extraordinary' steps to avoid default



DAKAR: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen delivers a speech at the Goree-landing stage during a visit on Goree Island off the coast of the city of Dakar on January 21, 2023. — AFP

WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned Friday that the United States could see a recession and "cause a global financial crisis" if it defaults on payments, as Congress heads toward a clash over raising the debt limit.

Yellen's comments to CNN in Senegal come as the US Treasury started taking "extraordinary measures" this week to avert a default as the country reached its \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling. But such tools can only help for a limited time, likely no longer than six months, according to the Treasury. Yellen noted that the actual day on which the Treasury would no longer be able to use these measures is "quite uncertain," and could come as early as June.

If the measures were exhausted and Congress fails to raise the debt limit, the US could see a downgrading of its debt "at minimum," Yellen said. "If that happened, our borrowing costs would increase, and every American would see that their borrowing costs would increase as well," she added.

"On top of that, a failure to make payments that are due, whether it's to bondholders or to social security recipients, or to our military, would undoubtedly cause a recession in the US economy and could cause a global financial crisis," Yellen said. This would also undermine the role of the dollar as a reserve currency used in transactions globally. The world's biggest economy is bracing for a drawn out battle in Congress, as Republicans threaten to block the usual annual rubber stamping of a rise in the debt ceiling. With new

control over the US House after last year's midterm elections, Republicans want Democratic President Joe Biden to agree to slash government spending, which they view as having risen to unsustainable heights. But the White House said cuts of the size Republicans demand would have to come from politically sensitive social security and military spending programs, or involve major new taxes. It added that Biden would not negotiate with hardline Republicans over their "risky and dangerous" opposition to increased borrowing for programs Congress already authorized.

JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon echoed that concern Thursday, saying "we should never question the creditworthiness of the United States government." "That is sacrosanct," he said in an interview with CNBC.

### 'Risky and dangerous'

The world's biggest economy is bracing for a drawn out battle in Congress, as Republicans threaten to block the usual annual rubber stamping of a rise in the so-called debt ceiling. With new control over the US House after last year's midterm elections, Republicans want Democratic President Joe Biden to agree to slash government spending, which they view as having risen to unsustainable heights. "Unchecked spending will have dire consequences," said House Republican Jason Smith, the new chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, in a statement.

But the White House said cuts of the size

Republicans demand would have to come from politically sensitive social security and military spending programs, or involve major new taxes. It added that Biden would not negotiate with hardline Republicans over their "risky and dangerous" opposition to increased borrowing for programs Congress already authorized.

"Republicans are creating a crisis that need not exist," said Congressman Brendan Boyle, top Democrat on the House Budget Committee. Raising or suspending the debt limit does not authorize new spending or cost taxpayers money, Yellen noted last week.

Conversely, "if the debt limit were not raised, the amount of spending cuts or tax increases that would be required would equal \$1.5 trillion this year" or more in the next decade, said Leonard Burman and William Gale of the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. They added that "a desire to change the course of fiscal policy should be manifested in new congressional initiatives" rather than a refusal to pay bills arising from earlier action.

### 'Rancorous politics'

The Treasury Department said it would turn to resources from two funds for retirees as it starts "extraordinary measures." It will not fully invest a portion of the Civil Service Retirement and Disability Fund (CSRDF), with a "debt issuance suspension period" to last until early June. — AFP

## Biden ready to discuss debt ceiling with Republican leader

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy both indicated Friday they are willing to discuss raising the US debt ceiling, as Democratic and Republican lawmakers head toward a high-stakes clash over raising the nation's borrowing limit. Their comments come one day after the US Treasury Department began taking "extraordinary measures" to help temporarily reduce the amount of outstanding debt subject to the limit, currently set at \$31.4 trillion, and avoid defaulting on its payments.

Republicans, who took control of the House of Representatives earlier this month, have threatened to block the usual annual rubber stamping of a rise in the limit. But White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre insisted in a statement Friday that "raising the debt ceiling is not a negotiation," and that Biden wants to talk with Republican McCarthy on a "range of issues" as the speaker begins his tenure.

Raising the debt ceiling "is an obligation of this country and its leaders to avoid economic chaos," Jean-Pierre said. "Congress has always done it, and the president expects them to do their duty once again," she added.

"That is not negotiable."

Earlier Friday, McCarthy indicated in a tweet that he is open to raising the debt limit as part of talks on spending cuts. "President Biden: I accept your invitation to sit down and discuss a responsible debt ceiling increase to address irresponsible government spending," he posted.

"I look forward to our meeting," Jean-Pierre said the meeting would touch on several economic topics, including Democrat Biden's plans to cut the nation's budget deficit "by making the wealthy and big corporations pay their fair share," rather than by slashing politically sensitive social spending. "We are going to have a clear debate on two different visions for the country—one that cuts Social Security, and one that protects it—and the president is happy to discuss that with the speaker," she said in the statement. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned earlier in the day that the United States could trigger a "global financial crisis" if it defaults on debt payments, causing an increase in borrowing costs and undermining the role of the dollar as an international reserve currency.

"I respectfully urge Congress to act promptly to protect the full faith and credit of the United States," she wrote in a letter to congressional leadership Thursday. Debates surrounding spending and raising the debt ceiling have grown increasingly contentious in recent years, though Congress has acted 78 times to permanently or temporarily deal with the limit since 1960, under both Republican and Democratic presidents. — AFP

## US, Africa histories 'intimately connected' by slavery: Yellen

DAKAR: Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Saturday the histories of the United States and Africa were "intimately connected" by the "tragedy" of slavery, as Washington seeks to strengthen relations with the continent. Speaking at Goree Island off the Senegalese capital of Dakar, the largest slave trading centre on the African coast, Yellen voiced "an overwhelming sense of sadness and pain thinking about those stolen from their families."

"In both Africa and the United States, even as we have made tremendous strides, we are still living with the brutal consequences of the trans-Atlantic

slave trade," she said alongside Goree's Mayor Augustin Senghor. "Ultimately, Goree Island reminds us that the histories of Africa and America are intimately connected," she added.

"What I take from this place is the importance of redoubling our commitment to fight for our shared values and principles wherever they are threatened—in the United States, in Africa, and around the world. We have more work to do." Yellen arrived in Senegal on Friday, the first stop on a visit aimed at forging a new "mutually beneficial" economic strategy toward Africa, where countries are being aggressively courted by Russia and China.

"A prosperous continent won't just benefit Africa—it will help to strengthen the American and global economies as well," she said Friday after meeting officials including Senegal's President Macky Sall, who is also chairman of the African Union. Yellen is scheduled to travel to Zambia on Sunday, and later to South Africa. — AFP



## US home sales slump for 11th month

WASHINGTON: Sales of existing homes in the United States have fallen for the 11th straight month, with the past year logging the biggest annual drop since 2008, according to industry data released Friday. The slide came as a rough period of limited inventory and high mortgage rates persisted, said the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

The interest-sensitive property sector has been reeling as the Federal Reserve embarked on an aggressive campaign to rein in decades-high inflation. As the Fed raised the benchmark lending rate seven times last year to cool the economy, borrowing costs went up-pricing many buyers out of the key housing market. Over five million existing homes were sold last year, falling 17.8 percent from 2021 in the biggest decline since the Great Recession period, said NAR chief economist Lawrence Yun.

"December was another difficult month for buyers, who continue to face limited inventory and high mortgage rates," Yun added. Sales of all types of homes and condos slipped 1.5 percent from November to December, hitting a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 4.0 million, the NAR said.

This was the weakest performance since

November 2010, when the US was in a housing crisis, Yun told reporters. While December's annual rate was better than expected, sales were still 34 percent down from December 2021.

But Yun expects numbers will pick up soon as mortgage rates have "markedly declined" after peaking in late 2022. The 30-year fixed-rate mortgage, a popular option, averaged around 6.2 percent as of mid-January, according to home loan finance company Freddie Mac.

This was lower than in December, although still significantly higher than the rate a year ago.

Home prices, however, were "very solid," said Yun. The median home price across housing types was \$366,900, also above the year-ago period and the highest median price for December on record.

Three of four major regions in the country logged declines in sales, with sales in the West remaining unchanged, said the NAR. "Sales now likely are very close to bottoming," said Ian Shepherdson and Kieran Clancy of Pantheon Macroeconomics in a report.

"The housing market has had to adjust, painfully, to a huge surge in mortgage rates," the report said.

Existing home sales make up the vast majority of the US real estate market.

Rubeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics added that although prices are moving in the right direction, they remain well above pre-pandemic levels. "Overall, affordability issues are a key constraint," she said. But Nancy Vanden Houten of Oxford Economics expects home sales will "start a modest recovery towards year-end." — AFP

## Carrefour Kuwait hosts students of Hope School for Special Needs

KUWAIT: Carrefour, owned and operated by Majid Al-Futtaim Retail in Kuwait, hosted students of the Hope School for Special Needs on 19 January for an apprenticeship day that brought them into stores to build their skills and grow their confidence.

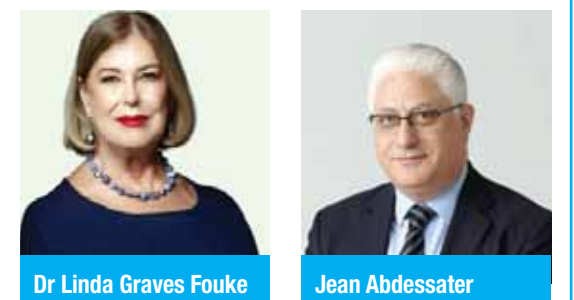
Hosted at hypermarket within Kuwait City's 360 Mall, the apprenticeship day aimed to underline Carrefour's commitment to talentism and diversity. The unique program enhanced the participants' knowledge of the retail industry, career opportunities and necessary skills to succeed.

Jean Abdessater, Head of Commercial and Operation Services at Carrefour Kuwait, commented: "The well-being of communities starts by taking care of each and every individual, and this fact is what inspires every day at Carrefour. The students of Hope School were outstanding, and made it clear that despite the challenges we may face, each of us has an important role to play in the community. I would like to thank Hope School for this collaboration, as well as the Carrefour team members who made this happen - demonstrating our heart-felt, inclusive approach to business."

9 children had the chance to perform three main duties at Carrefour. The first task was to bag items for customers, helping support oral comprehension, physical coordination, interaction, and knowledge. Here, children also learned the importance of choosing sustainable bags offered at Carrefour rather than regular plastic bags.

The second task was as a packer, which provided knowledge of industry safety regulations and encouraged children to become more attentive to details. The task also helped to build self-independence, motivation, and oral and written communication skills. Children were tasked with keeping products on shelves separated, organized, and rotated.

The third task saw students become Carrefour ambassadors, interacting with customers and introducing them to the elevated shopping experience offered at Carrefour stores. Students highlighted the Scan & Go



Dr Linda Graves Fouke

Jean Abdessater

service, which helps customers skip the queue and save time by scanning as they shop, for purchasing through the MAFCarrefour application or instantly at the cash counters.

Additionally, students supported customers with the Valet Trolley service, which saves customers time by having their items delivered direct to their doorstep. The activity helped students understand the importance of technology in running a business, as well as building communication skills, responsibility, and patience.

On behalf of Hope School for Special Needs, Dr Linda Graves Fouke, the School Principal, commented: "HOPE school is very grateful for this opportunity for our students to experience real-world tasks and responsibilities in such a popular and diverse retail environment as Carrefour. One of HOPE school's primary missions is to promote Awareness, Acceptance and Appreciation of our students' unique abilities. I certainly believe that has been achieved with today's collaboration. Carrefour has combined fun and active learning with on-site training to engage our students in meaningful real-world experiences. Thank you, Team Carrefour." The collaboration with

Hope School underlines Carrefour's commitment to making a difference in the communities in which it operates. The event highlighted the importance of individual contributions in the creation of a society that prioritizes inclusion and equal opportunity.





## Lifestyle | Features



BANGKOK: Lion dancers perform on the eve of lunar new year in the Chinatown area of Bangkok on January 21, 2023. — AFP photos



## BUSTLING WUHAN MARKETS CELEBRATE NEW YEAR BUT GRIEF REMAINS

Shoppers cradled huge bouquets at Wuhan's bustling flower market on Lunar New Year's Eve on Saturday, three years after a once-mysterious virus plunged the Chinese city into a terrifying lockdown. But while many stock up on colourful flowers to celebrate the Spring Festival and the arrival of the Year of the Rabbit, others have a more sombre reason: To mourn loved ones lost to COVID-19 in the recent wave.

"I have friends and family who passed away during this time," 54-year-old Mr Zhang told AFP clutching a bunch of chrysanthemums, which symbolise grief in Chinese culture. Zhang, who did not give his full name, explained that the New Year's Eve custom in Hubei province, of which Wuhan is the capital, is to visit the homes of people who recently died to offer flowers and burn incense. The Beijing government lifted its stringent zero-Covid policy in December but a surge in infections has since ripped through the country, killing thousands.

Wuhan, a metropolis on the banks of the Yangtze River now synonymous with Covid, reported the first cases in late 2019 of what was then a killer virus. Authorities imposed a strict shutdown just two days before the Year of the Rat in late January 2020 to stop the spread of the virus.

Deprived of New Year's Eve festivities, its 11 million inhabitants were cut off from the world for 76 days while Wuhan



Children watch a lion dance performance at a school to welcome the upcoming Lunar New Year of the Rabbit in Solo, Central Java.

became the epicentre of an epidemic that inexorably became global.

### 'I love Wuhan'

On Saturday, a few hours before New Year's Eve 2023, the city was seemingly back to normal and gearing up for the festival that is the most important family gathering of the year. Multicoloured lanterns and pennants adorned the city's Jiangnan com-

mercial district and a banner with a heart read "I love Wuhan".

An elderly man struggled to pedal his bicycle loaded with packages and food, while a couple with a toddler squeezed on to a scooter on their way back from the shops. "Of course it's way better after opening up," Ms Zhu told AFP as she bought decorative flowers.

"Now, since everyone has had COVID



People pray at a monastery ahead of the lunar new year in the Chinatown area of Jakarta.

already, we can properly have a good Chinese New Year. So that makes us quite happy." Business is finally back on track again for flower sellers after years of struggles. "At the start of the year with COVID, we had no business," said Ms Liu, a tradeswoman in her sixties.

"Now that we've reopened, we have a bit more business." Ms Tao, another vendor, was putting the finishing touches on a

floral arrangement. "During COVID, there were very few people buying flowers but these few years many people have died from COVID, so our sales for chrysanthemums have been pretty high," she said. "We didn't sell any flowers we had during the lockdown that year of Covid. We threw them all away." — AFP

## Brooke Shields describes rape in Sundance documentary

Brooke Shields revealed she was raped as a young Hollywood actress in new documentary "Pretty Baby: Brooke Shields," which premiered on day two of the Sundance film festival Friday. The former supermodel did not reveal the identity of her attacker, but said she met with the man — someone she already knew — soon after she graduated college, believing it was a work meeting to discuss casting her in a new movie.

He took her back to his hotel, claiming he would call her a taxi from his room. He instead disappeared to the bathroom before returning naked and assaulting her, she said. "I didn't fight that much... I just absolutely froze," Shields recalled in the documentary.



Brooke Shields attends the 2023 Sundance Film Festival "Pretty Baby: Brooke Shields" Premiere at Eccles Center Theatre in Park City, Utah. — AFP

"I thought that my one 'no' should have been enough. And I just thought 'stay alive and get out.'" After the incident, Shields recalled phoning her friend and security head Gavin de Becker, who told her: "That's rape." She replied "I'm not willing to believe that," and has not spoken of the incident publicly until now.

The revelation — which echoes #MeToo revelations by prominent and lesser-known Hollywood actresses in recent years — is one of several shocking moments in the film, which will be released on the Hulu streaming platform in two parts.

Part one examines the intense sexualization Shields experienced as a young girl, including a provocative nude photoshoot at age 10, and her appearance as a child prostitute in the film "Pretty Baby" at age 11.

The documentary shows a young Shields being asked lascivious questions by much older male chat show hosts about her roles in movies such as "The Blue Lagoon" and "Endless Love," and the series of controversial Calvin Klein jeans commercials she starred in.

After experiencing global fame as a teenager, Shields attended university at Princeton, and initially struggled to find acting roles again after she graduated — leading to the meeting with her alleged rapist.

### 'Perseverance'

"My personal message is perseverance, and not allowing yourself to become a victim to a society or an industry," she told AFP ahead of the film's premiere at the festival in Utah. "I'm proud of how I kept learning, kept growing, kept striving and kept loving what I do," Shields said.

The movie, which earned Shields a standing ovation at Sundance, also chronicles the media's later obsession with her virginity, her mother's alcoholism, and her first marriage to tennis star Andre Agassi.

It features several of Shields' famous friends including Lionel Richie, Laura Linney and Drew Barrymore. Co-founded by Robert Redford, Sundance is a key launching pad for independent movies and documentaries. Also on Thursday was the premiere of "Justice," a surprise late addition to the festival line-up, which explores the sexual misconduct allegations against Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

The first documentary from "The Bourne Identity" director Doug Liman, it features testimony from Deborah Ramirez, one of Kavanaugh's accusers and a former Yale classmate. It also includes audio of another classmate, who said he saw Kavanaugh expose himself to a different, "extremely drunk" woman student at another party, but whose account was only reported in US media months after Kavanaugh's polarizing 2018 Senate confirmation hearing. The woman, who is not named, has said she does not remember the incident. "This was the kind of movie where people are terrified" to speak out, Liman said. — AFP

## 'Aquaman' warns Sundance of deep-sea mining peril

He is best known as hunky, sea-dwelling superhero "Aquaman," but actor Jason Momoa brought a stark and sober warning about the perils of deep-sea mining to the Sundance film festival on Friday. The Hawaiian-born A-lister narrates "Deep Rising," a new documentary about the frenzied efforts by resource-hungry corporations to scrape valuable metals from vast swathes of the Pacific floor.

Supporters of deep-sea mining claim that pellets of nickel and cobalt — used in electric car batteries — can be conveniently scooped off the seabed, helping reduce our fossil fuel reliance. But conservation groups and scientists fear this could devastate poorly understood marine systems that play a crucial role in regulating the climate, and some nations have called for bans.

"There's moments where I cried and got emotional" narrating the film, Momoa told AFP, before its world premiere at the festival in Utah. "It's very important, using your power for good. It's all the things I'm passionate about," added the actor, who took marine biology courses as a student, and is a UN Environment Program advocate for the oceans.

The documentary follows key players in the fledgling industry including The Metals Company, a Canadian group pushing to mine the Clarion Clipperton Zone — a vast expanse of seafloor near Hawaii. The film goes behind-the-scenes as its chief executive Gerard Barron courts wealthy investors with promises that little harm will be done to "the most barren, desolate part of the planet," in contrast to the devastation that ongoing mining is causing rainforests.

But "Deep Rising" director Matthieu Rytz told AFP that "we know so little" about the real risk to the deep ocean. "Extraction on the seafloor, it's just a rush, because we don't have enough science to really understand what's happening there," he said.



(L-R) Darryl Yeo, Junxiang Huang, Bradley Liew, Bianca Balbuena Liew, Jasmine Curtis-Smith, Kenneth Dagatan, Beauty Gonzalez and Russell Morton attend the 2023 Sundance Film Festival "In My Mother's Skin" Premiere at Egyptian Theatre in Park City, Utah.



Jason Momoa, Sebastien Lepinard, Julie Lepinard, Director Matthieu Rytz and Annie Roney attend the 2023 Sundance Film Festival "Deep Rising" Premiere at The Ray Theatre in Park City, Utah. — AFP photos

### 'The new oil'

Still, The Metals Company has said it expects to be mining 10 million tons of material from the ocean floor every year, starting in 2025. And it is just one of about 20 research institutes or corporations that hold ocean exploration contracts, awaiting the go-ahead to begin commercial-scale mining.

Rytz's film argues that the energy crisis has no "silver bullet," and that the brewing race to harvest critical metals is not a solution but "the new oil," and could trigger future resource wars. It shows meetings of the International Seabed Authority, described by Rytz as an "obscure room in Kingston, Jamaica" where delegates decide "the future of 65 percent of the planet's surface."

"This is beyond national jurisdiction. It's the high seas," said Rytz. "It belongs to all of us or none of us." Rytz speaks in the film with scientists who argue that alternative clean, more abundant energy sources such as hydrogen should be explored for car engines, or that transport options such as high-speed rail should be expanded.

"We don't need these metals in the first place," he said. "The places we're going to be mining, it's total damage. There's no half damage. It's like clear-cutting a rainforest." For Momoa watching the film, "you're supposed to question things. You're supposed to sit down and have breakfast, talk about stuff and go, 'We need to rethink everything.'" — AFP



Sports

# LA Lakers rally to stun Grizzlies as short-handed Warriors shock Cavs

LOS ANGELES: Dennis Schroder grabbed a steal and drove for the go-ahead basket with 7.6 seconds left on Friday as the Los Angeles Lakers edged Memphis 122-121 to end the Grizzlies' 11-game NBA winning streak. Russell Westbrook led Los Angeles with 29 points off the bench and superstar LeBron James added 23 for a Lakers team that has struggled to find consistency amid injuries - including the foot trouble sidelining Anthony Davis.

But it was German guard Schroder who starred late, serenely draining a pair of free throws to pull the Lakers within one - at 120-119 - with 13.2 seconds left. On Memphis' ensuing possession he poked the ball away from Desmond Bane and raced up the court with it for a layup. Fouled on the play, he made the free throw to put the Lakers up 122-120. "I just made a play," Schroder told broadcaster ESPN. "I just went to go get it, stabbed at it, the ball went loose and I just attacked the basket."

The Grizzlies would have another chance, but Ja Morant missed a driving shot and Brandon Clarke missed one of two free throws and the Lakers had the win. Morant shook off a slow start to lead Memphis with 22 points. Tyus Jones and John Konchar had 20 each off the bench, but the Grizzlies slipped a game and a half behind Western Conference leaders Denver, who beat Indiana 134-111 for their ninth straight victory.

"Hell of a game," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "Our guys stayed competing, stayed together, stayed aggressive, I think that was the recipe." It was just the second time this season the Grizzlies

lost when leading after three quarters - and just the second Lakers' win when trailing through three. But it wasn't the only unlikely outcome on the night as Jordan Poole and Golden State put on a shooting clinic in Cleveland, the Warriors draining 23 three-pointers in a 120-114 victory with Stephen Curry and three other starters on the bench.

Curry, Klay Thompson, Andrew Wiggins and Draymond Green all sat out the contest a day after the NBA champions' heartbreaking overtime loss to the Celtics in Boston. But with 32 points from Poole and 22 from Ty Jerome the Warriors posted their first road victory this season over a team with a winning record. The Warriors set the tone early, connecting on seven of eight three-pointers in the first quarter. Their 14 first-half three-pointers matched the most ever by a Cleveland opponent for one half.

Golden State pushed a five-point halftime lead to as many as 20 in the third. Cleveland sliced the deficit to four with two minutes remaining, but Jerome promptly drained another three-pointer and the Warriors were off again. Warriors coach Steve Kerr was unrepentant about sitting his starters, saying banged up players had to be given a chance to rest or risk injury.

"I feel terrible for fans who buy tickets who are expecting to see someone play," Kerr said. "It's a brutal part of the business. It's why I'm going to continue to advocate for 72-game seasons." Darius Garland scored 21 to lead Cleveland, who were again without three-time All-Star Donovan Mitchell



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers is fouled from behind as he attempts a layup by Dillon Brooks of the Memphis Grizzlies during a 122-121 Lakers win at Crypto.com Arena on Jan 20, 2023. — AFP

because of a groin injury.

Cleveland coach J B Bickerstaff said the problem wasn't any missing Cavs player. "We didn't respect the game," Bickerstaff said. "They've got champions over there, and we thought some of those guys were out so we were going to take it

lightly and we got what we deserved." In Denver, two-time reigning MVP Nikola Jokic was sidelined with a hamstring injury. But teammate Jamal Murray scored 17 points with 14 assists and 10 rebounds for the first triple-double of his career to lead the Nuggets over the Pacers. — AFP

## Illegal workers from Paris 2024 sites speak out

PARIS: Gaye Sarambounou is used to toiling long days for a pittance. He's a Malian living in France with no working papers, but it's a situation that occurs around the world. The difference here is that Sarambounou is one of an army of construction workers preparing next year's Olympic Games in Paris. The fact that France's upcoming sporting showcase is being put together with the help of illegal workers is becoming a source of political and social tension.

For three months Sarambounou, 41, worked between eight- and 11-hour shifts for 80 euros per day. Obviously, "overtime was never paid," he said ruefully. "I accepted because I know my situation. If you don't have papers, you do all the hard work, all the crappy jobs. You have no choice," he said as he boiled water on a stove on the floor of the tiny room

he shares with four compatriots.

"Everyone knows what's going on, but nobody talks about it", said a smiling Sarambounou, who was kicked off an Olympic building site last year after a raid by labor inspectors. Trade unionist Bernard Thibault, who co-chairs the Paris 2024 Social Charter Monitoring Committee says there is "a great deal of hypocrisy on the part of the political authorities". As a sign of the concern, the Labor Inspectorate has created a specialized unit that has been checking nearly one site a day for the past two years.

In June, nine irregular workers were identified on a site run by Solideo, the public company responsible for building facilities and infrastructure for the Olympics. At the same time, a local public prosecutor's office opened a preliminary investigation into the "employment of foreigners without a permit in an organized gang".

Solideo swiftly "took the necessary steps" by terminating the contract of the offending subcontractor but also of the construction giant that used it, said Antoine du Souich, the company's strategy director. Since then procedures have been tightened up, he assured, while admitting it's impossible to set up a system "entirely impervious" to such fraud. "All these



PARIS: This picture taken on Dec 15, 2022, shows an undocumented worker from Mali holding his access card to a Paris 2024 Olympic Games construction site where he used to work illegally, as he poses outside his room. — AFP

beautiful stadiums are built by poor people... who are exploited," said another Malian worker, who requested anonymity. "It's always 80 percent immigrants who do the work. You see Malians, Portuguese, Turks. And the French... in the offices!" he added. — AFP

## Juve docked 15 pts in suspect transfer trial

MILAN: Juventus' troubled start to the new year slipped into disaster on Friday after the Italian Football Federation docked the Serie A giants 15 points for using transfers to artificially boost their balance sheet. The FIGC said in a statement that the points sanction was to be inflicted this season, a huge blow to Juve whose chances of qualifying for next season's Champions League are now greatly compromised.

Juve drop down from third to 10th place on just 22 points, 15 from the top four positions in Italy's top flight. Missing out on Europe's top - and richest - club competition would be a further blow to the club's accounts which last season were nearly 239 million euros in the red. Juve's current sporting director Federico Cherubini was also banned for 16 months, another serious punishment which Juve said in a statement they would appeal at the Italian Olympic Committee.

The club's former leadership were also handed long bans by the FIGC including two years to ex-chairman Andrea Agnelli and former CEO Maurizio Arrivabene and 30 months to former sporting director Fabio Paratici, now at Tottenham Hotspur. The FIGC also said that it had asked that the bans - which also included eight months for former vice-president and playing icon Pavel Nedved - be extended beyond Italy to the jurisdictions of international governing bodies UEFA and FIFA.

### 'Injustice'

All eight other clubs facing potential FIGC sanctions, including Serie A teams Sampdoria and Empoli, were acquitted, something Juve's legal team called "a clear injustice". They were accused of using capital gains - the positive difference between purchase and sale values net of amortization and write-downs - from a series of player exchanges in which little or no money passed between clubs.

One widely-cited deal was between Juve and Barcelona in 2020 which saw Miralem Pjanic move to Catalonia and Arthur Melo go the other way. Arthur was valued at 72 million euros and Pjanic 60 million euros, sums both clubs could immediately book on their balance sheets while the cost of purchases can be spread over the length of a player's contract. Juve recorded a capital gain of 43 million euros on Pjanic, the second highest in the club's history.

The decision to dock Juve points came as the FIGC reopened a trial which had ended last year with Juve and a host of other clubs including Serie A leaders Napoli being acquitted. It follows new evidence from a separate criminal probe into Juve's finances conducted by prosecutors in Turin. Juve will know after a preliminary hearing in March if they and the former members of the club's board will stand criminal trial over alleged false accounting. Agnelli and the rest of the Juve board stepped down in November under pressure from the criminal investigation, with a new board led by Gianluca Ferrero being appointed earlier this week. — AFP

## Indian wrestlers call off protest

NEW DELHI: India's top wrestlers have called off a protest after the head of the sport's national federation reportedly agreed to step aside until claims of sexual harassment against him are investigated. Dozens of male and female wrestlers, including Olympic and Commonwealth medallists, had announced a boycott of all competitions until Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh was removed.

Singh, who is also a member of parliament from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has denied the allegations. Wrestler Bajrang Punia announced the decision to call off the protest after talks with

India's Sports Minister Anurag Thakur on Friday. "The minister told us that a committee will be formed (to look into the allegations) and it will complete its work in one month," Punia told reporters. "We are confident that a thorough probe will be conducted."

Thakur said Singh "will step aside" until the investigation is completed within four weeks, the Times of India reported. The protesting athletes were being led by Vinesh Phogat, a three-time Commonwealth Games champion and one of India's most decorated woman wrestlers. Phogat has accused Singh of harassing "several young wrestlers" and said that she knew "at least 10 to 20 girls" who had recounted sexual harassment at wrestling camps. She has said that both girls and boys have come forward to accuse other senior figures in the sport of harassment and bullying. — AFP



GONDA, India: Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh arrives to address a press conference on Jan 20, 2023, following allegations of sexual harassment. — AFP

## Bayern held as Bundesliga makes returns

LEIPZIG: A second-half equalizer from RB Leipzig defender Marcel Halstenberg helped RB Leipzig hold Bayern Munich to a 1-1 home draw on Friday in the first Bundesliga match since the winter break. Bayern looked on course for their seventh straight Bundesliga win after striker Eric-Maxim Choupo-Moting scored in the 37th minute, but Halstenberg levelled in the 52nd minute.

Veteran Bayern forward Thomas Mueller had a chance to win the match in injury time with a shot from point blank range, but dragged his effort just wide. Bayern manager Julian Nagelsmann lamented his side's concession of a "totally unnecessary goal" but said a point was "worth a little bit more" to his side than to Leipzig, considering the teams' relative

positions in the table. "Leipzig played a strong game and both teams played a little bit wildly, but at the end of the day we can live with the draw."

A combination of rustiness after a ten-week break and sub-zero temperatures meant both sides struggled to find rhythm early on. Central defender Josko Gvardiol, one of the breakout stars at the World Cup, almost scored an own goal after seven minutes, when his attempt at smothering a Serge Gnabry cross hit the post. Bayern midfielder Leon Goretzka headed the ball in the back of the net after 31 minutes, but the goal was struck off due to a narrow offside against Munich center-back Matthijs de Ligt in the build up.

The reigning champions got on the board soon after through Cameroon striker Choupo-Moting, who tapped a Gnabry cross past the outstretched arm of Leipzig keeper Janis Blaswich to score his 11th goal in ten games in all competitions. Leipzig shook off the cobwebs to reclaim parity shortly after halftime when Halstenberg side-footed in a Dominik Szoboszlai header to score his first goal of the season. — AFP



LEIPZIG: Bayern Munich's German midfielder Jamal Musiala vies for the ball with Leipzig's French defender Mohamed Simakan and Leipzig's Austrian midfielder Konrad Laimer on Jan 20, 2023. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

#### Hospitals

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

Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

#### Clinics

Kaizen center Rawda	25716707
	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
Mirgab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### Change of Name

I, Aalam Manaiah S/o Aalam Subbarayudu (old name), R/o. H.No.5/3, Eguva Reddy Palli (Vil), T.Kammappalli Post, Pullampet Mandal, YSR Kadapa District, A.P, have Indian passport No.L5941032, have changed my name as Alam Manaiah S/o Alam Subbarayudu (new name) (C#0884) 22-1-23





Bader Al-Kharafi (right) with Former Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudan.



Bader Al-Kharafi and his son Nasser, MP Hani Shams and Member of the board for the Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Jaber Thamer Al-Ahmad.



Bader Al-Kharafi is flanked by padel players Ahmed Rabeeaa, Aziz Mayoof and Paquito Navarro.



Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (center) and his wife Fatima Al-Awadhi (right) with Abdullah Al-Terkait (left).

# BNK Padel Open tournament places Kuwait on global map



Bader Al-Kharafi with his wife Sana Al-Naqeeb.

**KUWAIT:** BNK Padel Open finals concluded on Saturday with great success, after players who qualified played with top World Padel Tour-ranked athletes, which further elevated the sport of padel in Kuwait to unprecedented levels of global exposure. BNK Group Chairman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi said BNK's investment in such events has a great return for the participation of Gulf youth, affirming his company's keenness to organize an event at an international level. He revealed BNK's readiness for investing in any sporting event or social activity, noting that BNK Padel Open is not only a success for the company, but also for Kuwait.

The finals took place at The Arena Kuwait on January 20 and 21, with the event broadcast on beIN SPORTS. The Tour-ranked players partnered and competed with GCC players, where the first-place team received two Volvo cars with a total prize of KD 103,000, the highest in the Middle East. The winners of the local tournament in the men's category are Aziz Mayoof and Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi. Women's category winners are Mariam Sarraj and Fatma Al-Nabhani. The local champions and those in second place played with the top-ranked athletes.

Kuwaiti and GCC players who participated in BNK's tournament are Aziz Mayoof, Ahmed Rabeeaa, Mohammed Abdal, Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi, Asrar Abdulmajeed, Fatma Al-Nabhani,



Bader Al-Kharafi (center) and his son Nasser with Abdullah Boftain and his sons Abdulrahman and Ahmed.

Mariam Sarraj, and Dana Al-Fulaij. The international players are Arturo Coello, Juan Lebron, Agustin Tapia, Paquito Navarro, Marta Ortega, Paula Josemaria, Bea Gonzalez and Ariana Sanchez.

Powered by Volvo Kuwait, the event was sponsored by Gulf Cable, National Investment Company, Boubyan Bank, SVN, Huawei, Gia, BackBurner, Padel IN, Floward, DISC clinic, Arkan Al-Kuwait Real Estate and Kuwait News and Kuwait Times as a media sponsor. 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.



Khaled Al-Mulla with his wife Taiba Al-Rifai.



Bader Al-Kharafi (right) and Chairperson of the women's sports committee and member of Kuwait Olympic Committee Fatma Hayat.



Bader Al-Kharafi and his wife Sana Al-Naqeeb in a group photo.



Bader Al-Kharafi (center) with member of the board of Kuwait Olympic Committee Fatma Hayat, member of Padel Union Ali Hayat and Kuwaiti players Mariam Sarraj and Dana Al-Fulaij.



Emirati journalist Haitham Al-Hammadi



Bader Al-Kharafi (right) with Hamad Khaled Al-Mulla.



Hamad Al-Mulla hugging international padel player Juan Lebron.



Sports

Sunday, January 22, 2023



Players in action at the tournament. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Spanish padel player Juan Lebron



Kuwait News team — (from left) Hussain Assad, Nasser Hayat and Hawara Ghaleb — at the event.



Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer at Zain Waleed Al-Khashti



Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (right) and Dana Khajah.



Ahmad Al-Fraih with Nasser Al-Kharafi



Broadcaster Ahmad Al-Fahad



Khaled Falah



Singer Balqees Fathi



Khaled Al-Mulla and Hashem Abel



Meshal Al-Jarki with his wife Farah Al-Humaidhi.



Kuwaiti padel player and champion Ahmed Rabeaa with his family.



Mohammed Al-Mosawi with Ashraf Tamim, General Manager at BNK Automotive and BNK Motion.



Kuwaiti padel players Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi and Mohammed Abdal



Kuwaiti padel player Asrar Abdulmajeed



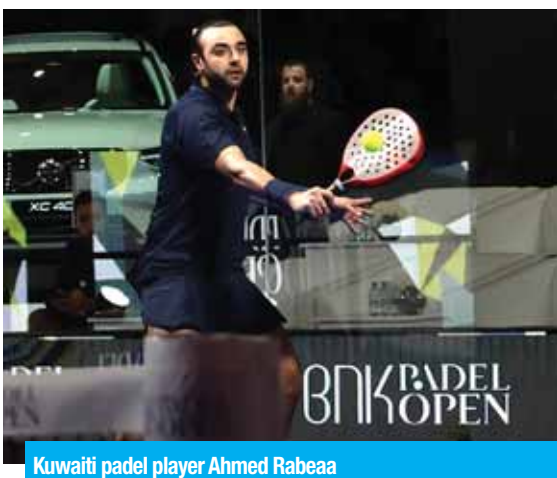
Kuwaiti padel player Mariam Sarraj



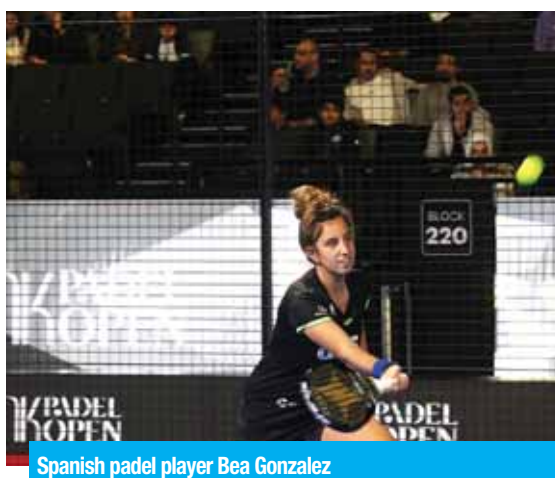
Kuwaiti padel player Aziz Mayoof



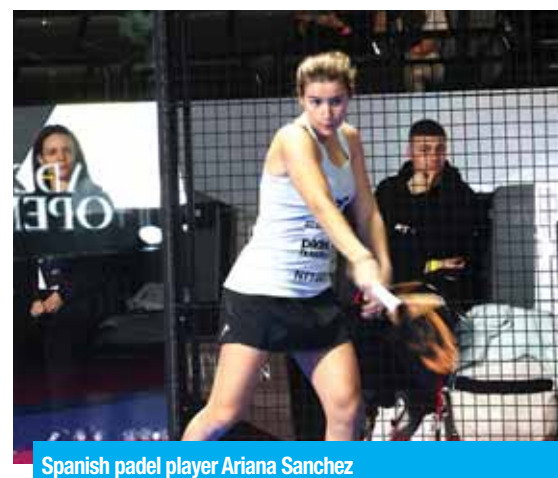
Kuwaiti padel player Dana Al-Fulaj



Kuwaiti padel player Ahmed Rabeaa



Spanish padel player Bea Gonzalez



Spanish padel player Ariana Sanchez



Spanish padel player Paquito Navarro



## Djokovic defies injury to win

Murray bows out • Sabalenka barrels into last 16



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return against Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov during their men's singles match of the Australian Open on Jan 21, 2023. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic's hamstring just about held up as the hot favorite battled into the Australian Open last 16 on Saturday, but Andy Murray's heroic run is over. Hard-hitting Aryna Sabalenka meanwhile burnished her title credentials as she barreled through, along with several other women's seeds. An ailing Djokovic had heavy strapping and needed treatment twice on his troublesome left hamstring before defeating Grigor Dimitrov 7-6 (9/7), 6-3, 6-4 on Rod Laver Arena.

The Serb will face home hope Alex de Minaur for a place in the quarterfinals as he closes on a 10th Melbourne Park crown and a record-equaling 22nd Grand Slam title. "Obviously, I didn't know how I'm going to feel physically, it was going up and down," said Djokovic. "It was an incredible battle, three sets over three hours. Let's rest up and prepare for the next one."

Djokovic's fellow 35-year-old Murray will not join him in the next round, however, as the Briton's 4:05 am finish eventually caught up with him. Former number one Murray was clearly feeling the effects of his epic five-setter in round two, which started on Thursday but ended in the early hours of Friday. The 24th-seeded Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut won 6-1, 6-7 (7/9), 6-3, 6-4 and faces unseeded Tommy Paul of the United States. "I gave

everything that I had the last three matches - I'm very proud of that," said Murray. "But I'm also disappointed because I put loads of work into the beginning of this year and was playing well enough to have a really good run, have a deep run."

Also in the men's draw, fifth seed Andrey Rublev surged into a clash with Holger Rune - then thanked his beaten opponent Dan Evans for giving him a banana mid-match. The Russian crushed the Briton 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 to make the fourth round for a third time. He will face Danish teenager Rune for a place in the quarter-finals after the ninth seed survived a nasty fall to sweep past unseeded Frenchman Ugo Humbert 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5).

His friend and 25th seed Evans threw a banana to Rublev at a changeover when he ran out. "I didn't ask him, I asked the ball boy, but Danny asked for bananas earlier and he had two so he just said 'take it', and I caught it," said Rublev. In two all-American matches, Jeffrey Wolf strolled past Michael Mmoh in three sets while Paul made equally light work of Jenson Brooksby.

### Ominous Sabalenka

Sabalenka is building a head of steam in her pursuit of a first Grand Slam title. The Belarusian fifth seed blew away 26th-seeded Elise Mertens 6-

2, 6-3 to set up a clash with Olympic champion Belinda Bencic. Thirtieth seed Karolina Pliskova and 23rd seed Zhang Shuai also went through in straight sets on day six at Melbourne Park, and will clash in the fourth round.

Sabalenka is trying not to get carried away. The Minsk-born 24-year-old teased the Margaret Court Arena crowd for supporting Belgium's Mertens over her, but said she was enjoying the ride into the second week. "About the favorite, that I am on that favorite list... I mean, it's really good that I'm there," said the Belarusian, who is yet to drop a set. "But I better focus on myself, on my game, make sure that my dream will happen."

Bencic has also not dropped a set in Melbourne. The Swiss 12th seed eased past unseeded Italian Camila Giorgi 6-2, 7-5. Also into the fourth round is the 17-year-old Linda Fruhvirtova, who beat her fellow Czech Marketa Vondrousova in three sets. She faces Donna Vekic of Croatia. "It feels pretty surreal," the teenager told reporters. "It's an incredible feeling. I'm just so happy and excited to be able to say: 'Hi second week!'" French fourth seed Caroline Garcia fought back after a disastrous first set to beat world number 158 Laura Siegemund 1-6, 6-3, 6-3. — AFP

## Ronaldo v Messi just the start for Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: A showdown between two of the world's greatest footballers provided an entertaining spectacle in Riyadh but deep-pocketed Saudi Arabia will not stop there in its drive to burnish its image through sport. Deafening fireworks closed Thursday's exhibition between Lionel Messi's Paris Saint-Germain and a composite team led by Saudi Pro League new arrival Cristiano Ronaldo, won 5-4 by the visitors.

The friendly had all the trimmings of a major fixture, complete with VAR, flame-throwers, tickertape and a medal presentation in front of more than 60,000 fans at the venerable King Fahd Stadium. But the desert kingdom is already promising more with a World Cup and Summer Olympics, perhaps even a Winter Olympics, already in its sights, together with a swathe of other major events.

"This is a big match but... this is nothing (compared to) what will happen with Vision 2030," said Turki Al-Sheikh, head of the General Entertainment Authority, referring to Saudi Arabia's ambitious development plan. Just five years after allowing its first non-Muslim tourists and letting women drive, Saudi Arabia is attempting to open up its conservative, long-cloistered society to the world.

The world's biggest oil exporter has thrown hundreds of millions at sports deals including Ronaldo's capture, F1 in Jeddah and the lucrative LIV Golf tour. In coming years the Saudis, who watched as neighbors Qatar hosted the World Cup in November and December, will hold the men's and women's Asian Cup, the Olympic-sized Asian Games and even the Asian Winter Games on artificial snow.

It is all part of grand plans by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to modernize the Saudi economy and remove its reliance on oil before the world moves on to other fuels. "My leader will surprise Saudis with much more things," Sheikh told AFP, referring to the crown prince. "We are ready to fulfil his demands at any time. But what's coming is much greater."

Saudi Arabia is discussing a joint bid for the 2030 World Cup with Egypt and Greece, while last year its sports minister told AFP that hosting the Olympics was the "ultimate goal". Its biggest coup so far was Ronaldo's signing by Al Nassr for more than 200 million euros, plus a separate 200 million deal to promote the World Cup bid, according to a source close to the club.

The shock transfer of the 37-year-old Portuguese has triggered speculation that Messi, who plays for Qatar-owned PSG but is a paid Saudi tourism ambassador, could join him in the Pro League. "Ronaldo's transfer is just the beginning," said Danyel Reiche, a visiting associate professor at Georgetown University Qatar. "Regardless of whether Messi will go to Saudi, we will see more superstars moving to Saudi Arabia." — AFP

## Drab draw leaves Liverpool, Chelsea mired in mid-table

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool and Chelsea's poor seasons were summed up in a dismal 0-0 draw at Anfield on Saturday that did little to aid their chances of climbing into the Premier League's top four. A point apiece leaves both clubs nine points adrift of the Champions League places and there was little to suggest either can quickly rekindle their former glories to make a charge up the table.

Chelsea had a goal scored by Kai Havertz ruled out for offside early on and there were promising flashes from new 100 million euro (\$108 million) signing Mykhailo Mudryk off the bench. But the Blues remain in 10th without an away league win since October. Liverpool edge up to eighth, above Brentford on goal difference.

Jurgen Klopp described Liverpool's 3-0 defeat to Brighton last weekend as the worst performance of his eight years at Anfield and, in the 1,000th game of his managerial career, made sweeping changes with Fabinho, Jordan Henderson and Trent Alexander-Arnold among those left on the bench. The change in personnel did little to ignite a drastically improved performance as the Reds were penned back in the first 45 minutes by a similarly out of sorts Chelsea.

Graham Potter's men had the ball in the net after just three minutes when Havertz slotted in after Thiago Silva hit the post from a corner. However,



LIVERPOOL: Chelsea's French defender Benoit Badiashile fights for the ball with Liverpool's Egyptian striker Mohamed Salah at Anfield on Jan 21, 2023. — AFP

the German was ruled offside after a VAR review. Cody Gakpo twice blazed over with Liverpool's two best sights of goal before the break, but it was the visitors who came closest to breaking the deadlock when Benoit Badiashile's header was well saved by Alisson Becker from another dangerous set-piece.

Klopp's half-time team talk had the desired impact as the home side came out on the front foot early in the second period. Yet they failed to create a clear-cut chance as Gakpo and Naby Keita saw shots blocked inside the area. Mudryk was made to wait for his debut, but the Ukrainian's introduction

10 minutes into the second half sparked Chelsea into life as he fired into the side-netting after some quick footwork.

Darwin Nunez's arrival off the bench had a similar impact on the Liverpool attack, but the Uruguayan also failed to find a way through. After a rampaging run, Nunez's shot lacked the power to beat Kepa Arrizabalaga before he teed up Alexander-Arnold to slice Liverpool's best chance of the game wide. After stalemates in both last season's League and FA Cup finals, which Liverpool won on penalties, a third consecutive meeting between the sides ended goalless. — AFP