

Polestar 2  
Why wait  
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



**4** Poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain honored by Oxford University



**8** Gulf Bank records KD 35.8m in net profit for first half of 2023



**11** 'Silk of peace' weaves new bonds in post-quake Turkey



**16** France reboot World Cup hopes; Sweden reach last 16



# UN urges moratorium after Singapore, Kuwait hangings

Global body opposes death penalty under all circumstances

## Kuwait PM condoles UAE President



ABU DHABI: Representative of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, along with an accompanying delegation, expressed his condolences to UAE President Sheikh Mohammad bin Zayed Al-Nahyan on Saturday on the demise of Sheikh Said bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. — KUNA

GENEVA: The United Nations on Friday denounced the recent executions carried out by Singapore and Kuwait and called for the nations to impose a moratorium on carrying out the death penalty. Singapore on Friday hanged a 45-year-old citizen for drug trafficking, the city-state's first execution of a woman in nearly 20 years, officials said.

Kuwait put to death five people on Thursday, including a man convicted of involvement in a 2015 suicide bombing by the Islamic State group that killed 26 people, the public prosecution said. The multiple executions in the state — relatively rare compared to neighboring Saudi Arabia — were the first since seven people were put to death in November last year ending a five-year moratorium. "We deplore the multiple executions carried out this week in Kuwait and Singapore and oppose the death penalty under all circumstances," UN Human Rights Office spokesman Seif Magango said in a statement. "We urge Kuwait and Singapore to immediately es-

ablish a moratorium on executions and join the more than 170 states that have so far abolished or introduced a moratorium on the death penalty."

On Thursday, Amnesty International said the move was "another example of the disturbing rise in use of the death penalty" in Kuwait. "When it is used against non-violent offenders such as the Sri Lankan killed today, it is incompatible with international law," Amnesty's Kuwait researcher, Devin Kenney, told AFP. The Sri Lankan was put to death on drug charges.

Although Kuwait has executed dozens of people since it introduced the death penalty in the mid-1960s, the punishment is relatively rare. Most of those condemned have been convicted of murder or drug trafficking. In April 2013, Kuwaiti authorities hanged three men convicted of murder. Two months later, two Egyptians, convicted of kidnap and murder, were executed. In 2017, the state carried out a mass execution of seven prisoners, including a ruling family member.

The execution in Singapore was carried out despite appeals from rights groups, who argue capital punishment has no proven deterrent effect on crime. "The capital sentence of death imposed on Saridewi Binte Djamani was carried out on 28 July 2023," the Central Narcotics Bureau said in a statement. She was convicted of trafficking "not less than 30.72 grams" of heroin, more than twice the volume that merits the death penalty in Singapore.

Djamani is the first woman to be executed in the city-state since 2004, when Yen May Woen was hanged for drug trafficking, the Singapore Prison Service told AFP in an email. Yen was a 36-year-old hairdresser, according to media reports. Djamani on Friday became the 15th prisoner sent to the gallows since the government resumed executions in March 2022 after a two-year pause during the COVID-19 pandemic. A local man, Mohd Aziz bin Hussain, 57, was hanged on Wednesday for trafficking about 50 grams of heroin.

Continued on Page 6

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Nationwide power outage in Iraq

BAGHDAD: A fire at an electricity substation in southern Iraq triggered a nationwide power outage Saturday, authorities said, just as demand peaks amid the searing summer heat. "The power grid experienced a total shutdown on Saturday at 12:40 pm (09:40 GMT) due to a fire that affected a transmission substation in Basra province," the electricity ministry said in a statement. Ministry spokesperson Ahmed Moussa told AFP that the outage affected the mains supply to "all of Iraq". — AFP

#### India's tiger numbers top 3,600

NEW DELHI: India's wild tiger population is estimated to now exceed 3,600, according to new government figures released Saturday, in a vindication of conservation efforts for the endangered species. India is currently home to 75 percent of the world's tigers, and the country declared its population of the big cats had risen to 3,167 in April after a camera-based survey. Further analysis of the same survey data by the Wildlife Institute of India found that average tiger numbers were better estimated at 3,682 across the country, the government said in a press release. — AFP

#### Nasrallah slams same-sex relations

BEIRUT: The leader of Lebanon's powerful Hezbollah movement on Saturday stepped up his attacks against the region's LGBTQ community. "We are not making up battles, nor are we making up dangers. This is a real danger that is imminent and has begun," Hassan Nasrallah said in a televised speech for the annual Ashoura commemoration. Nasrallah said that, "In Lebanon, this danger started with some educational institutions, and NGOs," which he accused of "promoting" same-sex relations to children. — AFP

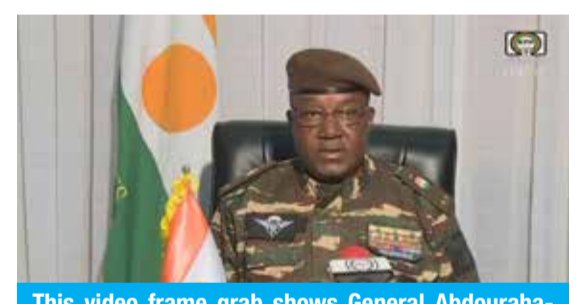
## AU, EU keep up pressure on Niger coup leaders

NIAMEY: The African Union demanded Niger's military "return to their barracks and restore constitutional authority" within 15 days as the EU intensified pressure on the coup leaders Saturday by suspending security cooperation with the strife-hit

country. General Abdourahmane Tiani, head of the Presidential Guard since 2011, appeared on state television on Friday to declare himself the troubled West African country's new leader.

His forces have confined democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum to his official residence in the capital Niamey since Wednesday, in a putsch Tiani presented as a response to "the degradation of the security situation" linked to militant bloodshed. The African Union and the European Union joined the chorus of international condemnation of the power grab, the latest to strike the Sahel region.

Continued on Page 6



This video frame grab shows General Abdourahmane Tiani, Niger's new strongman, speaking on national television on July 28, 2023. — AFP

## Defiant Trump shares stage with DeSantis

DES MOINES: Former US president Donald Trump — who has pledged to pursue his White House bid if convicted and sentenced in one of the cases engulfing his comeback bid — on Friday shared a stage with his Republican rivals for the first time in Iowa. Trump's appearance at the party's Lincoln Dinner fundraiser came as he faced new charges over his handling of classified government documents — and a possible fresh indictment

over his alleged efforts to overturn the result of the 2020 election.

The format of the Lincoln Dinner — 10 minutes for each candidate — kept the fireworks to a minimum, but the frontrunner did not shy away from telling the attendees what he thought of his main challenger, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis. "I wouldn't take a chance on that one," Trump said after offering a barrage of poll data suggesting he would easily defeat incumbent President Joe Biden while DeSantis would lose against the veteran Democrat.

Trump offered a rapid-fire summary of his achievements while in office, from appointing three

Continued on Page 6



DES MOINES, Iowa: Former US president and 2024 Republican presidential hopeful Donald Trump leaves after speaking at the Republican Party of Iowa's 2023 Lincoln Dinner on July 28, 2023. — AFP

## Former Twitter exec says Musk rules by 'gut'

SAN FRANCISCO: A fired Twitter product manager said Elon Musk ran the company newly renamed X by instinct not data, surrounded by sycophants with his mood changing unpredictably. Esther Crawford, whose picture sleeping in a Twitter office late last year made her a viral sensation, shared her thoughts on Wednesday in a lengthy post at X. "I disagree with many of his decisions and am surprised by his willingness to burn so much down, but with enough

money and time, something new and innovative may emerge," Crawford said in the post.

Crawford joined Twitter when it bought her startup in 2020, before Musk bought the social media platform for \$44 billion. "In person Elon is oddly charming and he's genuinely funny," Crawford said. "The challenge is his personality and demeanor can turn on a dime going from excited to angry." Twitter employees feared being called into meetings with him or having to deliver negative news, according to Crawford.

"At times it felt like the inner circle was too zealous and fanatical in their unwavering support of everything he said," Crawford wrote. "Product and business decisions were nearly always the result of him following his gut instinct, and he didn't seem compelled to seek out or rely on a lot of data or expertise to inform it."

Continued on Page 6



SAN FRANCISCO: A new X sign is installed on the roof of the headquarters of Twitter, which is being rebranded as "X", on July 28, 2023. — AFP



## Local

# Smoking on the rise in Kuwait

## 39.9% of men, 3% of women are smokers even as cigarette prices rise

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: According to the latest statistics of the Central Statistical Bureau in June 2023, prices of cigarettes and tobacco increased by 0.37 percent. Despite the hike, the smoking rate in Kuwait keeps on increasing, whether with regular cigarettes or alternatives. In 2021, Kuwait ranked first in the Gulf in smoking, as 39.9 percent of men and 3 percent of women in the country are smokers, according to the head of the healthy cities' office at the health ministry Dr Amal Al-Yahya, indicating the latest statistics by the health ministry showed the annual cost of smoking in Kuwait reached KD 481 million.

In many countries, including Kuwait, vaping is widespread and has reached all demographics. According to Salman El-Enzi, 35, the spread of vaping can be attributed to several factors, the most important of which is that e-cigarettes can be easy to obtain. "Vapes are now available in any

small supermarket at affordable prices. This accessibility has contributed to the spread of vaping," he said. Enzi started vaping as a safer alternative to traditional smoking, but later he discovered they were all the same, so he switched again. "I believed vaping was less harmful than smoking cigarettes, but it never led me to quit, although it reduced my cigarette consumption."

As for Hatan Fatafta, 17, vaping started as a curiosity. "The allure of trying something new led me to experiment with vaping, along with the social influence that played a significant role. I also got encouragement and positive experiences and recommendations from friends and family too," she said. The large variety of vape flavors is the main attraction for many, including 32-year-old Nahla Ahmed. She pointed out vapes are easy to smoke in public places and non-smoking areas because of the light smoke and smell.

According to Anwar Borahma, Secretary General of the Kuwait Society for Pre-

venting Smoking and Cancer and member of the MoH committee for the National Program for Combating Smoking, Kuwait has a high rate of smokers because tobacco and nicotine replacement methods are inexpensive, and authorities don't strictly enforce the smoking ban law in smokers, where 24 percent believed vaping helps to quit smoking and 16 percent said it is safer than traditional smoking. Meanwhile, 33 percent believe vaping is an introduction to traditional smoking, 40 considered vaping as a public health problem, while 60 percent said e-smoking must be regulated in public places and workplaces.

A cross-sectional study conducted among employees in various ministries in Kuwait from Dec 27, 2018 to Jan 3, 2019 showed that there is a higher prevalence of smoking among males (46.5 percent) than females (6.4 percent). Among the participants, 18.6 percent used one tobacco product exclusively, while 7.4 percent used two or three.



KUWAIT: Illustrative picture shows a man smoking a cigarette in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



## Consultant warns over AIDS cases

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Infectious and internal diseases consultant Dr Ghanim Al-Hujailan said AIDS is a very disturbing disease, adding that few victims are infected through contaminated needles or get the deadly virus from their spouses. Dr Al-Hujailan spoke at the Middle East conference on 'AIDS in humans', which discussed the most modern treatments. Kuwait's delegation participated in the conference.

He said Kuwait is exerting great efforts to control the disease by carrying out many tests, such as testing all new employees before they start their jobs. Also, every blood donor is required to undergo medical tests, in addition to blood tests for expats. He said there is a method that is being carried out abroad called "anonymous testing", which involves having an unknown person voluntarily carry out the tests without any information about the individual, and this person will be the only one to know the result of his or her test. Also a method has been put in place to encourage patients to seek for proper treatment.

Meanwhile, infectious and internal diseases consultant at the Salmiya medical complex and associate professor at Gulf University at King Hamad hospital, Dr Jamila Al-Salman, said the most important recommendations at the conference are related to increasing awareness about the disease; the way it is transferred, prevented, and treated in various stages. Through awareness campaigns at various groups and institutions, medical practitioners and patients will know how to deal with the disease and the means of early discovery through symptoms. Recommendations also include carrying out more tests and conducting scientific research on the disease.

## Experts share how visuals have power to change the world

By Munirah Al-Fayez

KUWAIT: The society and the world of journalism, media, politics and advertising changed since the camera was invented. Now it is usually the case that we do not just use words to express what we are going through, but we also have a camera in our hand to show proof of what we mean. Kuwait Times interviewed Kuwait-based filmmaker Tamer Hanna and street photographer Rashed Al-Ajmi to ask them about their point of view on this matter.

Hanna said he always had a love for movies. "Twelve years ago, I started to make short films as a hobby with my friends. Then it evolved into a profession when I started applying at film festivals. My first award was in 2015 in Egypt," he said. According to Hanna, cameras have a big role in media. He explained with technology, mobile phones and high-tech cameras, everyone can now take a video or photo and the quality is good. Therefore, if someone has something to tell the world, they can easily do it from their phone, and almost everyone will be able to see it, because everyone has a mobile phone.

"In the past, leaders, governments and big companies had the power, and the public could only receive. Now, the public has the power to speak up and voice their opinion with a video or a photo through social media," he said. The Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, for example, began with one

incident recorded on video that went viral and had a huge impact. According to Hanna, a camera is a very important and powerful tool that can be used to highlight an issue that people are not aware of or are not focused on.

Hanna stressed how he has also used his camera to shed light on "not-so-focused-on" issues, when he made a short film called 'The Shadow' in 2018 about depression, which was nominated at the Jersey Shore film festival in the United States. "I also made a motivational video in 2020 about asking for help if you need it or feel down. I uploaded the video on YouTube and it had a lot of comments on how it changed and helped people. This video raised awareness about a topic that many suffer from these days," he said.

Hanna's advice for young people or beginners who want to start a career in photography or videography or even if they want to start it as a hobby is two things: "The first thing is never stop learning or say I'm done with learning and now it is time to apply. Every time you learn something new, you apply it, then seek something new to learn and apply. The second thing is always keep practicing and creating. The more you practice, the more you shoot, the more you hold the camera, the more you run the camera, the better you get."

### Sending social messages

Ajmi explained how he fell in love with photography. "In the mid-nineties taking photos was only for memories



Rashed Al-Ajmi



Tamer Hanna

and nothing more, but the concept still inspired me. However, then I felt like I wanted to take more professional pictures and I fell in love more with cameras," he said.

In the early 2000s, according to Ajmi, digital cameras became more mainstream and that was almost like a revolution. "The fact that we could take a picture and then see how it turned out immediately was unimaginable. This made me more attached to the camera. Taking pictures of real-life moments attracts me and it has held on to me. Because of that, I became a street photographer, because it is a picture of people's daily lives in many places in the world and this feeds our needs and curiosity as humans."

Ajmi believes that knowledge of media and advertisement is the knowledge of photography at its core. "Think of the advertisements on the streets and imagine if they had no pictures. We would most likely feel like there is something missing and is not complete. In my opinion, there is no media without photography," he said.

If not the picture of Mohamed

Bouazizi in Tunisia, explained Ajmi, then the Arab Spring would not have happened, where some regimes fell in the Arab world, some changed and others arose, all because of a picture. If not for the picture of Mohammed Al-Durrah in 1997, then the second Palestinian intifada would not have happened, and that is because people are convinced with reality, and reality is a picture, he said.

Ajmi spoke about his journey. "I think emotions are universal — this is why I use photography to send social messages, and I think that I am obligated to do so. I took a picture on respecting parents and the picture won the Al-Baghli award in Kuwait. It was bought by UNICEF and was shown at the Leica Street Photo Expo in Poland," he said. "No one can stop you from buying a camera. So, when you buy a camera, you are in front of a divergent road. You can either make the camera a cause for your happiness and other people's happiness or make it a cause for your sadness and other people's sadness. Choose wisely," Ajmi advised.

## Kuwaiti co-op job postings get 'average' turnout

KUWAIT: The number of Kuwaitis applying for job postings listed last week at cooperative societies did not meet expectations, sources told Kuwait Times. The manpower authority posted last week job openings for Kuwaitis wishing to work in leadership positions at five co-ops: Nuzha, Qurtuba, Faiha, Jabriya, and Qadisiya. The jobs come as part of an effort

to Kuwaitize cooperative societies in the country led by the social affairs ministry and in implementation of the decisions of the Higher Committee for Demographics. However, the number of applicants was not as high as the ministry had hoped, sources said. "The relatively low turnout could be an obstacle in the face of Kuwaitizing jobs in the sector, which represents the largest retail market in Kuwait, and is considered to have a large reserve of jobs that attract expatriates," they said.

Sources attributed the "average" numbers to several reasons, including the summer season and people waiting for other opportunities given that the deadline to apply for a co-op job is still far ahead. Some might not want to work at co-ops because they believe it is

not secure and have fears they may face difficulties each time the co-op's board of directors goes through changes, sources added. They said the social affairs ministry understands those fears and introduced rules that safeguard job security.

The salaries of the leadership and supervisory positions will be as follows: KD 2,000 for the general director, KD 1,500 for his deputy, and KD 1,000 for the head of the department, in addition to labor and family support usually provided to Kuwaitis by the manpower authority. A committee was formed to verify the applications and ensure a fair hiring process, which includes representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the co-op union, and the board of directors of the co-op where the position is open.



Worshippers exit the Kuwait Mosque after Friday prayers on July 28, 2023.



Egyptian Awqaf Minister Mukhtar Jumaah, Mufti Dr Shawqi Allam and Director General of Kuwait Zakat House Dr Majid Al-Azmi are seen outside the Kuwait Mosque.



CAIRO: Director General of Kuwait Zakat House Dr Majid Al-Azmi, Head of Kuwait office for Charity projects Sarah Al-Mutairi and Advisor at Kuwait Embassy in Egypt Nayef Al-Tayyar are seen at the opening of the mosque.

## Kuwait Mosque in Egypt's Giza opens

CAIRO: Kuwait Office for Charity Projects inaugurated the "Kuwait Mosque" Friday at the "October 6th" city in Egypt in the presence of Egyptian Awqaf Minister Mukhtar Jumaah, Mufti Dr Shawqi Allam and Director General of Kuwait Zakat House Dr Majid Al-Azmi.

Azmi said the mosque is one of the projects the office has built in Egypt at the wishes of Kuwaiti donors. He said the project is considered a building

block for Kuwaiti charity projects in the country. Azmi added that such projects will always be carried out by Kuwait in friendly and neighboring states.

Head of Kuwait office for Charity projects Sarah Al-Mutairi said Kuwait Mosque is an extension of Kuwaitis charity march in many Egyptian governorates. She said the KD 82,000 mosque project, which was financed in full by Kuwait Zakat House, serves the residents of the north of October 6th city which is part of Giza governorate. She said the Kuwait office has carried out 62 projects in Giza alone.

Azmi said humanitarian, charity and developmental work has become a bridge for communication between different peoples and countries.

The completed charity projects through the Kuwait Office for Charity Projects in Cairo are considered a real interpretation of the deep Kuwait-Egypt relations for centuries. He added the achievements are a true expression of the good will that is in the hearts of Kuwait donors towards their brothers in Egypt.

Advisor at Kuwait Embassy in Egypt Nayef Al-Tayyar said the projects are a confirmation of Kuwait's keenness on continuing the developmental role at the Arab and International levels in all fields and to deepen the strong relations between the two people. He lauded the major charity role of Kuwait office in Cairo through Zakat House, carrying out charity projects all over Egypt. — KUNA



Officials perform Friday prayers at the Kuwait Mosque in Egypt. — KUNA photos

Local

# Climate change, pollution put Kuwait waters at risk

Gulf region seas warming 3 times faster than global average



By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

**KUWAIT:** Marine life is an important part of the ecosystem, as the earth is mostly covered by oceans. Therefore, we must preserve marine life because it has the biggest effect on the ecosystem in the world, Kuwait and the Gulf included. A study published by Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management in April 2020 regarding mortality incidents between 1999 to 2019 said: "Different causes were responsible for the different marine mortalities in Kuwait and the region, including untreated sewage input, eutrophication, bacterial infection, algal blooms, hypoxic conditions, pollution and dredging."

Kuwait Times spoke to Rachel Mulholland, Middle East Principal Scientist at the Center for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture Science at the British Embassy, and Jenan Behzad, General Secretary of Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS), to find out Kuwait's position with regards to the issue compared to the world, as well as finding hopeful solutions for them.

**Main marine issues**

Mulholland said that some of the key marine issues in Kuwait and the Gulf include biodiversity loss, climate change impacts, plastic and other pollution. "These are similar to marine issues around the world. The oceans are all connected, and some marine species travel great distances, so no country is detached from any other in terms of the impacts of these issues."

Mulholland indicated that climate change impacts are already being seen in the region. "The region's seas are warming three times faster than the global average," she said, pointing out "an increased risk of coastal flooding which could impact low lying coastal areas such as Kuwait City due to both long-term sea level rise, as well as flood-

ing during more intense storm events". "Climate change especially is a global issue. Everything is linked and connected around the world... There is also the threat of impacts to global food supplies from climate change and these global impacts could also have an affect here in Kuwait," she stressed.

"More than 90 percent of the urban population is concentrated on the coasts and the population occupies most of the southern coast of Kuwait Bay to Kuwait's southern borders," Behzad said. "Kuwait has witnessed a significant expansion of infrastructure including land reclamation and construction, especially on the coast. Kuwait Bay receives wastewater from 70 percent of Kuwait's coastal population through sewage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants," she explained.

Behzad indicated that discharges resulting from these developments have negatively affected the quality of water in Kuwait. "Rising temperatures and increasing acidity of the sea resulting from climate change in the world also have a major impact. The lack of management and mitigation strategies are one of the driving factors of pollution. Thus, if the right management practices are not implemented, there will be serious consequences for the future sustainability of Kuwait's coastal ecosystems," she said.

**Main differences**

"In this region, marine life such as coral reefs are already closer to the maximum temperatures that they can withstand, so a marine temperature increase or heatwave period could have more of a lethal impact than the same increase in another part of the world where temperatures are cooler," Mulholland explained. Behzad agreed: "Oceans play an important role in regulating the global climate. Temperature changes lead to changes in fish migration patterns and may reduce the amount of fish production, while rising water temperature threatens biodiversity in general. This temperature shift is three times greater

than the global average published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change."

**The main factors**

"Eighty percent of marine pollution originates on land. This can be from littering, dumping, insufficient sewage or waste management, or stormwater runoff. Ocean based sources include maritime activities like shipping, fishing, offshore oil and gas production and recreational boating," Mulholland said. She said plastic makes up most of marine litter in the world, up to 80 percent in some places. Plastic bottles, food wrappers and old fishing gear are common items that are found as litter around the globe.

Behzad also stressed that plastic waste has exceeded reasonable limits in the marine environment, with "80 percent of all floating garbage in our oceans being plastic waste". "Reports have estimated that 500 billion plastic bags are used every year, and at least 8 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans. Every year, according to studies, more than 8 million tons of plastic end up in the oceans, causing damage to marine life, fisheries and tourism, incurring losses of at least \$8 billion due to damage to marine ecosystems. By 2050, the oceans will carry more plastic waste than fish and most seabirds will have swallowed plastic waste," Behzad warned.

**Reducing pollution**

"These are global problems which need all of us working together to solve. Marine monitoring is an essential part of this process," Mulholland clarified. She added that we need to tackle these issues by monitoring "the effectiveness of the actions we are taking to make sure we are doing the right thing". She stressed that addressing these issues involves individuals and international bodies. "It includes improving waste management systems, promoting recycling and reuse of materials, raising public



Rachel Mulholland



Jenan Behzad

awareness about the consequences of litter and pollution, and reducing the production and consumption of products where we can," she said.

"There is still plenty of hope... new and sustainable technologies are being developed in many sectors, global emissions reduction commitments are being made by countries as part of the UN climate conference, and a global plastics treaty is currently being negotiated. In areas where restoration projects are taking place, we are seeing nature recover, such as with Kuwait's mangrove replanting initiative. But it is crucial that we recognize the urgency of these issues and continue to work together globally to ensure a cleaner and healthier future for our marine ecosystems and the planet as a whole," Mulholland added.

Behzad also pointed to a hopeful future, indicating there are many different approaches that can be followed to develop environmental management. "The most attractive feature of a strategic planning approach is that it attempts to simplify what can be a complex task into simple concepts that are easily understood by the parties involved as well as set achievable and attractive goals," she noted.

## Kuwaiti actor grabs Jerash Festival shield

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti artist Mohammed Al-Mansour said on Saturday that a serious and conservative artistic culture of high value can stand up against the "culture of flattening" — which refers to low-quality media content — that is sweeping the world. This came during an interview with the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) at the Jerash Festival of Culture and Arts, currently held in Jordan. The festival honored him as one of the Arab creators recognized "for their various achievements and their role in enriching Arabic content". "We still have a high-value, beautiful, and useful product that provides a fulsome culture received by the audience with joy," Mansour said.

He stressed the importance of providing well-thought projects to face what he referred to as "the fast food" era the media is currently facing — meaning an era with quick-to-consume and low-quality content. Speaking on receiving the honorary shield from the Jordanian Minister of Culture Haifa Al-Najjar, Mansour said that "the honor did not come out of nowhere, but as a result of effort and a long road of suffering, hope, and giving." He said he feels great responsibility to maintain his talent and respectable attitude.

Regarding the cultural role of Kuwait in its Arab environment, he said that "this role continues despite the challenges, both during the invasion period and currently as a result of a strong tide that includes strange concepts and behaviors sweeping Arab society". Mansour also praised Jordan's efforts and its role in this field.

As for his upcoming works, he said that he has two works in the holy month of Ramadan: the first, a heritage drama called Al-Khan, the events of which take place between Kuwait and Zanzibar, while the second, The Time of Al-Ajaj, deals with the "poisoned ideas" affecting the Arab region, he said. Jordanian Minister of Culture Haifa Al-Najjar handed the Mansour the Jerash Festival shield as one of the Arab creators who enriched the Arabic content within the activities of the Jerash Festival, which is currently held until August 5. — KUNA



JERASH: Kuwaiti artist Mohammed Al-Mansour honored at the Jerash Festival of Culture and Arts. — KUNA



## 'LuLu Proudly South Africa 2023' fest a resounding success

**KUWAIT:** LuLu Hypermarket's festival of South African products titled, 'LuLu Proudly South Africa 2023', was a major success, drawing thousands of visitors to all outlets of the hypermarket in Kuwait. The event, which runs from July 27 to August 1, was inaugurated by the South African Ambassador Manelisi Genge along with LuLu Hypermarket's top management in Kuwait at the Al-Qurain outlet on July 27. The festival of South African products offered amazing discounts and special offers on all branded products from South Africa.



Adding to the excitement of the six-day festival were special performances by South African music bands, and traditional dances by South Africa artists, as well as large displays of South African foods and goods. In addition to the colorful decor of South African flags and festoons, all outlets of the hypermarket featured huge cutouts and images of iconic places and attractions of the Rainbow Nation.

Other highlights of the celebration included South African street food stalls and free samplings of special foods of South Africa. Among the major South African brands featured at the fest were Blue Diamonds, Heartland, Bokomo, Bakers, Wellingtons, Ceres, The Harvest Table, and Robinsons.

The event's success opened the door for more exciting celebrations in the coming years. It was a welcoming opportunity for customers to experience the vibrant culture of South Africa and to sample some of the delicious food that the region has to offer.



KUWAIT: Shiite Muslims take part in a traditional mourning event during Ashura commemorations that mark the martyrdom of Imam Hussein at a husseiniya in Daiya on July 28, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## VOCs in wastewater within permitted levels

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) said on Wednesday that the country's wastewater treatment plants can remove most Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) during treatment processes, with an efficiency of more than 98 percent.

The institute explained: "Our Water Research Center has completed a study and analysis prepared by the project leader, Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq, for samples of volatile organic compounds in wastewater located in one of the largest treatment plants in Kuwait."

"The study aims to identify the most common volatile organic compounds in wastewater, determine their concentrations and evaluate the efficiency of removing organic compounds," KISR clarified.

KISR also stated that Dr Al-Matouq collected samples of wastewater from four different sites in the treatment plants and analyzed them to identify the most common compounds in wastewater.

"After identifying the most common volatile organic compounds in the water, the results showed that their concentrations are within the permitted concentrations," they added. — KUNA



Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq

# Poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain honored by Oxford University

KUWAIT: Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation announced Saturday that Oxford University chose some verses of Poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain to be engraved on one of its walls, in recognition of the poet's projects. The University selected three verses of 'Alibdaa alkhaleed' Poem, 'immortal innovation', to be written in Arabic on a wooden board on a wall of a hall, the foundation said in a statement to KUNA. The board was put in a distinguished place in the Faculty of the Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, humanitarian sciences department, to attract the visitors, mainly the Arabs who feel pride for the poet's innovation, it added.

In 2016, Poet Al-Babtain planted the 'tree of peace' at the university on which he wrote, in both English and Arabic, a 'dedication of Kuwait's people to this scientific edifice to express continued appreciation and love'. This is not the first time that Babtain was honored by the university. In 2016, the university chose Babtain as a Laudian Professor of Arabic. Established in 1636, the Laudian Chair in Arabic is one of the oldest professorships of Arabic in Europe.

Oxford University is not the first where Babtain has had his name prominently featured. The Abdulaziz



Poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain

Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation collaborated with the University of Malta in 2021 to establish Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Peace Chair at the university to promote and teach a culture of peace.

In 2022, Albanian President Ilir Meta awarded the Kuwaiti poet the Order of the Albanian National Flag for his efforts in spreading Arab culture and the culture of peace in the world through the Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain Cultural Foundation. The Mediterranean University in Albania



OXFORD: The three verses selected by Oxford University to honor Poet Abdulaziz Al-Babtain are seen on the walls of the university in this photo. — KUNA photos

awarded an honorary doctorate to the poet the same year for supporting and promoting a culture of peace in the international community, es-

tablishing cooperation mechanisms through the dissemination of culture, education, and dialogue for future generations. — KUNA



KUWAIT: These photos show construction work as part of the South Sabah Al-Ahmad project.



## Kuwait to tighten Internet censorship

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) signed an agreement to provide enhance online censorship services, such as blocking access to some websites, with the aim of tackling illegal electronic donations.

Acting Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Abdulaziz Al-Mutairi, said in a press statement on the sidelines of the signing ceremony that the agreement contributes to preserving the rights of donors and protecting the reputation of charitable work in the State of Kuwait in general, praising the existing cooperation between the two sides. — KUNA

## Construction begins in South Sabah Al-Ahmad: PAHW

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare is following up on the start of the implementation of the contract for the construction, completion and maintenance of main roads, major infrastructure service networks and rainwater tanks in the South Sabah Al-Ahmad City project.

The authority said in a press release that the project has entered the preparatory stage for on-

site works since June 5. It added that it is working through the concerned sectors to determine the work schedule before entering the implementation stage, pointing out that the scheduled date for the expiration of the contract is June 5, 2026.

The contract includes work on roads, soil and environmental remediation, asphalt, sidewalks, rainwater drainage system, treated water and freshwater networks, electricity and street lighting, telephone networks and traffic signs. The project will serve 20,380 Kuwaiti families. A specialized engineering crew has been assigned to follow up on-site work and ensure that it is completed according to the highest required standards as outlined in the contract.

The South Sabah Al-Ahmad project covers 6,150 hectares and is located 70 kilometers south of the



capital of Kuwait. The project will include 11 residential suburbs, containing lots with an area of 400 meters square each, in addition to public buildings and power and fuel stations.

## Marbella hosts Kuwaiti-Spanish festival

MADRID: The City of Marbella, Spain, is hosting the second edition of the Kuwaiti-Spanish festival on Sunday. Marbella Municipality Representative Remedios Bocanegra said that the event will take place on July 30 until August 1 in The Garden of Europe in Puerto Banus. "This event seeks to strengthen the close and long relations between Marbella and Kuwait since the late 1970s of the last century," said Bocanegra.

The event will allow discovering the gastronomy, folklore, culture and art of Kuwait, while stressing that the Kuwaiti community in the city is very important. Chairman of the event's organizing company

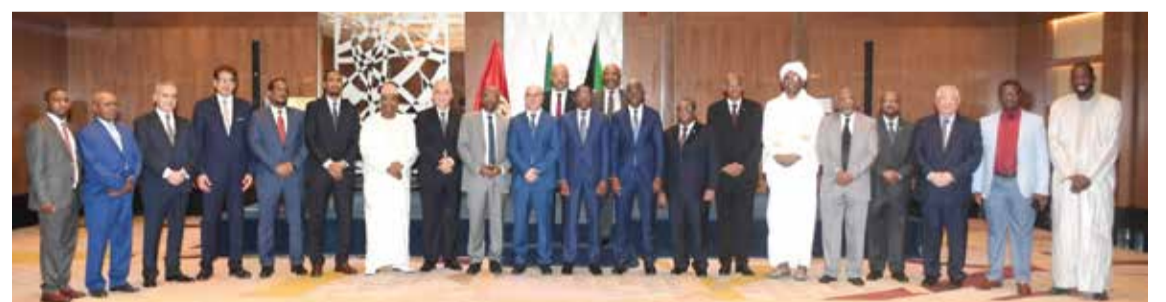


Abrar Al-Masoud

Abrar Al-Masoud said that this event sheds the light on the relations between Kuwait and Spain in the Political, Economic, and Cultural fields.

Masoud thanked the Municipality of Marbella for their cooperation in the first edition of the festival back in 2016 and in the second edition this year. She noted that the event will kick

off at 7pm (Marbella time) until midnight with the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Spain Khalifa Al-Kharafi, Spanish Ambassador to Kuwait Miguel Aguillar and several senior officials from both countries attending the opening ceremony. — KUNA

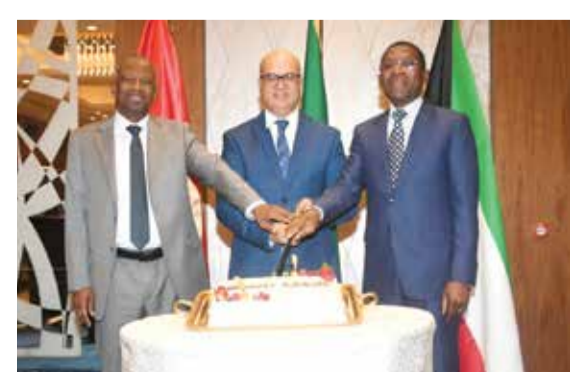


KUWAIT: Togo Ambassador to Kuwait Mohamed Saad Ouro-Sama is seen with outgoing Tunisian Ambassador Al-Hashemi Ajeeli at a farewell event that was attended by African ambassadors.

## African diplomats bid farewell to Tunisian envoy

KUWAIT: Togo Ambassador to Kuwait and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps Mohamed Saad Ouro-Sama held a farewell reception for the outgoing Tunisian Ambassador Al-Hashemi Ajeeli that was attended by African ambassadors.

Ambassador Ouro-Sama lauded the good relations with the Tunisian ambassador during his stay in Kuwait and commended the activities he carried out with love, determination, and excellence. He added that the outgoing ambassador maintained very good relations with his colleagues and was enthusiastic in carrying out his duties. He had an important role in developing relations with the State of Kuwait, said Ambassador Ouro-Sama.



Dean of the African Corps presented Hashemi with a memento, expressing the ambassadors' friendship and their respect. Hashemi thanked his colleagues, and said it was an honor for him to work with such people, who were hard working and professional in carrying out their diplomatic duties. He thanked the State of Kuwait for its efforts to instill and develop diplomatic relations at all levels.



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US to help Australia develop missile manufacturing industry

## Preparations on to tow blazing cargo ship off Dutch coast

Page 6

Page 7

# Abbas and Palestinian factions arrive in Egypt for unity talks

## Turkish strike in Iraq kills 4 militants

**CAIRO, Egypt:** Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas arrived in El Alamein in Egypt Saturday, the news agency Wafa said, ahead of unity talks between Palestinian factions boycotted by the militant group Islamic Jihad. The Palestinian news agency said that as well as chairing Sunday's meeting of the heads of Palestinian factions Abbas "is scheduled to meet with his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah El-Sisi".

Last week, Islamic Jihad leader Ziyad Al-Nakhalah made his group's participation in the talks conditional on the release of its members and those of other factions detained by Palestinian security forces in the West Bank. In a statement to AFP Saturday, Islamic Jihad official Mohammad Al-Hindi again denounced "continued political detention and prosecution of the resistance".

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine is also boycotting the talks. Sunday's meeting will include the heads of other political factions, including Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh.

Both Abbas and Haniyeh met in Ankara on Wednesday in the run-up to Sunday's crucial meeting. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has good relations with both, hosted the talks and said his government will do its best to push for intra-Palestinian reconciliation. A Palestinian official, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to the media, said the talks aim to "end the divisions (between factions) in preparation for a unified Palestinian government and presidential and general elections". Haniyeh's spokesman Taher Al-Nunu told AFP that Hamas sought to "unify the Palestinian position" under a strategic plan to "confront the Zionist occupation in light of the aggression of its extremist government".

Since Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007, the Islamist movement has been at loggerheads with Abbas' secular Fatah which administers

Palestinian-run areas of the West Bank, which the Zionist entity has occupied in the 1967 Six-Day War. Attempts to end the more than 15-year Fatah-Hamas rift saw leading figures from both movements sign a reconciliation deal in Algiers last year, promising long-delayed Palestinian elections in 2023.

Egypt's meeting comes amid a resurgence of violence linked to increasing Zionist attacks on Palestinian positions, which this year has killed at least 203 Palestinians, one Ukrainian and one Italian, according to an AFP tally compiled from official sources from both sides. Meanwhile, four "fighters" from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) have been killed by a drone strike in northern Iraq, officials in the autonomous Kurdistan region said, blaming the Turkish military. The strike on Friday near Iraqi Kurdistan's second city Sulaimaniyah came as Kurdish authorities in neighboring Syria said a drone attack also by Turkey had killed four members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

Ankara and its Western allies classify the PKK as a "terrorist" organization. Turkey also considers the main component of the SDF, the People's Protection Units (YPG), to be a "terrorist" offshoot of the PKK. The Turkish army rarely comments on its strikes in Iraq, but routinely targets PKK rear bases in the mountains of the Kurdistan region. On Friday around 8 pm (1700 GMT), "four PKK fighters were killed and another wounded when a Turkish army drone targeted their vehicle near the village of Rangina" north of Sulaimaniyah, according to a statement from Iraqi Kurdistan's anti-terrorism services. Since 1984 the PKK has waged an insurgency in Turkey that has claimed tens of thousands of lives, and Ankara has long maintained military positions inside northern Iraq where it regularly launches operations against them.

Two raids a week apart in May in Iraqi Kurdistan's Sinjar district killed six Yazidi fighters affiliated



CARACAS: A woman walks past a mural being painted on a wall in solidarity with Palestine in 23 de Enero neighborhood in Caracas on July 28, 2023. — AFP

with the PKK, in strikes local security officials blamed on Ankara. In late February and early March, strikes which the anti-terrorism service attributed to Turkey, again killed fighters from the Sinjar Resistance Units. The movement took up arms against the Islamic State group in 2014 following the jihadists' massacre of thousands of Yazidi men and their abduction of thousands of women for use as sex slaves.

Both the Iraqi federal authorities and the Kurdistan regional government have been accused of tol-

erating Turkey's military activities to preserve their close economic ties. On Tuesday the office of Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani referred to an "upcoming visit" by Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, but did not provide a specific date. The meeting would likely focus on economic activity as well as the sensitive issue of water. Baghdad says upstream dams built by Turkey on major rivers it shares with drought-hit Iraq have contributed to severe water shortages in recent years. — AFP

## Alarm as seawater heats up off Florida Keys, imperiling reef

**SUMMERLAND KEY:** Super-heated seawater off the Florida Keys has grown so perilous to the world's third-largest barrier reef that scientists are now removing samples of coral from ocean nurseries to place in cooler land-based tanks. Sea temperatures off Florida have risen to extraordinary highs this month, presenting a severe threat to the barrier reef. "Hot water is not good for any marine organism, whether it be coral, fish or lobster.

So we run the risk of having massive fish die offs, sea turtle die offs, things like that," said Alex Neufeld, projects coordinator with the Coral Restoration Foundation. Surface water temperatures rose above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32.2 degrees Celsius) several days earlier this month, and on Monday hit a record 101.1F in Manatee Bay, a sound near Key Largo.

Coral can routinely survive sea temperatures between 70 and 84F (21 to 28.8C). "This is the worst that I've seen. And I think many people would agree that... it has the potential to be the worst one that the Keys has ever experienced," Neufeld said. Neufeld's nonprofit group, working with other local groups, has been collecting samples of genetic strains of cor-



KEY WEST, US: A Longspine squirrelfish (*Holocentrus rufus*) swims around a coral reef in Key West, Florida. — AFP

al from nurseries "and pulling them into land-based facilities where the water parameters can be controlled, and where they can be safeguarded," he said.

As scientists race to ensure the survival of reef-based sea life, business owners despair over the possible impact on tourism to the Florida Keys. Brian Branigan, a 65-year-old boat captain who rents launches to tourists from Big Pine Key (near Key West), says the warming has shaken him. "What has happened in the last two weeks is terrible, shocking. I wanted to cry myself, when I was in the water, snorkeling to see this," he said as he took AFP to Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary, some five miles (eight kilometers) off the coast. — AFP

## Biden acknowledges seventh grandchild for first time

**WASHINGTON:** US President Joe Biden on Friday publicly acknowledged his seventh grandchild for the first time - a four-year-old girl his son Hunter fathered with an Arkansas woman - after Republican criticism of his failure to recognize her. "This is not a political issue, it's a family matter," the president said in a statement to People magazine about the girl, Navy Joan Roberts. "Our son Hunter and Navy's mother, Lunden, are working together to foster a relationship that is in the best interests of their daughter, preserving her privacy as much as possible going forward." Biden said he and his wife Jill "only want what is best for all of our grandchildren, including Navy."

People cited an unnamed source familiar with the

situation as saying that a child support dispute between Hunter Biden and Lunden Roberts, settled last month, had affected how the First Couple interacted with their grandchild. "You have to remember there were some fairly contentious legal proceedings between Navy's parents happening until just a few weeks ago. As grandparents, the Bidens are following Hunter's lead," the source said. The Democratic US president had come under tough criticism from Republicans who said his failure to mention Navy was at odds with his public image as a family man.

Earlier this month, top Republican lawmaker Elise Stefanik called Biden "cold, heartless, selfish, and cowardly" for not acknowledging Navy, and labeled the situation "an inexcusable disgrace" in comments to the Daily Mail. Hunter Biden's paternity of the child was confirmed through DNA testing. She has reportedly not met her father or her grandparents. Hunter Biden, who has battled drug addiction and is currently mired in legal trouble over tax charges and illegal possession of a firearm, has four other children. — AFP

US president with tactics used by Adolf Hitler. US District Court Judge Raag Singhal, who was appointed by Trump, the frontrunner for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, tossed out the suit on Friday.

"There is no question that the statements made by CNN meet the publication requirement for defamation under Florida law," Singhal said in his ruling.

"The next question is whether the statements were false statements of fact," the judge said. "This is where Trump's defamation claims fail. 'The complained of statements are opinion, not factually false statements, and therefore are not actionable,' Singhal said. "CNN's statements, while repugnant, were not, as a matter of law, defamatory. — AFP

## Judge throws out Trump defamation lawsuit against CNN

**WASHINGTON:** A federal judge has dismissed a \$475 million defamation lawsuit that Donald Trump filed against CNN for describing his claim that the 2020 election was stolen as the "Big Lie." Trump, in the suit filed in a US District Court in Florida in October, had alleged that the use of the phrase by the last television news network associated the former

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## International

## Blazing ship off Netherlands to be towed, 'likely this weekend'

## Attempt to avert a major ecological disaster

**THE HAGUE:** Preparations were under way to salvage a cargo ship packed with electric vehicles that caught fire off the Dutch coast, officials said Friday, in an operation intended to avert an ecological disaster. An electric car is suspected of having sparked the deadly blaze and officials said earlier that nearly 500 electric vehicles were aboard, far more than initially reported.

Fire broke out on the Fremantle Highway late Tuesday, killing one member of the all-Indian crew and prompting a massive effort to douse the flames. "The temperature on board the ship has dropped sharply and the intensity of the fire and smoke development have decreased," said the Rijkswaterstaat, the national water management agency, in a statement at about 11.30 pm. "The cargo ship is stable at this time. The ship is also still intact below the waterline and does not tilt."

The agency said it, as well as salvage companies, "have now started preparations for towing the freighter to an area further east", after rescuers were able to board the ship and connect it to a tug. It added that towing the ship was likely to take around 12 hours, pulling the stricken vessel to a temporary anchorage north of Schiermonnikoog island - "a better starting position for Rijkswaterstaat, the Coast Guard and the collaborating salvage companies".

The agency added that "no direct consequences" were expected for the surrounding environment, and

the Fremantle Highway would eventually be towed to a port, which was yet to be determined. While the timing would be affected by the weather and the state of the smoke, it was "likely that towing will begin this weekend". Efforts to extinguish the blaze were halted Thursday to prevent the ship from losing stability due to the volume of water accumulating on board.

Japan-based K Line, the ship's charter company, reported there were 3,783 cars on board the vessel — far more than an initial estimate of around 3,000. These were "all brand new/no used cars on board" including 498 "electrical vehicle units", the company told AFP in a statement. Ship owner Shoei Kisen Kaisha has said there was a "good chance that the fire started with electric cars", but added that the cause still needed to be investigated. One sailor died after he and 22 others were rescued from the burning ship that had forced some crew members to jump overboard.

The blaze has raised the spectre of an ecological disaster on a nearby chain of islands, which include Terschelling and Ameland, where the fire was first reported. The ship remained close to Terschelling and Ameland, which are part of an archipelago of ecologically sensitive islands in the Wadden Sea. The area spanning the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark has been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has a rich diversity of more than 10,000 aquatic and terrestrial species. — AFP



**AT SEA, Undefined:** A fire aboard the Panamanian-registered car carrier ship Fremantle Highway, off the coast of the northern Dutch island of Ameland. — AFP

## Arizona Republican Gates suffers PTSD after 2020 vote

**PHOENIX:** In the comfort of his Arizona office, election official Bill Gates still sometimes struggles to come to terms with his diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder. For this staunch Republican, it was a term he had previously associated more with Afghanistan veterans, or rape victims, than somebody who oversees a presidential poll. But the extraordinary 2020 election has turned his life upside down, as it has for countless officials across the United States.

Since refusing to endorse Donald Trump's false claims of a rigged election, and validating his defeat in Arizona's most populous county, the 51-year-old has endured a deluge of threats and harassment. Finally, his anger consumed him, and he sought therapy. "My therapist told me: 'You have PTSD — you didn't have bullets whizzing by your head, but you suffered a significant trauma and it's been very public,'" recalled Gates.

"Your integrity is something that's very important to you. And it has been challenged on a daily basis... your family has been threatened and you've been threatened." Joe Biden defeated Trump by just over 10,000 votes in Arizona — a rare Democratic win in the southwestern state, which has become a focus of conspiracy theories. Maricopa County's board of supervisors, on which Gates sits and which he has previously chaired, has borne the brunt of far-right attacks. Despite repeated pressure from Trump and his supporters, it certified the results. — AFP

## Russia says it hit Ukraine command post in Dnipro

**MOSCOW:** Russia said Saturday its forces struck a command post in Ukraine's Dnipro the previous day after Kyiv said a missile hit an apartment block there, wounding nine people. "On the evening of July 28, the Russian armed forces attacked a command post of the Ukrainian armed forces in the city of Dnepropetrovsk with high-precision weapons," the Russian defense ministry said, referring to Dnipro by its earlier name.

Kyiv officials said on Friday that a Russian missile struck an apartment block in Dnipro on Friday, injuring nine people including two children. Officials said that several other buildings had been hit including an empty building belonging to the country's security service.

"Dnipro. Another terrorist attack," said Sergiy

Kruk, head of the Ukrainian State Emergency Service, on Telegram. "Currently, we know of 9 injured, including two children. Work continues." Internal Affairs Minister Igor Klymenko earlier reported "a Russian strike on a multistorey building in Dnipro", saying five people had been injured. Videos posted on social media showed smoke billowing from the top floors of a residential building that had been badly damaged.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said: "Dnipro. Friday evening. A high-rise building and the Security Service of Ukraine's building were hit. Russian missile terror again". "All necessary services are on site... We keep the situation under control. We will do everything to bring Russia to full punishment for aggression and terror against our people." Russia said on Friday it intercepted two Ukrainian missiles over its southern Rostov region, bordering Ukraine. It said at least a dozen people were wounded by debris falling on the city of Taganrog. Russian regions bordering Ukraine have seen regular drone strikes and shelling since Moscow launched its military



**DNIPRO, Ukraine:** Rescuers stand outside a residential building partially destroyed after missile strike in Dnipro on July 28, 2023. — AFP

campaign in February last year but have hardly ever been targeted by missiles.

Meanwhile, President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday he was visiting "advanced positions" of Ukraine's special forces near the hotspot of Bakhmut as Kyiv ramps up its counter-offensive. — AFP

## Leading Senegal opposition figure Sonko arrested

**DAKAR:** Leading Senegalese opposition politician Ousmane Sonko was arrested on Friday for allegedly stealing a gendarme's phone and posting a "subversive" message. The firebrand politician, a thorn in the flesh of President Macky Sall, has faced a number of legal woes, which he says are aimed at keeping him out of politics.

His sentencing last month in a moral corruption case sparked fatal clashes that left 16 dead according to the government, 24 according to Amnesty International, and 30 according to Sonko's PASTEF party.

Senegal's public prosecutor said the politician had stolen the mobile phone of a gendarme whose vehicle had broken down near Sonko's home on Friday and issued a subversive message on social media. On Friday afternoon, Sonko had said on social media that security forces stationed outside his home were filming him.

He said he had taken one of the phones and demanded the images be deleted — a request he claimed was denied. "I ask the people to stand ready to face this endless abuse," Sonko wrote.

The prosecutor said the politician had "for some time" committed "criminally reprehensible" acts, and that an investigation into "various counts of offenses and crimes" had been ordered.

Sonko's party said he had been "brutally arrested" and called on Senegalese people to "constitutionally resist these abuses". One of Sonko's lawyers, Cheikh Koureyssi Ba, said on Facebook that Sonko was already



**Ousmane Sonko**

being interrogated. Another lawyer, Abdoulaye Tall, told local media that Sonko was in police custody. On Friday evening, people were gathering outside Sonko's Dakar home, an AFP journalist reported. — AFP

## UN urges moratorium after...

Continued from Page 1

Local rights group Transformative Justice Collective said Friday it had confirmed that another drug convict on death row has been scheduled for execution on Aug 3. It identified the convict as a Singaporean

man who worked as a delivery driver before his arrest in 2016. He was convicted in 2019 of trafficking around 50 grams of heroin.

"This week has cast a harsh and tragic spotlight on the complete lack of death penalty reform in Singapore," said Amnesty International's death penalty expert Chiara Sangiorgio. "As most of the world turns its back on this cruel punishment, Singapore's government continues down the path of executing people for drug-related crimes, violating international human rights law and standards." — AFP

Thursday in the documents probe, Special Counsel Jack Smith alleged that Trump, who is scheduled to go on trial at the height of the campaign in March and May next year, asked a worker at his beachfront estate in Florida to delete surveillance footage to obstruct investigators.

Trump, who denies all wrongdoing, was also charged with illegally retaining national defense information over a document he is accused of showing to journalists at his New Jersey golf club. He unleashed a torrent of invective loaded with false accusations against the government, Biden and other top Democrats on his social media platform. He also called for Smith "and his Thug Prosecutors" to be jailed alongside Attorney General Merrick Garland.

DeSantis is in a campaign lull — the 44-year-old has seen Trump's lead widen from 13 points in February to 34 points now, as he has failed to connect with voters and has been beset by a series of largely self-inflicted controversies. His team was forced this week to fire a staffer who promoted a video featuring Nazi imagery, and the candidate sparked outrage by suggesting he would pick anti-vaccine conspiracy theorist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead his public health policy.

Aides announced they were firing a third of the campaign's staff as they acknowledged wild overspending, and DeSantis earned further criticism as he defended his state's heavily criticized new curriculum teaching the benefits of slavery. With Iowa and then New Hampshire voters due to pick their favored Republican nominee in six months, most of the candidates have been camped out in those states, attending campaign events daily. Other speakers at the Lincoln Dinner included Trump's vice president Mike Pence, businessman Vivek Ramaswamy, former UN ambassador Nikki Haley and South Carolina Senator Tim Scott. — AFP

## AU, EU keep up pressure on Niger...

Continued from Page 1

Niger's neighbors Mali and Burkina Faso have both undergone two military coups since 2020, fueled by anger at a failure to quash long-running insurgencies by jihadists linked to the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda. The AU's Peace and Security Council "demands the military personnel to immediately and unconditionally return to their barracks and restore constitutional authority, within a maximum period of fifteen (15) days," it said in a communique following a meeting Friday on the coup. It "condemns in the strongest terms possible" the overthrow of the elected government and expressed deep concern over the "alarming resurgence" of military coups in Africa.

The EU's diplomatic chief Josep Borrell on Saturday said the bloc would not recognize the putschists and announced the suspension of security cooperation with Niger. "The European Union does not recognize and will not recognize the authorities from the putsch in Niger," Borrell said in a statement. "All cooperation in the security field is suspended indefinitely with immediate effect" in addition to the end to budgetary aid, he added.

Bazoum "remains the only legitimate president of Niger", the statement said, calling for his immediate release and holding the coup leaders to account for the safety of the president and his family. Borrell said the EU was ready to support future decisions taken

by West Africa's regional bloc, "including the adoption of sanctions".

Leaders from the Economic Community of West African States will meet on Sunday in Abuja to discuss the coup, Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said. French President Emmanuel Macron was due to chair a meeting of his Defence and National Security Council on the coup on Saturday afternoon, the presidency said. France, Niger's former colonial power, has 1,500 soldiers in the country. The United States has around 1,000 troops on the ground.

Tiani, 59, has shunned the limelight despite a stellar military career which has seen him lead the 700-member presidential guard since 2011. He is a staunch ally of former president Mahamadou Issoufou, Bazoum's predecessor, who appointed him head of the presidential guard. Sources close to Bazoum told AFP that he had been considering replacing Tiani as the head of the elite unit. Tiani meanwhile began shunning "official ceremonies and activities" of the president and sent his deputy Colonel Ibroh Amadou Bacharou, also a member of the new junta, to represent him, one source close to Bazoum said.

Landlocked Niger is one of the world's poorest nations, often ranking last in the UN's Human Development Index, despite vast deposits of uranium. It has had a turbulent political history since gaining independence in 1960, with four coups as well as numerous other attempts — including two previously against Bazoum. The 63-year-old has been one of a dwindling group of elected presidents and pro-Western leaders in the Sahel as juntas in Mali and Burkina Faso turn away from traditional allies and towards Russia. — AFP

## Defiant Trump shares stage...

Continued from Page 1

conservative-leaning Supreme Court justices to withdrawing US troops from Afghanistan, and only briefly alluded to his legal woes. "If I weren't running, I would have nobody coming after me," the 77-year-old said. For his part, DeSantis stuck to his usual stump speech, and did not use the opportunity to take a swipe at Trump. "The time for excuses is over. We must get the job done. I will get the job done," he told attendees in Des Moines.

Earlier in the day, Trump used a radio interview to insist his legal woes would not derail his White House bid. Asked by radio host John Fredericks if being sentenced would stop his 2024 campaign, Trump quickly responded: "Not at all. There's nothing in the Constitution to say that it could." "And even the radical left crazies are saying not at all, that wouldn't stop (me) -- and it wouldn't stop me, either," he added. "These people are sick. What they are doing is absolutely horrible."

The twice-impeached former president was first indicted in the classified documents case last month, accused of endangering national security by holding onto top secret nuclear and defense information after leaving the White House. The Justice Department added charges Thursday to its more than three dozen counts against Trump, who was found by a jury in a civil trial in May to have raped a writer in Manhattan in the 1990s.

Trump is also facing dozens of felony charges in a case involving hush money payments to a porn star in New York and is bracing for indictment in separate state and federal investigations into his efforts to overturn the 2020 election. In a major development

## Former Twitter exec says Musk...

Continued from Page 1

Musk seemed to trust random feedback and Twitter polls more than employees working to solve problems at the company, according to Crawford. "His boldness, passion and storytelling is inspiring, but his lack of process and empathy is painful." Musk has proven success tackling engineering problems, but a social networking platform requires emotional intelligence, Crawford said.

She did not spare the previous management, calling

it "bloated" and "soft and entitled" where "teams could spend months building a feature and then some last-minute kerfuffle meant it'd get killed for being too risky." Musk killed off the Twitter logo this week, replacing the world-recognized blue bird with a white X.

After buying Twitter, Musk had said that he wanted to create a super-app inspired by China's WeChat, which would function as a social media platform and offer messaging and payments. Since Musk bought Twitter last October, the platform's advertising business has collapsed as marketers soured on Musk's management style and mass firings at the company that gutted content moderation.

In response, the billionaire has moved toward building a subscriber base and pay model in a search for new revenue. — AFP

## International

# US to help Australia develop missile manufacturing industry

## Chopper crash pauses military exercise, four missing

**BRISBANE:** Washington will seek to bolster its shrinking weapons stockpiles by helping Australia develop a missile manufacturing and exporting industry, top officials said Saturday after high-level talks between the two countries.

Australian Defense Minister Richard Marles announced the project after meetings in Brisbane with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin. "We hope to see manufacturing of missiles commenced in Australia in two years' time," Marles told reporters, hailing the initiative as a boost to his country's defense and industrial base.

"We are really pleased with the steps that we are taking in respect of establishing a guided weapons and explosive ordnance enterprise in this country," he added. The project will see Australia develop guided multiple launch rocket systems, or GMLRS.

Austin said the plan would help the United States "sharpen our technological edge and strengthen our defense industrial base". Washington will now work to help Australia build a fledgling domestic missile industry almost from scratch, with an eye to securing a reliable pipeline for its own armed forces down the track. The war in Ukraine has exposed weaknesses in many Western military supply chains and has steadily depleted stocks of missiles and other munitions. Australia is currently embarking on its own armed forces overhaul, pivoting towards long-range strike capabilities in an effort to keep would-be foes such as China at arm's length.

### Increased tempo

The two-day Australia-US meeting that ended on Saturday was heavily focused on regional security and military cooperation, as the longtime allies work to curb China's growing power in the Pacific region. The talks were partially overshadowed when an Australian MRH-90 Taipan military helicopter crashed in subtropical waters off the coast of Queensland late Friday, prompting the suspension of a major military exercise between the two countries.

The four crew members are still missing and concern is growing for their wellbeing. They had been taking part in the vast Talisman Saber exercise, which features 30,000 military personnel from Australia, the United States and several other nations. Both Australian and US officials expressed concern about the incident, but insisted drills were needed to ensure both militaries were "match fit".

The meeting signaled that joint operations and projects are only likely to increase. Canberra agreed to refurbish military bases in the strategically-important north of the country, allowing them to host training exercises and ramped-up rotations of US troops.

Four Australian military aircrew are missing after their helicopter ditched in waters off the country's northeast coast while on a major military exercise, Defense Minister Richard Marles said Saturday.

Meanwhile, Australian police said Saturday that debris had been found from the Australian military helicopter that crashed into the Pacific Ocean, but



**BRISBANE:** (Left to right) US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Australian Defence Minister Richard Marles and US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin leave a building at Queensland Government House prior to press conference in Brisbane on July 29, 2023. — AFP

there was still no sign of four missing crew members after a night and day's search.

Militaries from at least three nations have joined police in looking for the crew of an MRH-90 Taipan that went down late Friday night in subtropical waters off the northeast coast of Australia. The chopper had been taking part in the large-scale Talisman Saber exercise, which brings together 30,000 military personnel from Australia, the United States and several other nations.

The MRH-90 Taipan went down late Friday night in sub-tropical waters off Hamilton Island, Queensland,

while taking part in the 30,000-strong Talisman Sabere drills. "As we speak to you now, the four aircrew are yet to be found" Marles said after a nearly 12 hour overnight search, which is set to continue Saturday.

"The families of the four aircrew have been notified of this incident and our hopes and thoughts are very much with the aircrew and their families," he added. "We desperately hope for better news during the course of this day." Defense officials announced a pause in the Talisman Saber exercise, which also includes soldiers from Japan, France, Germany, and South Korea. — AFP

## Macron makes 'historic' stop in Sri Lanka

**COLOMBO:** Emmanuel Macron made a short stopover in Sri Lanka on Friday, the first visit by a French president to the island nation, which is undergoing a difficult economic recovery. The French leader, who spent less than two hours in the country, was welcomed by his Sri Lankan counterpart Ranil Wickremesinghe. Macron made the stop en route home from Oceania, after visiting Papua New Guinea, the French territory of New Caledonia and the sea-threatened archipelago of Vanuatu.

During the airport meeting, Macron and Wickremesinghe were to talk about economic recovery and maintenance of the rule of law. "This is a historic visit," the Elysee said of the meeting, which occurred after Macron disembarked around 11.30 pm local time (1800 GMT).

Wickremesinghe came to power a year ago after his predecessor fled the country, driven out by massive protests amid the country's worst economic crisis since independence in 1948.

Sri Lanka, which has received major support from the IMF, is expected to remain bankrupt until 2026.

Macron was to speak with Wickremesinghe about the country's debt restructuring — with Beijing, the country's main creditor, having agreed in March to reschedule its loan repayments. China and India vie for influence in economically fragile Sri Lanka. The situation prompted Macron to warn against "new imperialism" at work in the region while he was in Vanuatu, referring in particular to China's growing influence.



**COLOMBO:** Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe (center right) and France's President Emmanuel Macron (center left) during their meeting at the airport in Colombo, after Macron stopped in Sri Lanka for a short visit following his South Pacific tour. — AFP

Earlier, Macron denounced "new imperialism" in the Pacific during a landmark visit to the region on Thursday, warning of a threat to the sovereignty of smaller states. Macron — speaking in Vanuatu on the first visit by a sitting French leader to an independent Pacific Island state — sought to offer a French alternative in a region where the US and China are competing for influence.

"There is in the Indo-Pacific, and particularly in Oceania, new imperialism appearing, and a power logic that is threatening the sovereignty of several states — the smallest, often the most fragile," Macron said in a speech. "Our Indo-Pacific strategy is above all to defend through partnerships the independence and sovereignty of all states in the region that are ready to work with us."

China is seeking to expand its influence in the South Pacific, notably making inroads in Solomon Islands, with which it signed a secretive defense pact

last year. Beijing also maintains sweeping, contested claims over the South China Sea. The United States — the dominant military force in the South Pacific since World War II — has responded by announcing new aid, opening embassies in the region, and signing pacts including a recent defence deal with Papua New Guinea. Macron said he felt free to issue the warning over major powers' ambitions in the Pacific because "we recognize our colonial past here in Vanuatu".

Vanuatu, a former French-British colony until independence in 1980, endured a colonial history of "grabbing wealth and exploitation of the people", he said. "We are the heirs of this past," Macron added, listing a history since European settlement that included the trafficking of indigenous people to work on plantations. "Vanuatu suffered a colonization as brutal as those imposed elsewhere in Africa or Asia. This heritage must not be forgotten." — AFP

## China issues red alert for torrential rain in Beijing

**BEIJING:** China's weather service on Saturday issued a red alert for torrential rain in the capital Beijing and surrounding provinces, as Typhoon Doksuri swept inland bringing hazardous weather conditions to many parts of the country. Doksuri smashed into southern Fujian province on Friday morning with gusts of up to 175 kilometers per hour (110 miles per hour), and China's meteorological service said Saturday its "influence" was now being felt in the country's north.

China has been experiencing extreme weather conditions and posting record temperatures this summer, events that scientists say are being exacerbated by climate change. Experts have warned Saturday's downpour could prompt even worse flooding than in July 2012, when 79 people died and tens of thousands were evacuated, according to local media.

It is the first time since 2011 that such a heavy rainfall warning has been issued, local media said. The red alert will be in force from 8 pm local time (1200 GMT), and covers an area of several hundred million inhabitants, including the metropolis of Tianjin, and the provinces of Hebei and Shandong. — AFP



**CALUMPIT, Philippines:** Residents ride a boat to avoid floodwaters left by torrential rains of Typhoon Doksuri in Calumpit, Bulacan province on July 29, 2023. — AFP



**DHAKA:** Police move towards Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) activists (top) who blocked a highway entering Bangladesh's capital to demand the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and a general election under a neutral caretaker government, in Dhaka on July 29, 2023. — AFP

## Bangladesh police clash with protesters blockading capital

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh police fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse stone-throwing crowds blockading major roads in the capital Dhaka on Saturday in the latest protest demanding the prime minister's resignation. The opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its allies have staged a series of protests since last year demanding Sheikh Hasina step down and allow a caretaker government to oversee elections due next January. Clashes erupted in several locations when police moved in to clear thousands of people who gathered in the morning to block traffic on key arterials around the city.

"Some officers were injured," Dhaka Metropolitan Police spokesman Faruk Hossain told AFP. "We fired tear gas and rubber bullets." At least four protest sites around the city saw clashes between police and protesters, Hossain said, with 20 officers injured and 90 protesters arrested.

AFP journalists at one protest site in Dholaikhal, an old neighborhood now a hub for automotive repair shops, witnessed protesters retaliate by throwing rocks at riot police and their vehicles.

Bacchu Mia, a police inspector at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, told AFP that six protesters had been admitted to the hospital with injuries. Senior BNP leaders Goyeshwar Roy and Amanullah Aman had been taken into police custody but had not been formally arrested, Hossain said.

Transport links between the capital and other parts of the country were badly disrupted, with trucks and buses stuck in gridlock.

### Increasing demonstrations

Hasina's Awami League has ruled Bangladesh since 2009 and has been accused of human rights abuses, corruption and creeping authoritarianism. Demonstrations led by the BNP have become increasingly common since the start of the year, with rallies this month drawing tens of thousands of people to the streets. Police arrested at least 500 opposition activists ahead of a rally outside the party's headquarters this week. Western governments have expressed concern over the political climate in Bangladesh, where the ruling party dominates the legislature and runs it virtually as a rubber stamp.

Her security forces are accused of detaining tens of thousands of opposition activists, killing hundreds in extrajudicial encounters and disappearing hundreds of leaders and supporters. The elite Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) security force and seven of its senior officers were sanctioned by Washington in 2021 in response to those alleged rights abuses. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### 4 electrocuted in India

**NEW DELHI:** At least four people were electrocuted Saturday and seven others injured after a Muslim religious procession came into contact with a high-voltage wire in India, police told AFP. The Islamic calendar is currently in the month of Muharram, the holiest time for Shiites across the world, when large Ashura processions mark the martyrdom of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) grandson Hussein in the seventh century. Members of a procession in the eastern state of Jharkhand were killed when a metal pole carried by some devotees hit an overhead cable, Bokaro district police superintendent Priyadarshi Alok said. — AFP

#### Mali soldier dead in attack

**BAMAKO, Mali:** One Malian soldier has been killed and two injured in an attack in the west of the country, the armed forces and local officials said. "According to a security source, the (armed forces) carried out airstrikes on several terrorist nests in the area", on Friday, the governorate of the town of Nara, near the Mauritanian border, said in a statement received late on Friday by AFP. "On the enemy side, the provisional report shows seven (7) terrorists neutralized, two (2) prisoners, weapons and materials recovered", it said. The armed forces said in a social media post that a complex ambush had taken place between the towns of Nara and Guire and that the dead and wounded were being evacuated from the area. — AFP

#### France releases pair in rape case

**PARIS:** French police have released two men who had been detained on suspicion of taking part in an alleged gang rape of a Mexican tourist in the Champ de Mars park at the foot of the Eiffel Tower in central Paris, prosecutors said Saturday. The men were detained on Thursday in an ongoing investigation into the suspected rape of the woman, Paris prosecutors said. "At this state of the investigation, the detentions have been lifted," prosecutors said, without providing further details. "The investigation is ongoing." The Le Parisien daily, which first reported the incident, said that the 27-year-old woman was attacked by five men. Prosecutors have

## US unveils \$345m military aid package for Taiwan

**WASHINGTON:** The United States on Friday unveiled a \$345 million military aid package for Taiwan designed to quickly bolster the island's ability to deter a Chinese invasion. The package — which an official said features intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipment and small arms munitions — will be drawn from the US' own reserves, allowing it to be delivered on a faster-than-usual timeline. These are "capabilities that Taiwan will be able to use to bolster deterrence now and in the future," a Pentagon spokesperson said. Elements of the package "address critical defensive stockpiles, multi-domain awareness, anti-armor and air defense capabilities," he added.

"We are working expeditiously to deliver the military assistance announced today," Taiwan's defense ministry thanked Washington "for its staunch commitment to Taiwan's security." "The Presidential Draw-down Authority is another important support for Taiwan's self-defense in addition to weapons sales," ministry spokesman Sun Li-fang said. "Taiwan and the US will continue to cooperate closely in safety issues in order to maintain peace, stability and the status quo in the Taiwan Strait." Congress has authorized President Joe Biden to draw aid for Taiwan from American military stocks — the same way that Washington has provided large quantities of assistance to Ukraine since Russia invaded in February 2022. — AFP

## Business

SUNDAY, JULY 30, 2023

# Gulf Bank records KD 35.8 million in net profit for first half of 2023

## Net profit increases 18.3% compared to H1 2022

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. announced its financial results for the first half ending 30 June, 2023. The Bank reported a net profit of KD 35.8 million, an increase of KD 5.6 million or 18.3 percent compared to 2022 first half net profit of KD 30.3 million.

The increase in the Bank's net profit was mainly driven by a 9 percent or KD 6 million increase in net interest income for the first half 2023. As a result, operating income grew by 8 percent or KD 6.9 million to reach KD 92.3 million and operating profit before provisions grew by 12 percent to reach KD 49.3 million for the same period.

Subsequently, the Bank's return on assets improved from 0.9 percent in the first half of 2022 to 1.1 percent in first half of 2023 and return on equity grew from 9.1 percent to 10.1 percent.

For the second quarter of 2023, the Bank reported a net profit of KD 18.5 million, an increase of 22 percent over the second quarter of 2022. Operating income for the second quarter of 2023 was to KD 45.9 million, an increase of 5 percent compared to the same period of last year and operating profit was KD 24.3 million, with an increase of 9 percent over the same period of last year.

As for asset quality, the non-performing loans (NPL) ratio stood at 1 percent as of 30 June, 2023, similar to the prior year. Additionally, the Bank continues to have significant non-performing loans coverage ratio of 546 percent including total provisions and collaterals.

Total credit provisions as of 30 June, 2023 reached KD 307 million whereas IFRS 9 accounting requirements (i.e., ECL or expected credit losses) were KD 185 million. As a result, the Bank has very healthy excess provision level of KD 122 million, which is above what is required by the IFRS9 accounting requirements.

Compared to first half 2022, total assets increased by 1 percent to KD 6.9 billion while loans and advances reached KD 5.2 billion. Shareholders' equity increased by 7 percent to reach KD 723 million and total deposits stood at KD 5.2 billion. The Bank's regulatory Tier 1 ratio as of 30 June, 2023 was 13.9 percent, above the regulatory minimum of 12 percent and the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 16.1 percent, which is above the regulatory minimum of 14 percent.

Commenting on the first half of 2023 financial results, Gulf Bank's Chairman Jassim Mustafa Boodai said: "We are proud of the notable achievements and strong financial performance Gulf Bank has accomplished in the first half of 2023. We remain focused



### Jassim Mustafa Boodai

- We are proud of the notable achievements and strong financial performance Gulf Bank has accomplished in the first half of 2023.
- For the second quarter of 2023, the Bank reported a net profit of KD 18.5 million, an increase of 22 percent over the second quarter of 2022.
- We remain focused on delivering exceptional services, launching innovative products, and prioritizing customer satisfaction.

on delivering exceptional services, launching innovative products, and prioritizing customer satisfaction to meet their evolving needs."

### Core banking system implementation

One of the key milestones of Gulf Bank during the first half of 2023 was the implementation of phase I of the new core banking system. This milestone represents a major leap forward in the Bank's digital transformation journey. It empowers the Bank to provide enhanced services, improve efficiency, and deliver seamless customer experiences. The new system's deployment showcases Gulf Bank's commitment to better serve its valued customers using cutting-edge technology.

By going live with the core banking system, Gulf Bank has demonstrated its dedication to adaptability, innovation, and pioneering in an increasingly competitive environment. The phase I of the new system's integration will enable Gulf Bank to stream-

line operations and optimize processes to further solidifying its position as a trusted financial partner.

Commenting on the launch of phase I of the new core banking system, Boodai said: "The successful deployment of the first phase of the new core banking system is a testament of our commitment to innovation and digital transformation. We are confident that these strategic milestones will further enhance our ability to deliver unparalleled banking experiences to our customers. With a clear vision and robust strategies in place, Gulf Bank is poised for continued success and sustainable growth."

### Al-Danah grand prize increase

During the first half of the year 2023, Gulf Bank has announced an increase in the annual grand prize value of the Al-Danah account, in celebration of Al-Danah's 25th anniversary. The annual grand prize has been raised from KD 1.5 million to KD 2 million, becoming the world's largest cash prize linked to a bank account.

### Key positive indicators

- First half 2023 net profit of KD 35.8 million, an increase of 18.3 percent compared to the same period of 2022.
- Return on assets improved in the first half of 2023 to 1.1 percent and return on equity grew to 10.1 percent.
- Non-performing loan ratio for the First half 2023 was 1 percent, with a strong non-performance loan coverage ratio of 546 percent.
- Capital ratios as of the First half 2023, Tier 1 ratio was 13.9 percent and Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) was 16.1 percent.

## As heatwave bites, Egypt announces power cuts, measures

CAIRO: Egypt's prime minister announced a number of measures Thursday, including planned power cuts, to cut down on energy consumption as the country and wider region endure a brutal heatwave.

Civil servants will work from home one day a week in an attempt to ease the load on local electricity networks, Mostafa Madbouli said in televised remarks, as temperatures surpassing 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) were recorded in parts of the country this week. He also confirmed that planned power cuts announced by the government last week will continue, with residents warned not to use elevators at certain times of day.

Last week's measure sparked a backlash, with many people complaining that the cuts — frequently coming at the hottest time of day — often lasted longer than two hours and occurred outside of the planned time slots. Madbouli on Thursday said the planned cuts would last one or two hours per day at most, adding that they come as energy consumption surged.

The premier directed civil servants who do not deal directly with the public to begin working remote-



EL SHOROUK, Egypt: The sun sets behind street lights along a highway in El-Shorouk, a satellite city about 47 kilometers outside the city-centre of Cairo, on July 24, 2023. — AFP

ly every Sunday for a month from August 6, and urged the private sector to take similar measures.

Egypt's economy has struggled in recent years with runaway inflation and repeated depreciations of the local currency, affecting purchasing power and the ability to import key goods. A similar energy crisis during the short-lived presidency of the late Islamist Mohamed Morsi led to widespread anger and pro-

tests before he was removed by the army in July 2013. In 2015 the authorities struck a deal with German electricity giant Siemens to build three major power plants with investments estimated at six billion euros (\$6.5 billion) in a bid to improve the network.

But the country has since struggled with depleting foreign reserves and mounting debt, exacerbated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year. — AFP

the report said, although growth in personal income slowed. "The economy's main growth engine continues to hum," said Oren Klachkin, lead US economist at Oxford Economics. "Rising incomes, complemented with lingering excess savings, gave consumers the purchasing power to continue spending in June," he added, although warning that their ability to spend is not limitless.

With cost-of-living pressures escalating in the past year, the Fed lifted interest rates rapidly to tamp down demand and rein in prices — and the effects have been rippling through the world's biggest economy. Inflation has come down from a peak and retail sales has weakened with consumers pressured by higher borrowing costs and still-elevated prices.

## Key US inflation gauge cools further as rate hikes bite

WASHINGTON: A key indicator of US inflation cooled in June to the lowest annual rate in over two years, although this remains above the central bank's target, according to government data released Friday. The Federal Reserve's preferred gauge of inflation, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, rose 3.0 percent last month from June 2022, down from a 3.8 percent jump in May, said the Commerce Department.

From May to June, the PCE price index ticked up 0.2 percent, a touch above the 0.1 percent rate in the prior month. But spending climbed 0.5 percent between May and June, up from 0.2 percent previously,



NEW YORK: A customer shops during the re-opening of the Century 21 flagship department store in New York City. — AFP

### Empowering and mentoring youth

Gulf Bank is happy to complete the second edition of the "Datathon" competition that empowers young talents in the areas of data analytics, data modeling, and visualization. This initiative aims to attract and invest in youth, fostering their growth and providing them with valuable mentorship opportunities. By nurturing young talents, Gulf Bank contributes to the development of the data analytics community and promotes an innovation mindset in the future generations. As a result of this commitment, Gulf Bank was awarded during the eighteenth 2023 Finnovex Awards Summit, Qatar, with The Prestigious Excellence in Data Innovation Award, in recognition of its unparalleled excellence in leveraging data to drive transformative change and create new opportunities in the banking industry.

### Recognition of creditworthiness

Gulf Bank's creditworthiness and financial strength is recognized internationally. During the first half of 2023, Capital Intelligence affirmed the Bank's Long-Term Foreign Currency Rating at 'A+' with a 'Stable' Outlook. In addition, Capital Intelligence has affirmed the Bank's KD 50 million Basel III-compliant Tier 2 Subordinated Bonds at "BBB+" with a "Stable" Outlook. Furthermore, Fitch Ratings has assigned Gulf Bank a Long-Term Issuer Default Rating of 'A' with a 'Stable' Outlook, and Moody's Investor Services has assigned the Bank a Long-Term Deposits rating of 'A3' with a 'Stable' Outlook.

These ratings are a testament to Gulf Bank's solid financial performance, experienced management, and ability to navigate the global banking landscape successfully.

### Appreciation

Boodai concluded his remarks by stating: "Gulf Bank remains dedicated to its long-term vision of delivering sustainable growth to its various stakeholders. We look forward to the second half of 2023 with great optimism, building upon the successes of the first half and to further elevate our position as a leading financial institution in Kuwait." He added: "On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our shareholders for their ongoing trust, and our employees for their commitment and dedication. I would also like to thank the Central Bank of Kuwait for their continuous support. Finally, I want to thank our clients for their loyalty, and reiterate our commitment to offering them the best banking experience."

## Fed officials spar over bank reform in open meeting

WASHINGTON: Members of the US Federal Reserve's governing body voiced disagreements over proposed changes to banking rules in a rare open meeting of the board Thursday. The proposals put forward by Michael Barr, the Fed's vice chair for supervision, call for a range of measures including increased capital requirements for large and mid-sized banks, and changes to how they measure risk.

While the moves to finalize the so-called Basel III agreement — developed in response to the financial crisis of 2007-2009 — have been under consideration for some time, the new proposals contain changes made following the banking crisis in March, the Fed said in a statement.

The recent banking turmoil in US and Europe was sparked by the sudden collapse of regional lender Silicon Valley Bank after it took on excessive interest-rate risk.

### Increase banking 'resilience'

"The goal of our actions today is simple: to increase the strength and resilience of the banking system by better aligning capital requirements with risk," Barr told the meeting of officials in Washington. But two Fed governors took the unusual step of publicly disagreeing with his proposals, putting on the record their strong opposition to certain steps — especially a proposal to raise capital requirements for some banks by an average of 16 percent.

Governor Michelle Bowman said she was concerned the proposal "will add to the challenges facing the US banking system, and impose real costs on banks, their customers, and the economy without commensurate benefits to safety and soundness or financial stability." Fed governor Christopher Waller told the meeting: "I don't think those costs are worth bearing without clear benefits to the resiliency of the financial system."

The president of the American Bankers Association, Rob Nichols, called the proposals "unnecessary and overly broad." "Far from simply meeting international standards, these changes will require banks operating in the US to meet even higher capital levels without any justification," he said in a statement. — AFP



## Business

# No climate crisis agreement at G20 environment meeting

## Nations fail to agree on peaking global emissions by 2025

CHENNAI: Environment ministers from G20 nations failed to agree on peaking global emissions by 2025 and other crucial issues to address the global climate crisis at their meeting in India on Friday. No breakthrough was possible on several key points ahead of this year's COP28 climate talks, with negotiations also failing to reach a consensus on tripling renewable energy use.

"I am very disappointed," France's ecological transition minister Christophe Bechu told AFP after the meeting. "We are not able to reach an agreement of increasing drastically renewable energies, we are not able to reach an agreement on phasing out or down fossil fuels, especially coal," he said.

"Records of temperatures, catastrophes, giant fires, and we are not able to reach an agreement on the peaking (of) emissions by 2025." The discussions with China, Saudi Arabia, and on climate issues with Russia had been "complicated", he added.

India's climate change minister Bhupender Yadav, who chaired the meeting, admitted there had been "some issues about energy, and some target-oriented issues". The Chennai meeting comes days after energy ministers from the bloc — which represents more than 80 percent of global GDP and CO2 emissions — failed to agree in Goa on a roadmap to cut fossil fuels from the global energy mix.

That was seen as a blow to mitigation efforts even as climate experts blame record global temperatures for triggering floods, storms and heatwaves. Major oil producers fear the impact of drastic mitigation on their economies, and Russia and Saudi Arabia were blamed for the lack of progress in Goa.

Campaigners were dismayed by the repeated failure to reach a deal Friday. "Europe and North Africa are burning, Asia is ravaged with floods yet G20 climate ministers have failed to agree on a shared direction to halt the climate crisis which is escalating day by day," said Alex Scott of climate change think-tank E3G. Reports of Saudi and Chinese resistance, he added, "fly in the face of their claims of defending the interests of developing countries".

### 'Self-interest'

All present at Friday's conference understood "the severity of the crisis" facing the world, Adnan Amin, chief executive of this year's COP28 climate talks, told AFP. "But I think there's a kind of political understanding that still needs to be achieved," he said. "It's very clear that every country in the world will start by looking at its immediate self-interest," he added. Most delegations were led by their environment and climate change ministers, while the US delegation was headed by Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry.

Also at the talks was Emirati oil boss Sultan Al-Jaber, who will lead the upcoming COP28 talks in the United Arab Emirates starting in late November. He has been heavily criticized for his apparent conflict of interest as head of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company because burning fossil fuels is the main driver of global warming.

### Livelihoods destroyed

With raging wildfires in Greece and a heatwave in Italy, European Union environment commission-



CHENNAI: Bhupender Yadav, India's Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate change (right) welcomes Sultan Ahmed Al-Jaber, COP28 President-designate and UAE's Special Envoy for Climate Change (center) prior to the Environmental and climate sustainability working group meeting held in Chennai on July 28, 2023. - AFP

er Virginijus Sinkevicius said ahead of the gathering that there was "growing evidence on the ground of devastating climate impact" and "the livelihoods of people are being destroyed".

But progress in global negotiations has been slow, with the G20 polarized by Russia's war in Ukraine and sharp divisions on key issues. Questions on financing the transition and ameliorating its short-term impacts have long been a point of contention

between developing and wealthy nations.

Major developing countries such as India argue that legacy emitters need to spend more to underwrite global mitigation efforts in poorer nations. "Whatever was pledged by the developed countries must be fulfilled," Yadav said after the meeting, which he added had reached consensus on other issues including land degradation and sustainable use of ocean resources. - AFP



Sam Altman, US entrepreneur, investor, programmer, and founder and CEO of artificial intelligence company OpenAI, speaks. - AFP

## Worldcoin crypto already under scrutiny in Europe

PARIS: Less than a week after its launch, the Worldcoin crypto project of OpenAI chief executive Sam Altman is already under scrutiny by European regulators over its reliance on an eye scan to verify a user's identity, France's data protection agency said Friday. Worldcoin's launch on Monday comes as the cryptocurrency industry is suffering hard times after the spectacular collapse of FTX and various legal cases against the sector's biggest players.

Using eye scans, it tries to solve one of the main challenges facing the crypto industry: a level of anonymity so high that makes it vulnerable to scams and spam bots — which AI threatens to make exponentially worse. But Worldcoin's collection of biometric data could run afoul of strict data privacy rules in Europe. "Worldcoin has begun to collect data in France... which seems questionable as does the conservation of biometric data," France's CNIL data regulator told AFP. After conducting an initial review, CNIL said it identified its counterpart in the German state of Bavaria as the lead agency in Europe to conduct a probe into Worldcoin, and said it supports their investigation.

Worldcoin in fact began operating in June in Germany, which is the home country of co-founder Alex Blania. Bavaria's data protection agency had no immediate comment when contacted by AFP on Friday.

With its cryptocurrency and identification system Worldcoin aims to create the "world's largest identity and financial public network," according to its website. Altman and Blania said earlier this week in a letter posted to Twitter, which is being renamed X, that the Worldcoin offers "a reliable solution for distinguishing humans from AI online while preserving privacy".

This will in turn enable Worldcoin as a blockchain-based technology to drastically increase economic opportunity and enable democratic processes. Blockchains are distributed databases that facilitate the verification and traceability of transactions.

They can offer lower costs and faster data transfer while ensuring secure transactions, although the most famous blockchain that powers the cryptocurrency Bitcoin, is notorious for being slow and expensive as it requires huge computer processing power to validate transactions as part of its system to reward processors with new bitcoins. - AFP

## Yellen raises need to slim insurance gap in climate disasters

WASHINGTON: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen raised the need Friday of understanding how to narrow a "protection gap" in insurance coverage when it comes to losses from climate-related disasters. At an open session meeting of the Financial Stability Oversight Council (FSOC), Yellen noted that "some insurers have begun raising the rates for homeowners' insur-

## Germany's pivotal chemicals industry gripped by crisis

HAMBURG, Germany: Thomas Kadowsky imagined that he would keep working at the German industrial coatings plant where he had served as team leader for more than 30 years until he retired. So it came as a shock when he received a call in March informing him that the owner, the German group Allnex, was going to close the 90-year-old site, nestled in the middle of a red-brick housing estate in the northern port city of Hamburg. "I was completely stunned," Kadowsky, 58, told AFP. Kadowsky and 130 other people will lose their jobs with the closure of the plant next year. The company has justified the move by the "recent changes in energy prices" — a surge that is crippling the German chemicals industry. The closure is yet another example of the crisis gripping this vital sector of the German economy, which slipped into a recession at the start of the year and, according to data released on Friday, stagnated in the second quarter.

### 'House on fire'

"The house is on fire," said Markus Steilemann, president of the VCI chemicals industry lobbying group which represents 1,900 companies in Germany. The sector in Germany has 466,000 employees and accounts for five percent of GDP, with existential importance for other sectors that it supplies with intermediate goods. But for several months now, bad news has been piling up.

The sector's sales plunged by 11.5 percent in the first half of the year, and a 14-percent drop is expected for 2023 as a whole. Small and medium-sized firms, which account for 92 percent of companies in the industry, are also downsizing. In May, the number of employees in the sector fell by 0.8 percent year-on-year. In February, the giant BASF announced that it was slashing 3,300 jobs, with the closure of several units

at its historic site in the western city of Ludwigshafen. On Friday, the company reported a 76-percent fall in second-quarter profits year-on-year.

A clutch of factors are chipping away at a success story with its roots in post-World War II West Germany's economic miracle. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and throttling of gas exports sent energy costs soaring in Europe's top economy, compounded by the country's phase-out of nuclear power. Although they have fallen since their peak in August 2022, energy prices are still five times higher than in the United States and between two and three times higher than in China, according to the VCI. Investment in the industry in Germany fell by 24 percent last year and a quarter of German companies have considered outsourcing at least part of their production.

### 'Defend and preserve'

In Hamburg, the flags of the IG BCE trade union are flying in front of the site. "The decision (to close) makes no sense, the plant is profitable," works council chairman Christian Wolf told AFP.

Despite local tensions, however, unions and companies are in agreement in calling for an energy price cap to help save the sector. In May, Economy Minister Robert Habeck of the ecologist Greens unveiled a proposal allowing electricity prices to be frozen until 2030 for the most energy-intensive industries, while Germany completes its transition to renewable energy. But his counterpart at the finance ministry, Christian Lindner of the pro-business Free Democrats, is vehemently opposed for the time being due to budgetary concerns. Hence some experts are calling for these industries, which will never be competitive on their own in Germany, to be shed and to concentrate on less energy-intensive sectors of the future. "The main goal of both industry and the unions is to defend and preserve, not to change and innovate," said Moritz Schularick, president of the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. Without chemicals, however, the economy would lose a "highly productive sector, which for years has been the driving force behind industry as a whole", counters Timo Wollmershaeuser of the Ifo research institute. - AFP



HAMBURG: (Left to right) Employee at the Allnex plant in Hamburg Torben Boldt (26), President of the Workers' Council at Allnex Hamburg Christian Wolf (45), employee at the Allnex plant in Hamburg Desiree Dahms (40), Director of Mining, Chemical and Energy Workers' Union (IGBCE) in Hamburg/Harburg Jan Koltze (60) and employee at the Allnex plant in Hamburg Sven Mareck (38) stand for a picture in Hamburg. - AFP

ance or are stepping back entirely from offering coverage in higher-risk areas" as climate disasters become more frequent and intense. Only 60 percent of \$165 billion in economic losses from such incidents were covered by insurance, said Yellen, who also chairs the FSOC.

And these climate impacts are the greatest on disadvantaged communities, she added, noting that more households are turning to residual markets for coverage or foregoing insurance completely.

"American households are already seeing the impacts even if their own homes have not been damaged," Yellen said. Home insurance premiums in the United States have grown in the past year, driven up by rising costs of reinsurance and rebuilding materials.

"In addition to challenges to households, we must also better understand the implications of changes in property insurance for real estate markets and other financial institutions that rely on insurers to help manage risks," Yellen said. The FSOC's members include the Federal Reserve chair, the comptroller of the currency, and the chair of the Securities and Exchange Commission, among others.

On Friday, the council also received an update on the transition away from Libor — the London Interbank Offered Rate — a global benchmark interest rate that has been discredited over accusations of manipulation. The end of Libor passed on June 30 after years of preparation, according to the meeting. In the United States, it is being replaced by the Secured Overnight Financing Rate. - AFP

## Evergrande's e-vehicle unit plunges

HONG KONG, China: Shares in the electric vehicle subsidiary of Chinese property giant Evergrande plunged more than 60 percent on Friday, the first day trading in its stock resumed after being suspended for more than 15 months. Officials had called a halt to dealing in China Evergrande New Energy Vehicle Group (NEV) on April 1 last year after it failed to release its financial results.

The company on Wednesday announced its earnings for 2021 and 2022 - showing a loss of almost \$12 billion - and returned to the Hong Kong stock market on Friday morning. But its shares plummeted almost 70 percent after the opening bell, and finished the day down 61.3 percent. NEV is a unit of China Evergrande, once China's biggest developer but now drowning in a sea of debt and a symbol of the country's widespread property crisis.

Fears of a collapse of the firm in 2021 sent shudders through the world's number two economy and fanned fears of a global contagion. Its car unit was launched in 2019 to compete with Elon Musk's Tesla, and at its peak was worth more than Ford Motor Co. But it has had mixed results — last year NEV sold only 320 vehicles in China, compared with the more than 74,000 sold in June by Tesla. In its financial results posted Wednesday, NEV said its debt hit 183.9 billion yuan (\$25.6 billion) at the end of December 2022.

The electric car market in China is particularly competitive, with many local manufacturers emerging in recent years. Trading in parent company China Evergrande remains suspended, though it finally released its own financial results earlier this month, revealing its liabilities had ballooned to \$340 billion. The company this year announced a debt restructuring proposal, offering creditors a choice to swap their debt into new notes issued by the company and equities in two subsidiaries, Evergrande Property Services Group and NEV. - AFP

## Spanish inflation ticks up as growth slows

MADRID: Spanish inflation ticked upwards in July due to higher fuel prices while growth slowed in the second quarter, preliminary data showed Friday.

Consumer prices rose 2.3 percent year-on-year, figures from the National Statistics Institute (INE) showed, up from 1.9 percent in June when it fell below the 2.0 percent target set by the European Central Bank. The increase in prices in July was due to a rebound in fuel prices, which had fallen in July 2022, as well as higher costs for package holidays, which offset falls in electricity and gas prices, INE said.

In a separate statement, INE said Spain's economic output rose by 0.4 percent in the second quarter, down from a revised 0.5 percent increase seen in the first three months of the year due in part to the poor performance of the country's drought-hit agriculture sector. The latest economic figures come after Spain held an inconclusive snap election on Sunday that could result in a repeat election in the coming months. Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez had repeatedly flagged the results of his economic policy to win voter support ahead of the elections in which his party finished second behind the conservative Popular Party. He is trying to cobble together enough support among smaller parties to stay in power. Sanchez's left-wing coalition government has implemented a series of measures to bring down inflation which hit a record 10.8 percent in July 2022, its highest level since 1985. - AFP

## Business

# Chip giant TSMC determined to 'keep roots in Taiwan': CEO

## Semiconductor giant launches massive microchip facility

**HSINCHU, Taiwan:** Semiconductor giant TSMC said it was determined to "keep its roots in Taiwan" as it launched a massive facility in the island's north on Friday geared towards developing the world's most cutting-edge microchips.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) controls more than half of the world's output of microchips, which are the lifeblood of the modern global economy, powering everything from coffee machines and smartphones to cars and missiles. Like the new research and development facility, much of TSMC's manufacturing base is in the northern city of Hsinchu, where its state-of-the-art facilities are producing ever-smaller silicon wafers that have skyrocketed in demand, especially due to the recent boom in AI-related technology.

At the Friday launch of the R&D facility, chairman Mark Liu said the centre would "develop world-leading technologies in the semiconductor industry more actively to explore two-nanometre and 1.4-nanometre technology, and even smaller".

The company is racing to begin mass production of a 1.4-nanometre chip — tinier than a fraction of a fingernail — ahead of its rival Samsung, the world's second-largest producer. Its production lines have expanded beyond Taiwan as Western powers have raised concerns about the crucial industry being centred on an island that China claims as its territory — having ramped up political and military pressure on it over the past year.

But CEO C.C. Wei said Friday that TSMC intended to keep the heart of its technological prowess in Taiwan. "We want to use this opportunity to show Taiwanese people TSMC's determination to

keep its roots in Taiwan," Wei said during the inauguration, which was attended by Taiwan's premier as well as TSMC founder Morris Chang.

"We have heard voices expressing concerns about whether TSMC is moving its focus abroad and whether TSMC is halting its development in Taiwan. We have to say 'no,'" he continued.

"With the opening of the global R&D centre, we are telling Taiwanese people our roots will remain in Taiwan." A planned Arizona plant — one of the largest foreign investments in the United States — is currently delayed until 2025 due to a shortage of skilled workers, a blow to the White House's plans to bring more chip production to the US. TSMC has said they are sending over Taiwanese technicians to help train the foundry's staff. The company is facing similar issues as it explores the possibility of a plant in Dresden, citing concerns about gaps in Germany's talent pool.

### 'Strategic significance'

Global recognition of TSMC has spiked in the past year, much of it coming after the US unveiled sweeping curbs aimed at cutting off Beijing's access to high-end chips, chipmaking equipment and software used to design semiconductors. Beijing has reacted with similar moves, restricting the sales of chips from American giant Micron and announcing that exports of rare minerals vital in the production of semiconductors require a license.

In the middle is self-ruled Taiwan — the world's primary manufacturing base of semiconductors — which China considers its own territory and has vowed to take one day, by force if necessary.



**HSINCHU, Taiwan:** In this handout picture taken and released by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited (TSMC) on July 28, 2023, founder of TSMC, Morris Chang (sixth right) and Taiwan's Premier Chen Chien-jen (sixth left) pose for a photograph during the launch of an R&D facility in Hsinchu. — AFP

But the entire supply chain, from chip design to manufacturing and final product assembly — which largely takes place in mainland China — is sprawling and complex, and has created an interdependence among all players. "The semiconductor industry requires close

global collaboration, from US designs to European equipment and Japanese materials to Taiwanese manufacturing and R&D," said Taiwanese Premier Chen Chien-jen, who attended TSMC's event in place of President Tsai Ing-wen, who was diagnosed with COVID this week.

Chen went on to say that TSMC's new R&D facility was of "important strategic significance". "Taiwan's industrial competitiveness lets the world notice that Taiwan is not only a resilient democratic island but also a prosperous technology island," he said. — AFP

## Japan presses Sri Lanka to secure China debt deal

**COLOMBO:** Japan pressed bankrupt Sri Lanka on Saturday to expedite its debt restructuring, including with its biggest creditor China, to stabilize the island nation's economy after an unprecedented crisis.

Tokyo's foreign minister Yoshimasa Hayashi welcomed economic reforms under the auspices of an International Monetary Fund bailout but said Sri Lanka needed to pick up the pace in its negotiations with creditors. "I conveyed my expectations for further progress in the debt restructuring process," Hayashi told reporters after his one-day visit.

China holds about 52 percent of Sri Lanka's bilateral credit, with Japan and India the next biggest lenders. All bilateral creditors except China have pledged to support a plan to delay repayments on loans. Beijing has been reluctant to agree to a debt deferral and instead initially offered more loans to pay off older debt, a move unacceptable under IMF bailout rules.

China's delay held up a \$2.9 billion IMF bailout which was finally granted in March, almost a year after Colombo defaulted on its \$46 billion foreign debt. Sri Lanka must secure agreement from all official creditors and a majority of private bondholders to draw down its second IMF instalment of \$330 million in September.

### 'As smoothly as possible'

Japanese foreign ministry spokeswoman Yukiko Okano told reporters that resolving Sri Lanka's debt burden remained an urgent priority to unlock further funding for the island. "For us now the important thing is this debt restructuring process will go as quickly as possible, as smoothly as possible," Okano said. She said Japan had been assured that all bilateral creditors will be offered "comparable treatment".

There have been fears among Sri Lanka's creditor nations that China may ask for more favorable terms, leaving others to carry a bigger share of the restructure's burden. Under Colombo's proposal, bilateral lenders are spared a haircut on loans but will be asked to extend maturity by up to 15 years at an annual fixed interest rate of 1.5 percent, with a nine-year moratorium on interest payments.

Okano added that Japan was concerned about China's big infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in the region as they did not meet international finance standards. Unable to repay a huge loan taken from China in 2017 to build a deep sea port in southern Hambantota, Sri Lanka handed it over to a Chinese firm for \$1.12 billion on a 99-year lease. Sri Lanka ran out of cash to pay for even the most essential imports last year, leading to chronic shortages of food, fuel and medicines.

Then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who faced allegations of mismanagement, was forced to flee the country and resign in July 2022 after months of protests. — AFP

## KFH employees serve customers in 9 branches in Turkey

**KUWAIT:** As part of its constant efforts to offer the best banking experience, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) assigned a team of employees to Turkey to serve customers and visitors during the summer. The employees were assigned to nine branches of KFH-Turkey: two in Bursa, four in Istanbul and one branch each in Trabzon, Izmit and Kuzadasi.

KFH's team, who went through an intensive course before the start of their mission, will continue to work until the first week of September. They were also introduced to the services and products provided by KFH-Turkey to best serve its customers. KFH has always given top priority for customers' needs especially during travel season. In response to their demands, KFH-Turkey team has been assigned to serve those customers who are staying in Turkey throughout the year. Those who own real estate and commercial activities and have financial and banking transactions with the bank on an ongoing basis, can open accounts in KFH-Turkey to benefit from the many services and advantages provided by the bank.

KFH Group Deputy General Manager - Products, Nehal Al-Mosalem, stressed that delegating employees to work in Turkey is a proactive step, and an initiative adopted by KFH to deliver the



Nehal Al-Mosalem



KFH team and KFH-Turkey team at a KFH Turkey branch.

best experience for customers staying in Turkey.

Al-Mosalem explained that KFH always seeks to offer innovative means to serve its valued customers and facilitate all their local and international financial transactions. This standpoint was behind the formation of the team, which includes a number of distinguished employees. She pointed out that this initiative was the result of joint work and cooperation between KFH-Kuwait and its Turkish subsidiary to provide the best banking experience for customers. Al-Mosalem said that KFH customers from

certain segments can open an account with KFH-Turkey while in Kuwait, and get all the services provided, such as a free service for electronic transfers from KFH to beneficiaries of KFH-Turkey.

She added that there are no fees for incoming SWIFT transfers, or the minimum account balance, while invoices or any other payments in Turkey can be easily managed through online banking and other useful services for those who travel regularly to Turkey or own a real estate or have investments there.

## Swedish economy contracts more than expected

**STOCKHOLM:** The Swedish economy contracted more than expected in the second quarter as exports from the Nordic country fell, official statistics showed Friday.

## BoJ eases grip on ultra-loose monetary policy

**TOKYO:** The Bank of Japan on Friday eased its grip on its ultra-loose monetary policy in a small step towards normalization as inflation accelerates and the yen comes under pressure against other major currencies.

The central bank has for years embarked on a process known as yield curve control (YCC) where it allows government bonds to move in a narrow band as part of a drive to boost the long-struggling economy. However, after a closely watched meeting, it said it would allow "greater flexibility" in the market as it hiked its inflation forecast for the current fiscal year.

Still, officials said it did not mean the bank was abandoning its monetary policy — which analysts have warned was looking increasingly unsustainable — saying it would maintain its massive asset-buying measures. Ten-year JGB yields would be allowed to "fluctuate in the range of around plus and minus 0.5 percentage points from the target level", the bank said in a statement.

Sweden's economy shrank by 1.5 percent in the April-to-June period compared to the same quarter last year, according to Statistics Sweden's preliminary data. Analysts had expected a drop of 0.5 percent, according to Bloomberg. There are several reasons for the decrease "but one factor in the last month of the quarter was a decline in exports of goods," Mattias Kain Wyatt, economist at Statistics Sweden, said in a statement.

In June, gross domestic product was 3.6 percent lower than a year earlier. Compared to the second quarter of 2022, GDP fell by 2.4 percent between April and June this year. The top Nordic economy avoided a technical recession when it expanded 0.6 percent in first quarter, following a 0.2 percent contraction in the fourth quarter of 2022.

The final GDP figure for the second quarter is set to be pub-

lished on August 29. Sweden's central bank, the Riksbank, has raised its key interest rate several times as the country combats persistent inflation.

It reached the highest level in nearly 15 years when the Riksbank announced an increase of 0.25 percentage points to 3.75 percent at the end of June. The annual inflation rate slowed in June but remained elevated, with consumer prices rising 9.3 percent. — AFP

But it will "conduct yield curve control with greater flexibility regarding the upper and lower bounds of the range as references, not as rigid limits", the bank said. "The Bank will offer to purchase 10-year JGBs at 1.0 percent every business day through fixed-rate purchase operations," it added.

Market expectations fluctuated in the lead up to the meeting over whether the bank would tinker with its signature stimulus policies after the two-day meeting chaired by governor Kazuo Ueda, who took the helm in April. "Allowing greater flexibility in YCC will help us respond to fluctuation risks more expeditiously, improve the sustainability of monetary loosening and realize the two percent inflation target in a stable and sustainable manner that comes with wage increases," Ueda told a press conference. "If the long-term interest rate were to be rigorously capped at 0.5 percent, that could affect the way the bond market functions or bring more volatility in the financial market," he said.

"We hope that allowing more flexibility in YCC could help ease these concerns."

### YCC tweak 'a cushion'

The yen initially weakened to 139.95 per dollar after the announcement, from around 139.12 yen in the morning, and was later hovering at around 139.48 yen. The currency has been hammered for more than a year as



**TOKYO:** A pedestrian walks past the Bank of Japan (BoJ) building (back right) in central Tokyo on July 28, 2023. — AFP

the BoJ refused to shift from its policy, even as central banks around the world pushed up interest rates to fight surging inflation. The benchmark Nikkei index sank more than two percent at one point on the prospect of higher borrowing costs. The BoJ took a similar measure in December when it expanded the YCC range to around plus or minus 0.5 percentage points, from a range of plus or minus 0.25 percentage points. — AFP



This photograph taken in Antakya shows a silkworm feeding on a mulberry leaf.

# 'Silk of peace'

weaves new bonds in post-quake Turkey

**N**early all the workers lost their houses, the accountant and vet disappeared along with their families, but after the deadly earthquake that devastated Turkey's Hatay province, "the silk of peace" is helping make new connections. "I had to convince myself to start up again," admits Emel Duman, rolling between her fingers a small and incredibly fine ball of fibres. The yellow cocoons, with which she spins and weaves natural silk, have been her life's project.

Duman's home was destroyed in the February disaster and she lives with her family in a silk cooperative workshop on the heights overlooking Antakya. Following the quake, about 100 people who had lost everything crammed into the building for shelter.



This photograph in Antakya shows a silkworm feeding on a mulberry leaf.

### Yellow cocoon

Hatay's special cocoon is yellowish and Duman obsessively tracked down the last place breeding the bombyx mori domestic silk moth around the city of Antakya. Her husband, Fikret, says she talks to the insects.

"It's like with plant species, you have to fight against the loss of biodiversity," she says.

silkworm egg hatches a caterpillar which eventually pierces a hole through the cocoon it has spun and flutters off as a moth.

Working with sericulture or silk production specialists from Hatay's Mustafa Kemal university and from Izmir, Duman heard of "the silk of peace", or ahimsa silk, an Indian term for silk produced without pain. "Industrial (production) boils the cocoon to kill the worm," she explains.

At the cooperative each cocoon is stretched out to a thread of up to 1,700 metres of silk, says her 32-year-old daughter Tugce, who studied textiles and design. "But all of it cannot be used because of the hole which damages the filament."

### Marriage trousseau

Silk production gradually declined in Hatay after the end of the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century. Emel recalls how brides would traditionally receive a silk trousseau for their marriage.

She lost nephews and cousins to the quake that was "so strong I thought no one had survived" and was then caught up helping families who needed aid. But Emel struggled to kickstart silk production again.

She found her own help from The International Organization for Migration which sent Syrian refugees to work at Appollon. Now Emel is seeking official recognition for the "peace silk of Hatay" and has filed for a protected designation of origin.

About 350,000 people worked in 3,000 clothing and textile businesses in the provinces hit by the February 6 earthquake. Today, the numbers have been halved, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which is running a campaign to recruit women. — AFP



Emel Duman, owner of Appollon Defne silk, poses during an interview in Antakya.



Emel Duman, owner of Appollon Defne silk, makes silk thread in Antakya.



Emel Duman, owner of Appollon Defne silk, feeds silkworms with mulberry leaves.



Emel Duman, owner of Appollon Defne silk, poses as she weaves silk fabric in Antakya.



Fikret Duman carries Mulberry leaves in Antakya.



This photograph taken in Antakya shows silk cocoons inside a basket.

They had survived but at least 50,000 people died in southern Turkey. "Apart from the workshop, everything collapsed. It's difficult to start over," says the 57-year-old. Seventy people had been employed by the Appollon cooperative, mostly women often working from home.

Only a handful have come back, including the designer who had already moved in to live.

When Duman had first started the business 25 years before, Hatay - on one of the silk routes of antiquity - had lost the refined production skills. Weaving continued but with white cocoons imported from China.

On dry and rocky land Fikret and Emel planted their first mulberry bushes, fragile plants which need watering day and night. The couple had water brought in by truck until a well was sunk.

Today, the 15,000 bushes nourish thousands of white worms, kept in the shade on large wooden platforms. If you listen carefully, you can hear the worms munching the fresh mulberry leaves.

"It's an orchestral symphony, the most beautiful music in the world," says Fikret after spreading out more freshly-picked leaves.

Emel lets nature do its work. The



A woman stands next to peace silks inside a shop in Antakya.



This photograph shows various colored peace silk fabrics in Antakya.



This picture shows peace silk fabrics in different colors in Antakya.



This photograph in Antakya shows silk thread balls in different colors.



This photograph taken in Antakya shows silkworms eating mulberry leaves.



This photograph taken in Antakya shows silk thread balls in different colors.

## Lifestyle



(From left) Secretary of organization "Save Askoy II" Piet Wittevrongel, Governor of West Flanders Carl Decaluwe and President of the organization "Save Askoy II", Gustaaf Wittevrongel stand in front of a scale model of Belgian singer Jacques Brel's former sailing boat in Zeebrugge. — AFP photos



Secretary of the "Save Askoy II" organization, Piet Wittevrongel poses for a photograph on Belgian singer Jacques Brel's former sailing boat.



This photograph shows Belgian singer Jacques Brel's former sailing boat "Askoy II" in Zeebrugge.

## BELGIAN BROTHERS LOOK TO PUT SINGER BREL'S BOAT BACK TO SEA

Belgian singer Jacques Brel famously crooned about clinging to love in iconic hits like "Ne me quitte pas" and now two brothers in his homeland are engaged in their own enduring passion project to restore his cherished sailboat.

In the North Sea port of Zeebrugge, Gustaaf and Piet Wittevrongel are close to returning the yacht to the sea, 15 years after it was salvaged as a wreck from a New Zealand beach. The red and blue hull of the 20 metre (66 foot) Askoy II looks almost as good new as the final work is done ahead of a planned launch in September. That will be almost 45 years after the death of the Belgian songster, whose French-language ballads such as "Quand on n'a que l'amour" made him a global star in the 1950s and 60s.

"We're waiting for the green light from the maritime inspection," said older brother Gustaaf, 84.

Brel embarked on two epic ocean crossings in the Askoy II - then consid-



This photograph shows gold lettering reading "Askoy II 1958" in Belgian singer Jacques Brel's former sailing boat.

ered one of the most beautiful vessels of its kind - in 1974 to the Marquesas Islands in the South Pacific.

But he sold it in Polynesia after becoming more interested in flying and the boat eventually ended up shipwrecked in New Zealand after reportedly passing through the hands of drug smugglers. While Brel's fame lives on internationally,



President of the "Save Askoy II" organization, Gustaaf Wittevrongel poses for a photograph in front of a scale model of Belgian singer Jacques Brel's former sailing boat.

for the Wittevrongel brothers the connection to the singer and his boat is much more personal.

It was in their father's shop on the Belgian coast some five decades ago that Brel bought the boat's sails and rigging before setting off on his adventures. "I didn't know who was talking to me. I told him that his purchase was going to

cost hundreds of thousands of Belgian francs," recalls Gustaaf, who was just a trainee at the time. "When he told me his name, I realized that he could afford a set of sails."

### Cranes and bulldozers

Doing up the rust-covered wreck has been a mammoth task. A Belgian yacht-

ing enthusiast toyed with the idea for a while but gave up for lack of money. The Wittevrongel brothers, however, were undeterred and decided to take up the challenge with the help of New Zealand contractors who used cranes and bulldozers to rescue the vessel.

"Before the high tide flooded back in, we only had four hours to see the boat and are digging, pull and pump", Gustaaf says. "We did that for three days and got it out." A shipping company agreed to transport the hull of the yacht, wedged between two containers, free of charge across the globe back to Antwerp in Belgium.

In April 2008, the Askoy II arrived back in Belgium. Now the two brothers have added extra berths to the interior and are dreaming of sailing her across the ocean again just as their hero once did. "Brel did it with two people but you need at least six crew if you want to go back to the Marquesas in the future," says Piet Wittevrongel. — AFP



Secretary of the "Save Askoy II" organization, Piet Wittevrongel plays a guitar of Belgian singer Jacques Brel, in his former sailing boat.



This photograph shows a portrait painting of Belgian singer Jacques Brel in Zeebrugge.



This photograph shows Belgian singer Jacques Brel's guitar in the singer's former sailing boat in Zeebrugge.

## Eagles co-founder Randy Meisner dies aged 77

Randy Meisner, a founding member of chart-topping rock band the Eagles, has died in Los Angeles at the age of 77, the group said Thursday. His passing on Wednesday night due to complications from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease was announced in a statement on the band's website.

Meisner was the original bassist and a vocalist for the Eagles, one of the best-selling bands in history,

whose many hits include "Hotel California," "Take It Easy" and "One of These Nights." "Randy was an integral part of the Eagles and instrumental in the early success of the band," the statement said.

"His vocal range was astonishing, as is evident on his signature ballad, 'Take It to the Limit.'" The Eagles have sold more than 150 million albums globally, after more than half a century in music, and were inducted into the

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1998.

They pioneered the West Coast sound of laid-back, country-tinged rock that dominated early 1970s American pop, and saw a changing cast of core members throughout the decades.

Fellow founding member Glenn Frey died in 2016, aged 67. The Eagles' current lineup - including Don Henley, Joe Walsh and Timothy B. Schmit - are scheduled to stage a final tour starting this September in New York, which is

expected to continue until 2025. Meisner, who quit the band in the late 1970s and was replaced by Schmit, was not due to take part in the tour.

Born to a farming family in Nebraska in March 1946, Meisner played with Rick Nelson's Stone Canyon Band, and Poco, before co-founding the Eagles. — AFP



The Eagles - Bernie Leadon, Joe Walsh, Don Henley, Timothy Schmit, Don Felder and Randy Meisner - appear together after receiving their awards and being inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, January 12, 1998 in New York.



The Eagles - Randy Meisner, Timothy Schmit, Glenn Frey, Don Felder, Joe Walsh, Don Henley and Bernie Leadon - appear together on stage after receiving their awards and being inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, January 12, 1998 in New York. — AFP photos



A gold, ruby, and diamond crown ring, designed and worn by the late US rapper Tupac Shakur during his last public appearance in 1996, is displayed during a press preview at Sotheby's in New York City. — AFP

### Top-of-the-line bling: Drake reveals he bought Tupac's crown ring

Canadian rapper Drake revealed Friday that he is the buyer of a crown-shaped ring that belonged to slain hip-hop legend Tupac Shakur, which sold at auction this week for a record \$1 million. Drake shared an Instagram story that showed him wearing the bauble, which sold Tuesday at Sotheby's for a total of \$1.016 million, includ-

ing commission and fees. That was well above the pre-sale estimate of between \$200,000 and \$300,000, making it the most valuable hip-hop artifact ever sold, the auction house said.

Drake - the best-selling artist behind hits such as "Hotline Bling" and "Nice For What" - has spent lavishly in the past, including buying a Boeing 767 for personal use and paying \$104 million for a Los Angeles home once owned by singer Robbie Williams. The New York-born Shakur wore the ring during his final public appearance at the MTV Video Music Awards on September 4, 1996.

Widely regarded as one of the greatest rappers of all time with 75 million records sold, he was shot dead by an

unidentified assailant in Las Vegas just days later. He was 25. Shakur, whose hits included "California Love," designed the ring over the course of a few months, Sotheby's said. He did so through his godmother Yaasmyn Fula, who put the ring up for sale.

A gold circlet studded with a central cabochon ruby flanked by two pave-cut diamonds sits atop a diamond-encrusted gold band. Shakur was influenced by 16th century Italian philosopher Niccolo Machiavelli's political manifesto "The Prince," which he read while in prison on sex abuse charges. He modeled the design on the crowns of the medieval kings of Europe, Sotheby's added. — AFP

## Sinead O'Connor was completing new album before death

Singer Sinead O'Connor was at the time of her death completing a new album and planning a tour as well as a movie based on her autobiography, her agents said Friday. Her death is not being treated as suspicious but an autopsy will be conducted to ascertain the cause, authorities have said, as tributes from around the world poured in for the 56-year-old Irish star.

"Sinead was completing her new album, reviewing new tour dates for 2024 and considering opportunities in relation to a movie of her book," her agents Kenneth Papenfus and Carl Papenfus said in a statement.

"Wonderful plans were afoot at this time", they added, noting that they were "forever grateful" to her. "It has been an honor to have worked with Sinead professionally, as musicians, producers and her artist managers over the last nine years, but much, much more than that Sinead was family," the pair said. "May she rest in peace."

Hundreds of condolences have poured in from politicians, musicians and others for O'Connor, who was known for her powerful voice and rebellious charisma. Born in County Dublin, the Grammy-winner made 10 albums in her career, from "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got" to 2014's "I'm not Bossy, I'm the Boss". O'Connor had spoken publicly about her mental health problems, including struggling with thoughts of suicide and her bipolar disorder diagnosis. — AFP



Irish singer Sinead O'Connor performs at the Highline Ballroom in New York City on February 23, 2012. — AFP

Lifestyle



# Kenzo presents first fashion show in China



**A**gainst Shanghai's glittering river skyline, Kenzo-clad models strutted down a breezy open-air runway on Friday for the French fashion brand's first-ever show in China.

The country's vast pool of consumers is critical to the luxury market, and top brands like Kenzo are turning to wooing them on their own turf as domestic high-end shopping rises.

Kenzo already operates 40 stores in mainland China, and the show is part of its policy of "reinforcing its strong commitment and growing presence in the Chinese market", a statement announcing the show said. "Despite the slowing economy, China is sending positive signs (to design houses)," said Lisa Nan, correspondent for Jing Daily, a publication which reports on the luxury sector in the country.

Consequently, "brands are engaging with local consumers through their highest standard of presentation, runways... Consumers really appreciate these exclusive events".

On Friday, dozens of models in dark blues and pastels paraded down the riverfront catwalk that took Shanghai's Oriental Pearl Tower as a backdrop, with bemused tourists scrambling to take pictures as they sailed past on LED-lit cruise boats.

Creative director Nigo's Spring/Summer 2024 collection - which has already shown in Paris - was presented with small changes to underscore "a symbolic yet natural 'East Meets West' bridge", Kenzo said.

The Shanghai venue was chosen to match that of the Paris show, which took place on the footbridge that links to the Eiffel Tower over the River Seine in June. Kenzo is part of the LVMH group, which includes dozens of brands like Louis Vuitton, Dior and Tiffany.

Its head, French billionaire Bernard Arnault, visited China in late June and has said he is "optimistic about the Chinese market". "The Chinese clientele is much more important than it was in 2019," LVMH's financial director Jean-



Jacques Guiony recently told journalists. Analysts at UBS, meanwhile, have said that 2023 will be the "year of the Chinese consumer".

Chinese consumers' spending on personal luxury goods had already surpassed pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2022 and has continued to grow year-on year, according to market research company Euromonitor - largely



thanks to domestic shopping that took off while zero-Covid kept the world largely cut off from the world.

The figure is projected to reach US\$59 billion by 2023, with the growth set to continue, although at a slower rate, in the short to medium term.

"Post-pandemic repatriation of luxury spending is unlikely to budge any time soon," said Fflur Roberts, Head of Luxury Goods at Euromonitor.

"These new-found shopping habits and major improvements in the local shopping options and customer journey are set to stick, and a notable share of luxury purchases by Chinese customers will continue to occur within the mainland."

Despite China's slowing economy, Roberts said, "the future overall for luxury goods in China nonetheless continues to look bright" - and brands are jostling to take advantage.

Jing Daily's Nan said 2023 was the "year of replica fashion shows". "Bottega Veneta, Chanel, Dior have or will be showcasing in China this year. So no wonder why Kenzo decided to showcase this year," she said. — AFP

## Kering takes stake in Valentino as results disappoint

**F**rench luxury group Kering announced Thursday it will take a stake in Italian fashion house Valentino as it released results that underperformed rivals thanks to stagnating sales at Gucci.

The deal to acquire a 30 percent stake in Valentino from its owner Mayhoola opens the possibility of the Qatari investment fund becoming a shareholder in Kering even as the luxury group spoke about the need to invest in its fashion houses.



This photograph shows the logo of French luxury group Kering in Paris on February 17, 2015. — AFP

The deal for the 30 percent stake for 1.7 billion euros (\$1.87 billion) in cash, which is expected to close by the end of the year, also includes an option to completely buy the Italian fashion house through 2028.

"The transaction is part of a broader strategic partnership between Kering and Mayhoola, which could lead to Mayhoola becoming a shareholder in Kering," the companies said in a joint statement.

This strategic partnership "will further support the brand elevation strategy implemented by Valentino CEO Jacopo Venturini under the ownership of Mayhoola, which turned it into one of the most admired luxury houses in the world," they added.

Meanwhile, Kering reported its net profits slid 10 percent in the first half of the year to 1.79 billion euros.

While overall revenue rose by two percent to 10.1 billion euros, they dipped by one percent at Gucci.

Earlier this month Kering announced a shake-up at Gucci, replacing the long-time chief executive with a confident of Kering chief executive and owner Francois-Henri Pinault.

Kering has underperformed its rivals in recent years as the luxury industry has seen phenomenal growth.

LVMH, the world's top luxury group, on Tuesday posted a 15-percent increase in first-half sales while profits jumped by 30 percent. — AFP

## Luxury giant LVMH enjoys 'excellent' first half

**L**VMH, the world's top luxury group, said Tuesday it enjoyed an excellent first half with net profits soaring by 30 percent to 8.48 billion euros (\$9.34 billion) thanks to strong growth in Asia and Europe. Sales at the group whose brands include Louis Vuitton, Dior and Tiffany, rose 15 percent during the January-June period compared with last year, to hit 42.2 billion euros.

LVMH's leading business group of fashion and leather goods alone saw 17 percent revenue growth to 21.2 billion euros. All business lines saw rising sales except wines and spirits, which dipped four percent.

"LVMH achieved outstanding results during a six-month period of ongoing economic and geopolitical uncertainty," chief executive Bernard Arnault said in a statement. Arnault said the group was confident and optimistic about the second half of this year. Selective retailing, which includes Sephora perfume shops, saw revenue jump by a quarter to 8.4 billion euros.

It also includes the DFS duty free shops, which returned to profitability.

"DFS benefited from the gradual recovery in international travel and, in particular, from the return of tourists to the flagship destinations of Hong Kong and Macau," the company said.

Geographically, "last year we had a slowdown in China and the United States helped us. This year it is a bit the opposite," LVMH's chief financial officer Jean-Jacques Guiony told journalists. Sales in Asia jumped 23 percent in the first half of the year, compared to just three percent growth in the United States, where they actually dipped by one percent in April through June.

"We saw a certain slowdown in the United States notably with the 'aspirational' clientele, that is to say in secondary cities, entry-level products, what we sell online," said Guiony. — AFP



Models present creations for Kenzo by Japanese fashion designer Tomoaki Nagao aka Nigo during Kenzo fashion show at the North Bund Bay in Shanghai on July 28, 2023. — AFP photos

## Sports

# Disqualified Ukraine fencer Kharlan awarded Olympics place, reinstated

## Russian Olympic chief accuses IOC of picking sides

**MILAN:** Ukrainian fencer Olha Kharlan was awarded a place in the 2024 Paris Olympics by the IOC after she was disqualified at the world championships for refusing to shake the hand of her Russian opponent. The International Fencing Federation (FIE) also said it was reinstating Kharlan, allowing her to take part in the team competition at the world championships in Milan. Emmanuel Katsiadakis, the Greek president of the FIE, said the decision had been taken "after consultation with the International Olympic Committee".

Kharlan, the first fencer to face a Russian or Belarusian since the former's invasion of Ukraine, won 15-7 against Russia's Anna Smirnova on Thursday. The 32-year-old four-time Olympic medalist refused Smirnova's handshake afterwards, instead offering her sabre to tap blades, but FIE rules state that the two fencers must shake hands. Smirnova staged a 45-minute protest and refused to leave the competition strip. Kharlan was disqualified, claiming afterwards that Emmanuel Katsiadakis, the Greek president of the FIE, had even assured her that it was "possible" not to shake hands and offer a touch of her blade instead following her victory.

"I thought I had his word, to be safe, but apparently, no," Kharlan said. In response

to her disqualification, the International Olympic Committee called for Ukrainian athletes to be treated "sensitively". Then on Friday, IOC President Thomas Bach, a former Olympic fencer himself, sent Kharlan a letter saying she would be guaranteed a place at next year's Olympics in Paris regardless of whether she gained the qualification points.

"As a fellow fencer, it is impossible for me to imagine how you feel at this moment," Bach wrote. "Given your unique situation, the International Olympic Committee will allocate an additional quota place to you for the Olympic Games Paris 2024 in case you will not be able to qualify in the remaining period." Bach added: "Rest assured that the IOC will continue to stand in full solidarity with the Ukrainian athletes and the Olympic community of Ukraine during these extremely difficult times."

### Russian anger

The decision to allocate Kharlan a place in the Olympics is sure to provoke an angry reaction from Russia. Earlier Friday, the head of Russia's Olympic Committee accused the IOC of picking sides after it urged sports federations to show sensitivity towards Ukrainian athletes. "The statement in question indicates that the IOC determined for itself and picked

a side in the political conflict, (and) began to act in the interests of this side," Stanislav Pozdnyakov said on Telegram.

According to Pozdnyakov, these remarks "clearly showed the duplicity of the so-called recommendations, criteria and parameters. Now we have been involuntarily but clearly shown the attitude which absolutely any Russian will face at international competitions". Since Russia launched its offensive in Ukraine, the IOC imposed sporting sanctions on Moscow and its ally Minsk, but earlier this year it recommended that Russian and Belarusian athletes could compete as individuals in qualifying events under a neutral flag and with no anthem.

The decision provoked howls of protest from both the Ukrainian government and criticism from their athletes for placing the human rights of Russian athletes above theirs. This resulted in Ukraine barring their athletes from competing at events where Russians and Belarusians were present — tennis being the exception as players in that sport compete as individuals. The IOC has not yet made a decision on whether Russians and Belarusians can take part in the Paris Olympics as neutral competitors. Ukraine's Sports Minister Vadym Gutzeit hailed the IOC's decision to give Kharlan an Olympics place.



**MILAN:** Ukraine's fencer Olha Kharlan (second left) attends a press conference with President of the French Fencing Federation, Bruno Gares (2nd right) during the FIE Fencing World Championships at the Fair Allianz MI.CO (Milano Convegno) in Milan, on July 28, 2023. — AFP

On Facebook he said: "Despite all the hate that I personally and my team have experienced in these 24 hours, working hard for Ukrainian athletes and not responding to it, we have already achieved the first result. "We are working on removing the black card for Olga's further

competitions and preventing similar situations in other sports." Kharlan is only taking part in the world championships after the Ukraine sports ministry changed its previous policy of barring athletes from facing Russian or Belarusian competitors. — AFP



**ATLANTA:** Taylor Fritz serves against Kei Nishikori during the ATP Atlanta Open quarter finals at Atlantic Station in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

## Fritz flies past Nishikori into Atlanta semis

**WASHINGTON:** Top-seeded Taylor Fritz powered past former world number four Kei Nishikori 6-4, 6-2 on Friday to reach the semi-finals of the ATP Atlanta Open. Fritz, ranked ninth in the world, reached his seventh tour-level semi-final of the season with his first career win in four meetings with Nishikori. Nishikori was playing his first ATP event since 2021 as he returns from left hip surgery in January 2022. "I'm super happy how I played today, getting better and better each day I feel like," Fritz said in his post-match on-court interview.

"A lot of positives I can take into the next match. Kei has been around since I first started. He's an incredible player and a great guy. "I'm just happy to see him back playing again, having good results and hitting the ball well after being injured for so long," added Fritz, who had lost three prior meetings with Nishikori but hadn't played him since 2019. Nishikori, owner of 12 ATP titles and runner-up at the US Open in 2014, launched his comeback this season on the lower tier Challenger Tour, capturing the title at the Caribbean Open Challenger in Puerto Rico in June.

He arrived in Atlanta ranked 439th in the world and posted victories over Australian Jordan Thompson and China's Shang Juncheng to reach the quarter-finals. But he and Fritz held serve with ease through the first five games, Fritz finally pouncing on the first break point of the match to pocket the first set after 34 minutes. Nishikori, who appeared to be struggling somewhat with his movement around court, received treatment on his left knee during a medical time out between sets, and after dropping serve in the second game could never get back on terms.

Fritz, who is seeking a second title of the season after winning the fifth of his career at Delray Beach in February, will face eighth-seeded American JJ Wolf for a place in the final. Wolf beat Germany's Dominik Koepfer 6-2, 6-3. There was a blow to local favorite Christopher Eubanks who, after a two-hour rain delay, lost 6-4, 6-4 to Australia's Aleksandar Vukic. The 27-year-old Vukic reaches an ATP Tour semi-final for the first time after punishing the unforced errors from Wimbledon quarter-finalist Eubanks, who was born in Atlanta. — AFP

## Kagawa adds to PSG woes

**OSAKA:** Former Manchester United midfielder Shinji Kagawa added to Paris Saint-Germain's woes on Friday, earning J-League side Cerezo Osaka a 3-2 win over the Ligue 1 champions in the second game of their Japan tour. Hugo Ekitike and Vitinha found the net for PSG, but Jordy Croux and Sota Kitano replied for Cerezo before Kagawa struck to seal Cerezo's comeback win in Osaka. Neymar once again failed to make it onto the pitch for PSG, having also sat out their 0-0 draw with Cristiano Ronaldo's Al Nassr on Tuesday.

Kylian Mbappe was sensationally left out of the squad on the eve of PSG's departure for Asia, with a source close to negotiations telling AFP on Monday that the club have received a world record bid of 300-million-euro (\$333 million) from Saudi Arabian side Al Hilal. Ekitike opened the scoring for PSG in the 17th minute, beating the offside trap to tuck home Warren Zaire-Emery's cross.

A mix-up between Milan Skriniar and Danilo Pereira gifted Cerezo an equalizer five minutes later, the pair both missing a long punt forward from Cerezo goalkeeper Yang Han-been before Croux capitalized with a slick finish. Ekitike then turned provider in some style for PSG four minutes after the break. After receiving the ball from Vitinha on the edge of the area Ekitike back-heeled into the path of the Portuguese, who had continued his run forward



**OSAKA:** Paris Saint-Germain's players remonstrate with the referee as Cerezo Osaka celebrate a goal scored by Shinji Kagawa during the friendly football match between France's Paris Saint-Germain and Japan's Cerezo Osaka at Nagai Stadium in Osaka on July 28, 2023. — AFP

ward and gleefully steered home. Carlos Soler lashed over the bar after breaking in behind in the 66th minute, and one minute later PSG were made to rue that miss.

Ryo Watanabe pressed high to win possession for Cerezo, before crossing for fellow substitute Sota Kitano to slam beyond Gianluigi Donnarumma. Kagawa then struck the ham-

mer blow for Cerezo in the 79th minute, arrowing into the top corner after Cher Ndour was robbed by Haruki Arai on the edge of the penalty area. PSG's next game is against Champions League runners-up Inter Milan in Tokyo on Tuesday, before they travel to South Korea to take on K-League side Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors. — AFP

## Axelsen and An storm into Japan Open finals

**TOKYO:** Badminton world number one Viktor Axelsen won a crushing victory against Japan's Kodai Naraoka on Saturday to move into the Japan Open final, while South Korea's An Se-young also secured a berth. Axelsen, the men's reigning world champion and Tokyo Olympics gold medalist, swiftly beat Naraoka 21-11, 21-11 in 45 minutes.

"I'm excited" about the final, said the Danish star, who will face Indonesian Masters winner Jonatan Christie who survived a close game against India's Lakshya Sen 21-15, 13-21, 21-16. "I just try to do my best every single day," said Axelsen, 29, as he looked ahead to Sunday's final. "I have struggles and stuff to overcome but... I've been really fortunate to have experience

playing with legends," he said.

Home favorite Naraoka, who suffers from back and foot pain, admitted Axelsen was "very powerful". "I couldn't hold on because of my back and foot. I did everything I could, but it didn't work against the world number one," he said. Christie, 25, speaking before Axelsen secured his victory, said he felt "a little nervous" about the final but added no one knows who will win.

Women's number two An Se-young beat Taiwan's fourth-seed Tai Tzu Ying — whom she defeated last week in the final of the Korea Open — 21-17, 21-12. "I'm happy I won," An said after the game, adding she was able to calm down and score points steadily one by one. "I want to enjoy my game (at the final) and I want to



**TOKYO:** Viktor Axelsen of Denmark hits a return against Kodai Naraoka of Japan during their men's singles semi final match in the fifth day of the Japan Open badminton tournament on July 29, 2023. — AFP

achieve my usual performance," she said. An will face China's He Bing Jiao who beat Gregoria Mariska Tunjung

13-21, 21-19, 21-9. He said An was "a very strong player" and that she "wants to learn from her." — AFP

## Norsgaard scores emotional victory

**BLAGNAC:** Emma Norsgaard outfoxed the other women's Tour de France sprinters by escaping on a breakaway and then holding off the pack at the finish to win stage six on Friday. Norsgaard missed a large chunk of the season after breaking a collarbone in the Strade Bianche in March and she wept throughout her post-race interview. "I want to thank everyone around me for still believing in me after being out the whole spring," said Norsgaard, who turned 24 on Wednesday. "I'm super emotional. It's the biggest victory ever."

The Dane was a part of a trio that escaped after 29km and nursed a slender lead almost to

the end of the 122.5km run from Albi to Blagnac. The peloton once again misjudged the pursuit and just failed to catch all the members of the escape group. As the pack swallowed the other breakaways with less than 500m to go, Norsgaard sprinted. She held on to finish one second ahead of Charlotte Kool and race leader Lotte Kopecky, who beat her handle bars in frustration after another near miss. "I'm not a sprinter any more I have to realize it," said Norsgaard. "I might be fast, but I cannot keep up with the real sprinters. I took a chance today and reached for the stars." It was a second stage victory for the Movistar team at the Tour after Liane Lippert won stage two.

On Saturday, the team will be focused on helping defending champion Annemiek van Vleuten through a short but brutal Pyrenean stage that contains two famed tour climbs: the Col de l'As-

pin and the Tourmalet. The Tour ends with a time trial on Sunday. "I feel sometimes guilty that they have to sacrifice their own ambitions," said Van Vleuten at the finish. "Today she had an opportunity and she went for it and pulled it off. It gives me goosebumps."

Defending champion Van Vleuten, who is third overall, has a 12-second advantage over her main rival Demi Vollerling, last year's runner up. "For me, it starts tomorrow," said Van Vleuten. "I'm ready." Vollerling was hit with a 20-second penalty on Thursday for drafting behind the Worx team car that was deemed to be driving dangerously. Worx team head Danny Stam, who was driving the car, was on Friday thrown off the Tour as punishment. Meanwhile, Norsgaard said she was not going to let the prospect of Saturday's tough climbs inhibit her after her victory. "I'm going to celebrate for sure," she said. — AFP

## Sports

# Belgian GP practice hit by treacherous conditions

## Verstappen makes light of Spa penalty

**SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS:** Carlos Sainz topped the times for Ferrari but Formula One was left facing a problematic challenge on Friday as heavy rain curtailed the only free practice session for the Belgian Grand Prix. The Spanish driver clocked a best lap time of two minutes and 3.207 seconds to finish ahead of the McLarens of Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris with Charles Leclerc fourth for Ferrari. Sergio Perez was fifth for Red Bull, but Max Verstappen did not clock a time and little of the action was representative in conditions that many observers believe render the circuit as too dangerous for racing.

In such treacherous conditions, the International Motoring Federation (FIA) may face calls for qualifying on Friday afternoon to be cancelled. The Grand Prix, being run at Spa in July for the first time, follows much debate about safety and comes only weeks after the death of 18-year-old Dutch racer Dilano van't Hoff, a crash in wet conditions that was a reminder of the fatal accident in 2019 that claimed the life of French F2 driver Antoine Hubert. The session began in steady rain with Alex Albon, on intermediates, leading the way in his Williams before Mercedes sent Lewis Hamilton out on full wets as the rain intensified.

Red Bull had been reluctant to join the fray, in difficult conditions, having confirmed shortly beforehand that Verstappen was taking a new gearbox, his fifth of the year, and was therefore poised for a five-place grid penalty. The maximum is four new boxes per year and Spa was a logical choice for the change and penalty because it is a long circuit offering many overtaking opportunities. Last year, he started 14th, but stormed to victory. The session represented Ferrari's first since they announced that Diego Lovorno had replaced Laurent Mekies as sporting director.

### Red-flagged

It was a tricky baptism, a 'sprint race' weekend with limited practice in treacherous conditions that reduced the session to a mix of survival and hope as a sequence of drivers experienced unscheduled excursions. Yuki Tsunoda, Albon, Perez, soon after joining the action, and Gasly all had minor incidents before Zhou Guanyu and then Logan Sargeant went off at the end of the Kemmel Straight after half an hour. The session was red-flagged as Sargeant reported:



**SPA, LIEGE PROVINCE:** Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (right) and Alpha Tauri's Japanese driver Yuki Tsunoda compete during the sprint shootout ahead of the Formula One Belgian Grand Prix at the Spa-Francorchamps Circuit in Spa on July 29, 2023. — AFP

"I couldn't turn. Something was broken."

The delay lasted nine minutes before the circuit was green-flagged – the worst preparation for the teams ahead of qualifying, scheduled to take place later on Friday afternoon. Anticipating a debate on how to form the grid, if qualifying was to be cancelled due to the weather, the FIA issued a statement mid-session. "We can confirm that the teams have been informed that Free Practice will not be used to set the grid for either the sprint or the grand prix this weekend," it said. "This has been done to ensure that teams do not treat the first session of the weekend as a competitive session."

Max Verstappen declared he can carry on winning in Sunday's Belgian Grand Prix, playing down his five-place grid penalty after topping qualifying on Friday. The defending double world champion and runaway leader of the title race reeled off a phenomenal late lap to beat Ferrari's Charles Leclerc by eight-tenths of a second and will be seeking his eighth consecu-

tive victory. "Last year, I had more penalties," he said, referring to his triumph from 14th on the grid. "So, we can still win this race on Sunday, but let's first wait till tomorrow (Saturday) - and see what the weather will do and what kind of racing we are going to have. "It's great for me here to see so many fans. I grew up close to here and I have raced here a lot, so it is like a second home race for me."

The 25-year-old Dutchman will be hoping to complete a hat-trick of Belgian wins and to increase his 110-point lead ahead of Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez in the championship, but it will be Leclerc who starts the race from pole position, his second this season. "Not bad for us," said Leclerc after the wet-dry session, which saw times tumbling in the third qualifying session on slick tyres after Q1 had been run on intermediates. "Especially in those conditions - it's always tricky to put everything together. I put in a lot of work for those conditions as I wasn't comfortable a few races ago and it seems to have paid off. — AFP

### 'Ebb and flowed'

Australia, as the holders, are assured of retaining the Ashes at 2-1 up, and only need to avoid defeat at The Oval to secure their first Test series win away to England in 22 years. "It's ebbed and flowed the whole way, we're pretty disappointed," Smith told the BBC. "A few of us got good starts but couldn't go and get a big score. Twelve runs in front, it's a one-innings game from here pretty much."

Australia resumed on Friday on 61-1, with Usman Khawaja 26 not out and Marnus Labuschagne, fresh from his hundred at Old Trafford, unbeaten on two. Their replicate in the series means they have no need to replicate England's risky 'Bazball' batting approach. But they arguably veered too much in the opposite direction during an attritional morning session, scoring just 54 runs in 26 overs for the loss of Labuschagne, who edged express fast bowler Mark Wood to Root in the slips, who took a brilliant one-handed catch.

But Broad, whose 167-Test career has been notable for dramatic wicket-taking bursts, soon reduced them to 127-4. He had Khawaja, the leading run-scorer in the series, lbw for 47 with a full-length



Australia's Steve Smith

delivery. Broad, who made his name in Ashes cricket with a return of 5-37 at The Oval in 2009, became the first Englishman to take 150 Test wickets against Australia. That rose to 151 wickets when Travis Head was caught behind off an excellent delivery that nipped away off the seam. — AFP

## Smith leads Australia revival in Ashes Test

**LONDON:** Steve Smith's 71 helped Australia recover from a batting collapse as the tourists frustrated England by battling to a first-innings lead in the fifth and final Ashes Test at The Oval on Friday. Australia were eventually bowled out for 295 on the second day, 12 runs ahead of England's 283. It looked as if England would enjoy a sizeable advantage as veteran seamer Stuart Broad sparked a slump that left Australia 185-7 from a comfortable 115-2 at lunch.

But Smith and Australia captain Pat Cummins (36) kept England at bay during an eighth-wicket stand of 54. Cummins then added 49 for the ninth wicket with Todd Murphy. Off-spinner Murphy — recalled following last week's rain-marred drawn fourth Test at Old Trafford — added to England's woes with a sparkling 34 off just 39 balls. Cummins eventually holed out off part-time spinner Joe Root, with rival skipper Ben Stokes throwing the ball back in over the rope at long-on to complete a fine catch.

## All Blacks crush Wallabies 38-7 to retain title

**MELBOURNE:** A vintage All Blacks smashed Australia 38-7 Saturday to retain the Rugby Championship title and Bledisloe Cup as Eddie Jones' gamble with a new-look Wallabies side backfired spectacularly. The visitors reached the break with a 19-7 lead in front of 83,944 fans at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, and romped to a six tries to one win. It was another hugely impressive performance from a team on a 10-game unbeaten streak as they ominously hit their straps ahead of the September-October World Cup in France.

Shannon Frizell, Codie Taylor and Will Jordan crossed in the first half to silence the bumper crowd, with Caleb Clarke, Mark Telea, and Rieko Ioane adding more tries in a devastating eight-minute second-half blitz. "I'm delighted with that, it was on an iconic ground and it's pretty special for us," said New Zealand coach Ian Foster. "To come away with that sort of victory is something we can be proud of. The way we were able to come through was really pleasing."

Australia's lone try came from Rob Valetini and with stand-in skipper Allan Alaalatoa stretched off with a nasty leg injury, it was another miserable



**MELBOURNE:** New Zealand's Cam Roigard (center) holds the trophy after the Rugby Championship 2023 and Bledisloe Cup Test match between Australia and New Zealand on July 29, 2023. — AFP

night. Ill-discipline again let them down, with two yellow cards making their job near impossible. Victory secured New Zealand the southern hemisphere Rugby Championship for the ninth time in its 11 editions and the prized trans-Tasman trophy for a 21st year with a game to play against Australia in Dunedin next month.

In contrast, it left the Wallabies in an ever-deepening hole as Jones struggles to find the right combinations. They have now lost all three games since

the 2023, 2024 and 2025 financial years do not meet their accounting requirements. Juventus said in a statement that they accepted the decision and would not appeal the sanction. "Juventus, while continuing to consider the alleged violations insubstantial and its actions correct, has declared to accept the decision," the club said.

However, they insisted that this did not "constitute admission of any liability against itself". "We regret the decisions of the UEFA Club Financial Control Body," said Juventus president Gianluco Ferrero who added the club preferred "to put an end to a period of uncertainty". Ferrero highlighted the "uncertainty about a possible participation in the 2024/2025 season of the Champions League" that could weigh on an appeal procedure.

Fiorentina, who finished in eighth place in Serie A last season, are likely to replace Juventus in the

Conference League. In May, Juventus agreed to pay a fine of more than 700,000 euros (\$751,000) for lying about players foregoing wages during the COVID-19 pandemic after a plea bargain approved by the Italian Football Federation tribunal. The plea deal brought to an end a series of cases in Italy's sporting courts involving the Turin club.

They were also handed a 10-point deduction in Serie A after a revision of their initial 15-point penalty inflicted on the club over illicit transfer activity. The disciplinary tribunal of the Italian federation (FIGC) said it had fined the club 718,240 euros, while seven of its management figures were ordered to pay fines ranging from 47,000 euros to 10,000 euros. On Friday, UEFA also reached a settlement with Chelsea which will result in the English Premier League side paying 10 million euros for "submitting incomplete financial information" during the Roman Abramovich era. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Al-Ahli recruit Jaissle

**PARIS:** Saudi side Al-Ahli on Friday named Matthias Jaissle as their new coach, the young German moving from Austrian champions RB Salzburg. The 35-year-old, regarded as one of the most promising managers of his generation, joins the posse of high profile players like Cristiano Ronaldo and Karim Benzema lured to the Saudi Pro League by enormous pay cheques. "Our new football manager: Matthias Jaissle, welcome," the club posted on social media, hours after unveiling Manchester City forward Riyad Mahrez as their latest signing. Jaissle led Salzburg to the Austrian title in both seasons in charge of the club. He joins other European managers confirmed or due to ply their trade in the cash-rich Saudi league this season including Steven Gerrard (Al-Ettifaq), Jorge Jesus (Al-Hilal) and Luis Castro (Al-Nassr). — AFP

#### Mahrez joins Saudi club

**LONDON:** Manchester City forward Riyad Mahrez has joined Saudi side Al-Ahli, the two clubs announced on Friday, becoming the latest big-name player to be lured to the cash-rich league in the Gulf state. The 32-year-old Algerian winger joined Pep Guardiola's team in 2018 from Leicester, winning 11 major trophies at the club. "The wait is over: Riyad is real," the Saudi Pro League club said in a social media post. City agreed a fee understood to be worth up to £30 million (\$38.6 million) with Al-Ahli last week. "To play for Manchester City has been an honor and privilege," Mahrez told City's website. "I came to City to win trophies and enjoy my football and I achieved all that and so much more. "I have had five unforgettable years with this football club, working with unbelievable players, fantastic supporters, and the best manager in the world." City's director of football Txiki Begiristain paid tribute to the Algeria star. — AFP

#### Boxer's suspension lifted

**LONDON:** UK Anti-Doping confirmed on Friday that Conor Benn is no longer provisionally suspended shortly after the British boxer announced he was free to resume his career in the ring. Benn was formally charged by UKAD in April after twice testing positive for the female fertility drug clomifene in the build-up to October's domestic catchweight showdown with Chris Eubank Jr. But the 26-year-old son of British great Nigel Benn revealed in a social media post that the charge had been dismissed. "Today marks the end of a grueling 10-month process, during which the WBC (World Boxing Council) had already decided I was innocent of any wrongdoing," Benn said. The welterweight said he has been "vindicated for the second time" after a hearing with the National Anti-Doping Panel and UKAD. "Hopefully, the public and various members of the media can now understand why I have maintained my innocence so strongly all the way through," he added. — AFP

#### Djere knocks out Musetti

**BERLIN:** Serbian Laslo Djere defeated titleholder Lorenzo Musetti of Italy to reach the semi-finals of the ATP Hamburg Open on Friday. World number 57 Djere won in straight sets 7-5, 6-3 against the 2022 Hamburg Open winner and third seed, who came into the match as the favorite. The 28-year-old, who has won two previous titles on clay, will face China's Zhang Zhizhen, who defeated Daniel Altmaier on Friday. Zhang, ranked 79 in the world, won 6-4, 6-4 after breaking the German once in each set on the way to his first ATP semi-finals. In the other half of the draw, Hamburg-born fourth-seed Alexander Zverev faces Luca Van Assche in the quarter-finals while top seed Casper Ruud takes on Arthur Fils. — AFP

#### Kim to make Bayern debut

**TOKYO:** South Korean defender Kim Min-jae will make his Bayern Munich debut in the club's second game of their Japan tour against J-League side Kawasaki Frontale this weekend, manager Thomas Tuchel said Friday. Kim helped Italian champions Napoli win their first Serie A title in over three decades last season before joining Bayern on a five-year contract in July. The 26-year-old did not appear in Bayern's 2-1 defeat to Manchester City on Wednesday, but Tuchel told reporters in Tokyo that "tomorrow, if nothing happens, I'd like to see him play his debut." "Maybe he will play about 45 minutes, the first half or second half," Tuchel said. "It's good for the team, and hopefully he can show that he is the player that we think he is." Tuchel praised the South Korea international, saying he will give Bayern "a lot of stability and also variety". — AFP

#### Juventus beat AC Milan

**LOS ANGELES:** Juventus beat AC Milan 4-3 on penalties after their pre-season friendly in Carson, California, ended in a 2-2 draw on Thursday. The two Serie A giants produced an interesting hour at Dignity Health Sports Park, the home of Major League Soccer's Los Angeles Galaxy, before mass substitutions from both teams saw the game fizzle out. German defender Malick Thiaw headed Milan in front in the 23rd minute, rising well in the box to power home a free-kick, floated in from deep by Theo Hernandez. Juve pulled level 10 minutes later after Danilo fired home following a scramble in front of the goal. Milan restored their lead in the 39th minute when Thiaw headed a Christian Pulisic corner towards Olivier Giroud and the veteran French striker hit a well-taken volley on the turn. — AFP

## Juve kicked out of Europe over financial breach

**PARIS:** Juventus were kicked out of next season's Europa Conference League on Friday for breaching financial fair play rules, UEFA announced. The Italian giants were also fined 20 million euros (\$22 million) with half that amount suspended. "Juventus violated UEFA's regulatory framework...and it was decided to exclude Juventus from the 2023/24 UEFA men's club competition," said a UEFA statement.

European football's governing body said the 10-million-euro additional fine will only be applied if

## France reboot hopes as Sweden crush Italy 5-0

### Jamaica claim first World Cup win



BRISBANE: Brazil's defender #02 Antonia (down) fights for the ball with France's forward #09 Eugénie Le Sommer (center) during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup Group F football match between France and Brazil on July 29, 2023. — AFP

BRISBANE: France breathed fresh life into their Women's World Cup campaign with a late winner in a 2-1 victory over Brazil on Saturday as Sweden barreled into the last 16. Captain Wendie Renard headed in the winner seven minutes from time in front of nearly 50,000 in Brisbane to earn the French a vital three points. It blew Group F wide open, with France top on four points from two games and Brazil on three. Herve Renard's France defied most of the Brisbane crowd and a Brazilian team who thumped Panama 4-0 in their previous match to reinvigorate French hopes of a first World Cup title.

The French controlled much of the first half and took an early lead through veteran striker Eugénie Le Sommer with her 90th goal in 181 appearances. Brazil came back into the game in the second half and were rewarded when Debinha latched onto a deflected shot and fired past goalkeeper Pauline Peyraud-Magnin to draw level. With time running out, France struck again. Selma Bacha swung in a corner in the 83rd minute and defender Renard - who had been a pre-match injury doubt - appeared unmarked at the far post to head home.

#### Ilestedt double

Sweden thumped Italy 5-0 to join title contenders Spain and former champions Japan in reaching the knockout rounds with a match to spare. Three goals in seven minutes in the first half did the damage in

Wellington as Italy struggled to deal with Sweden's set pieces and aerial threat. Arsenal defender Amanda Ilestedt scored twice - both headers - with Fridolina Rolfö, Stina Blackstenius and Rebecka Blomqvist also on the scoresheet.

Ilestedt was surprised by her prolific start to the tournament, having also scored the winner with her head in Sweden's opening 2-1 win over South Africa. "It feels a bit unreal but I'm very pleased," she said. "Maybe I didn't expect three goals but I know that's one of my strengths and it's something we're working on a lot at training."

#### Kerr comeback

Australia's hopes of staying in their home tournament were given a big boost on Saturday when skipper Sam Kerr declared herself available. The prolific Chelsea striker, the face of the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, suffered a calf injury on the eve of the tournament and missed the Matildas' first two games. The Australians squeezed past Ireland 1-0 thanks to a penalty to open their campaign but were then stunned 3-2 by Nigeria.

With a critical encounter against Olympic champions Canada looming on Monday, the 29-year-old fronted the media in Brisbane to say: "I am going to be there. I am going to be ready." There was also good news for European champions England after they announced that key midfielder

Keira Walsh did not suffer an anterior cruciate ligament injury in their win over Denmark. She will miss their last group game against China, when the Lionesses will hope to seal their place in the knockouts, but will remain with the squad.

#### Caicedo fitness doubt

Group A looks set for a thrilling conclusion on Sunday. Switzerland lead with four points and are in pole position to advance. They play co-hosts New Zealand in a sell-out in Dunedin. New Zealand are level on three points with debutants the Philippines, who play former champions Norway at the same time in Auckland. Norway, who sit bottom of the group with one point, can still qualify but they must win at a minimum - and do it without star striker Ada Hegerberg, who is injured. Also in action on Sunday are one of the favorites, Germany, who face Colombia in Group H. The Colombians could be without teenage star forward Linda Caicedo after she went down in training on Thursday holding her chest. Colombia coach Nelson Abadía on Saturday called it "an episode of tiredness, a bit of stress over her debut in a senior World Cup".

#### Jamaica target last 16

Meanwhile, Jamaica won a Women's World Cup match for the first time with a deserved 1-0 victory over debutants Panama on Saturday to close on a place

in the last 16. Skipper Allyson Swaby headed in from a corner early in the second half to give Jamaica their first victory at a World Cup at the fifth attempt. Having held France to a 0-0 draw in their opening match, the Reggae Girlz sit second in Group F with four points from two games, level on points with the French.

Jamaica face Brazil, beaten 2-1 by France on Saturday, on Wednesday knowing they only need a point to claim a landmark spot in the last 16. It comes against the backdrop of rows with the Jamaican football federation over a lack of support for the team and unpaid expenses. Panama, who are making their debut appearance at the World Cup, are out. Jamaica were on top for much of the contest in front of nearly 16,000 spectators in Perth. But with their star striker Khadija Shaw absent, having been sent off late on in the stalemate with France, they lacked a cutting edge up front at times.

In her glaring absence, midfielder Drew Spence appeared determined to grab the game by the scruff of the neck all by herself. The London-born Tottenham Hotspur player, who previously made a couple of appearances for England, ran the show at times. She was also a threat going forward and came close to scoring in the first period when on the stroke of half-time her direct free-kick pinged back off the bar. Jamaica's pressure paid off in the 56th minute when Swaby rose highest from a corner to glance the ball past goalkeeper Yenith Bailey. — AFP

## Australia tie record gold haul; Sjostrom, Ledecy make history

FUKUOKA: Australia tied their record gold haul at swimming's world championships with one day remaining Saturday, while greats Katie Ledecy and Sarah Sjostrom carved their names deeper into the sport's history. Australia claimed three more gold medals to take their count to 13 in Fukuoka, tying their best-ever tally from 2001 and 2005. It secured their place on top of the medal table, meaning they will finish ahead of the United States for the first time since 2001. Their night's work included a fifth world record this week for Australian swimmers and Kaylee McKeown completing an unprecedented backstroke world title sweep.

Cameron McEvoy, who claimed gold in the men's 50m freestyle, said his teammates' performances had spurred him on. "It's hard not to tap into that and just go along with the flow," he said. American Ledecy won the women's 800m freestyle to become the first swimmer ever to win the same event six times at a world championships. Sweden's Sjostrom won her fifth in the 50m butterfly, then promptly dived back into the pool 20 minutes later and broke her own world record in the 50m freestyle.

There was also gold for France's Maxime Grosset in the men's 100m butterfly. Australia's mixed 4x100m freestyle relay team claimed the final title of the day in a world record time of 3min, 18.83sec, giving Mollie O'Callaghan her fifth gold medal of the week. "I've had a lot going on this week and I think I've just got to maintain and be as profession-



FUKUOKA: Gold medalists Australia pose during the medals ceremony for the mixed 4x100m freestyle relay swimming at the World Aquatics Championships on July 29, 2023. — AFP

al as possible," said O'Callaghan, who has been part of four team or individual world records this week. "Just sticking around with the team and keeping it quite closed has really helped me."

#### Ledecy makes history

Ledecy claimed her 16th individual world championships gold medal, surpassing fellow American great Michael Phelps. She cruised home in a time of 8min, 08.87sec to win ahead of China's Li Bingjie on 8:13.31 and Australia's Ariarne Titmus on 8:13.59. It was Ledecy's second gold of the week, after she retained her 1,500m freestyle title. Her latest triumph gives her a career haul of 21 world championship golds, extending her record as the most decorated woman in the history of the competition. "I'm really happy with how I've been able to be consistent over all these years," said the 26-year-old, who has said she would like to compete at the 2026 Los Angeles Olympics. "Just always trying to get a little bit better." — AFP

## England close in on last 16; Walsh suffer injury blow

SYDNEY: England took a major step towards the last 16 of the Women's World Cup with a 1-0 win over Denmark on Friday but their victory was overshadowed by a potentially serious knee injury to midfielder Keira Walsh. Lauren James scored the only goal of the game in Sydney for the reigning European champions, bending in a superb strike from outside the box in the sixth minute.

Sarina Wiegman's side had more of the possession and more of the chances, but they suffered an almighty fright at the end when Amalie Vangsgaard hit the post with a header. England's second win in as many games in Group D put them on the verge of the knockout rounds but they still need to avoid defeat in their final pool game against China on Tuesday to be sure.

England are now waiting nervously though to discover the extent of the injury suffered by Barcelona's Walsh, who was stretchered off late in the first half. Walsh, a key cog in the England team that won the Euro last year, stretched to intercept a pass in her own half and went down in agony. She immediately signaled to the bench that she could not carry on. "Of course I'm concerned because she could not walk off the pitch," said Wiegman. "But we don't know yet (how bad the knee injury is) so we can't make any assumptions. Let's just really wait until we have a diagnosis."

China are still alive after a chaotic 1-0 win over debutants Haiti in Adelaide in which the Steel Roses played more than an hour with 10 players. Chi-



SYDNEY: England's midfielder #04 Keira Walsh reacts on the ground after an injury during the Australia and New Zealand 2023 Women's World Cup Group D football match between England and Denmark on July 28, 2023. — AFP

na looked to be in serious trouble in the last match of the day when they had Zhang Rui sent off in the 29th minute for a clumsy tackle on Sherly Jeudy. Defeat for China would have ended their World Cup and sent England through, and they were under the cosh for much of the second half. But Zhang Linyan was brought down in the box by Ruthy Mathurin against the run of play and after a lengthy VAR review, substitute Wang Shuang made no mistake with her 74th minute penalty.

China held on in a wild contest involving several controversial moments. Haiti were awarded a penalty in second-half stoppage time after Roseline Elois-saint had been seemingly grappled by Chen Qiaozhu, but the referee rescinded it after a VAR check. China are now level with Denmark on three points and eyeing a spot in the knockout rounds, meaning the group remains in the balance going into the final group matches. — AFP