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# CBK: Very limited exposure of Kuwaiti banks to SVB collapse

## US rules out Silicon Valley Bank bailout, wants to avoid ‘contagion’

**KUWAIT:** The Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) affirmed on Sunday that the exposure of Kuwaiti banks to Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), following the closure of the bank by the US authorities, is “very, very limited”. Central Bank of Kuwait Governor Basel Al-Haroun reaffirmed the stability and solidity of Kuwaiti banking system in light of the large financial buffers that banks possess.

The governor said in a statement to KUNA that in light of the closure of SVB by regulatory authorities in the United States, the Central Bank of Kuwait confirms, through its direct communication with Kuwaiti banks, that the exposure of Kuwaiti banks to Silicon Valley Bank is “very, very little”.

The governor indicated that the Central Bank has an integrated supervisory system aimed at for-



**بنك الكويت المركزي**  
CENTRAL BANK OF KUWAIT

tying the banking sector and maintaining financial stability. Within the framework of this system, there is an integrated package of supervisory instructions and controls issued to banks to preserve the integrity of their financial positions and enhance all indicators of their financial safety, especially with regards to basic standards.

The governor added that among these standards are the capital adequacy standard, liquidity

standards and standards related to asset quality and profitability, in addition to the instructions and controls issued within the framework of strengthening governance, risk management, internal control systems, internal and external auditing, and what is also related to the rationalization and regulation of banks’ credit policy to reduce credit risks and their decisions, based on comprehensive studies that have been made when considering borrowing and financing requests.

Haroun affirmed the integrity of the conditions of the units of the banking system and that the Central Bank of Kuwait exercises its supervisory functions and procedures on banks through offsite control, which is carried out in light of a statistical system that provides regulatory requirements and

is supported by supervisory functions through field inspection of banks to ensure the stability of the units of this sector.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Sunday said the government wanted to avoid financial “contagion” from the implosion of the Silicon Valley Bank but ruled out a bailout of the institution. “We want to make sure that the troubles that exist at one bank don’t create contagion to others that are sound,” Yellen said during an interview with CBS.

On Friday, US regulators pulled the plug on SVB – a key lender to US startups since the 1980s – after a run on deposits made it no longer tenable for the medium-sized bank to stay afloat on its own. Following SVB’s disclosure on Wednesday, investors

**Continued on Page 6**

News in brief

Bid to reduce expat workers

**KUWAIT:** The interior ministry’s residency affairs department and the Public Authority of Manpower are reviewing work permits of expat workers in a bid to reduce their numbers by a quarter of a million in the next three to five years. Sources said iqama violators exceed 100,000, which requires stricter security measures to control them, especially in areas where violators are present and pose a threat to the country, such as Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. Recommendations to the demographics committee include increasing work permit fees, determining specific numbers for each field of work and imposing health insurance for every worker. Among the proposals is to stop recruiting workers from abroad except for certain specializations and only for a period of five years, and getting rid of marginal workers.

Info ministry eyes OTT platform

**KUWAIT:** The ministry of information announced on Sunday that it had finalized the investment bidding process to establish an Over-the-Top (OTT) platform in line with its digital transformation plan. Ministry spokesperson Anwar Murad said that the OTT platform’s content will focus on promoting Kuwaiti culture through films, series and documentaries for a subscription. The bidding on the OTT would be held in the coming period, she affirmed, noting the project is part of a vast plan to develop media in Kuwait. — KUNA

MoI makes major drug seizure

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait’s First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said Saturday the country is facing a fierce war by drug traffickers. “We will not allow drugs traffickers to harm our children and youth,” he said while supervising the seizure of 120 kg hashish, 36,000 Captagon pills, one kg of shabu and 250 gm of heroin. — KUNA (See Page 2)

Jordan princess weds in royal ceremony

**AMMAN:** The daughter of Jordan’s King Abdullah II on Sunday wed a financier of Greek origin at a ceremony at the royal palace west of the capital Amman. State television broadcast the ceremony that saw Princess Iman tie the knot with Jameel Alexander Thermiotis in the presence of the king, queen and other members of the royal family, as well as the groom’s family.

Representing HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Chairwoman of the Voluntary Work Center Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated Jordan’s King Abdullah and Queen Rania during the wedding ceremony of Princess Iman on Sunday. — Agencies



**AMMAN:** Jordan’s King Abdullah II attends the wedding ceremony of his daughter Princess Iman and Jameel Alexander Thermiotis at the Beit Al Urdon Palace on March 12, 2023.

Saudi unveils new airline to compete with Gulf rivals

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia announced Sunday the creation of a new national airline, part of a plan to turn Riyadh into a global aviation hub rivaling regional leaders like Dubai and Doha. Riyadh Air “aims to launch flights to more than 100 destinations around the world by 2030,” the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

The Gulf kingdom is pursuing ambitious avi-



**RIYADH AIR**  
طيران الرياض

ation goals as part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s wide-ranging “Vision 2030” reform agenda, including more than tripling annual traffic to 330 million passengers by the end of the decade. It also wants to move up to five million tons of cargo each year.

Last November officials announced plans for a new airport in the capital Riyadh – spanning 57 sq km – that is set to accommodate 120 million travelers per year by 2030 and 185 million travelers by 2050. The capacity of the existing Riyadh airport is around 35 million travelers. The new airline is the latest in “a huge package of projects” that will “consolidate our country’s position as an international hub for aviation and a global logistics center”, Saudi transport minister Saleh Al-Jasser said on Twitter. Tony Douglas, former head of Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, has been appointed CEO, SPA said.

Sunday’s announcement said Riyadh Air would operate a “fleet of advanced aircraft”, but did not specify how big the fleet would be or from where it would be sourced. The Wall Street Journal reported on Saturday that the Public Investment Fund, the sovereign wealth fund that will own the airline, was

**Continued on Page 6**

Iraq to plant 5m trees in climate action

**BASRA:** Iraq’s prime minister on Sunday announced a campaign to combat the severe impacts of climate change on the water-scarce country, including by planting five million palms and trees. Oil-rich but war-battered Iraq suffers from extreme summer heat, frequent droughts, desertification and regular dust storms, problems that are all exacerbated by a heating planet.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani told a climate conference that more than seven million Iraqis

had already been affected by climate change and hundreds of thousands displaced by drought. He cited challenges including “high temperatures, scarcity of rain and an increase in dust storms” as well as shrinking green spaces, which all “threaten food, health, environmental and community security”.

Sudani, who took office in late October, said his government was launching “a grand afforestation initiative, which includes planting five million trees and palm trees in all governorates of Iraq”. In the spring of last year, Iraq was swept by about a dozen major sand or dust storms which blanketed Baghdad and other areas, causing breathing difficulties for thousands and forcing the closure of airports and schools.

**Continued on page 6**



**BASRA:** Iraq’s Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani speaks during the Iraq Climate Conference on March 12, 2023. — AFP



## Local

# Media specialists discuss strategic cooperation to counter terrorism

## The role of media in the fight against terrorism

By Ghadeer Ghloum and KUNA

**KUWAIT:** A team of specialists has been assigned to follow up on the role of Arab media outlets in combating terrorism, as part of a joint media strategy to keep pace with the media changes and the evolution of digitization. During their 24th meeting on Sunday, which took place during the 16th session of the Arab Information Ministers Council in Kuwait, organized by the communication ministry, the team discussed the strategies developed and prepared by Naif Arab University for Security Sciences (NAUSS), commissioned by the General Secretariat of the Arab League in 2015, along with the updates since then amid media innovations.

Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Media and Communication Sector of the Arab League Ambassador Ahmed Rashid Khattabi said this meeting is dedicated to studying the role of media in the fight against terrorism. He expressed his gratitude to Kuwait, represented by the ministry of information, for holding this meeting. He also highlighted the state's role in supporting Arab countries' unity to uplift the Arab world and activate and connect it to issues that the Arab world is facing, such as terrorism.

In this regard, the technical secretariat generalized the document that NAUSS prepared for member countries to improve, influenced by regional and country experiences to professionally deal with this problem that is going beyond killing and threatening innocent victims to draining finances, investments and production, and hindering developmental projects of Arab countries and targeting its civil safety and security.

NAUSS mentioned these strategies have been formed to adapt to ongoing social media developments and adherence to professional standards, while also taking into consideration the strategies in



Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Media and Communication Sector of the Arab League Ambassador Ahmed Rashid Khattabi. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

combating terrorism globally as well as political, economic and security shifts to implicitly update these strategies. The strategies are built on six points, starting with 'Response and Denial', in directing media responses to events linked to terrorism through updating media tools to negate inflammatory hearsay to be more fixed in news reporting to prevent these organizations from elucidating their messages to the public.

'Awareness and Prevention' aims to solidify cultural awareness that understands and refutes all forms of terrorism and leans towards ethics of tolerance and accepting others to prevent any form of extremist content, false news and misleading information via the Internet. 'Digital cooperation and Social Responsibility' encourages cooperation between the media and government authority associated to civil society to better encompass the media with proactivity and complementary social responsi-



KUWAIT: A team of specialists meet to follow up on the role of Arab media outlets in combating terrorism.

bility between the media, public and the private sector to denounce terrorist activities in highlighting the dangers of the ideologies fueling these actions.

'Endorsement and Support' supports efforts of the security services through the media in the context of combating terrorism in providing media coverage of activities and events of agencies, to better support the rights of the victims of terrorism

through media coverage, as well as giving consideration to the privacy of victims and their families.

'Capacity Building and Financing' aims to train Arab media employees to specialize in security media with the help of academic institutions to develop training programs and build the capabilities of the media networks to better strategize their analyses through modern methods.

### In my view

## Getting out of economic crises



By Muhammed Al-Muthafar

local@kuwaittimes.net

**G**overnments are always seeking ways to develop their economies, enacting necessary laws and issuing executive decisions to encourage investment. However, such actions alone are insufficient for achieving economic development. Building and educating the workforce, as well as creating the motivations that enable individuals to be effective in the economic community, are more important than enacting laws.

Citizens, whether investors or consumers, are the foundation of the economy. Sufficient awareness must be provided to citizens about the importance of investment, trade methods, crisis management and dealing with crises. Recent global crises, such as the coronavirus pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, demonstrate the need to prepare society to withstand such crises by training and developing individuals, so they can navigate and recover from these crises successfully.

Through the experiences gained from studying and analyzing finding appropriate solutions to get out of economic crises, we found the solutions are as follows: (1) Enhancing the role of the national private sector in economic activity. (2) Supporting and localizing national industries to rely on local products. (3) Announcing a program for private sector participation in state-owned assets.

For individuals, we find appropriate solutions to get out of economic crises are as follows: (1) Preparing a studied plan and a timetable to get out of that crisis. (2) Thinking more than once when buying real estate, cars or otherwise. (3) Buying local products. (4) Never borrowing from banks at the time of crises.

If we follow these steps, we will have made it easier for ourselves many problems that result from economic crises or at least reduce the risks of slippage during grinding economic crises by exerting effort, necessary care, good reading of the situations facing us, reducing spending on urgent matters and rationally distributing income to requirements. If we maintain these things, we will have achieved something very important towards getting out of crises.



KUWAIT: German Ambassador Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz poses for a group photo with the media personnel.

## Kuwait, Germany share strong ties

**KUWAIT:** In an exclusive introductory meeting with the press on 12 March, German Ambassador to Kuwait HE Hans-Christian Freiherr von Reibnitz, a seasoned diplomat with years of regional experience as Ambassador to Oman and Deputy Ambassador to Riyadh, briefed media representatives on Germany's relations with Kuwait and shared his thoughts on how to further strengthen them in coming years.

"I had the honor to present my letters of credence to HH the Crown Prince, Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on 7th March 2023. Working to further deepen the relations between our countries will be my privilege", said the Ambassador. "Kuwait and Germany have shared

strong bilateral ties since Kuwait's independence. Building on this solid foundation of shared values and interests, my priority is to expand the band width of our relations further, to exploit the full range of our bilateral potential".

Ambassador von Reibnitz pointed out climate change as the most pressing global issue: "Climate change is real, it is here - the current effects of unabated global emissions remind us to join ranks and intensity our battle. Germany will remain a leader. My government will host the ninth international energy transition conference in Berlin from 28-29 March 2023 - this year under the motto "Energy Transition - Securing a Green Future", in the run-up to COP 28 this fall.

"At a time of both great opportunity and great uncertainty in the energy sector, the forum brings together policymakers, business and innovation leaders from across the globe to realize the full potential of a global energy transition," said the Ambassador.

## Challenges facing autistic patients

By Ghadeer Ghloum

**KUWAIT:** Autism is a spectrum that makes people think quite differently than others. Hence, dealing with their lives and socializing with others becomes an uneasy task that needs assistance. To further understand autism, Kuwait Times spoke to Dr Moudi Abdullah Al-Ajmi, Specialist at Autistic Behavior School, for more information on autism and autistic individuals.

**Kuwait Times:** What are the challenges that people with autism mostly confront in their life?

**Dr Moudi Al-Ajmi:** One of the prominent obstacles that people with autism confront is deficiency in social skills, including the ability to recognize and respond to the emotions of other people, read nonverbal clues and navigate social rules. Problems with language development and communication are common obstacles faced by adolescents with autism. These challenges are sometimes intricately entangled with issues related to socializing, because a significant portion of human socialization is related to verbal and non-verbal communication.

Students with autism may have trouble figuring out what their senses are telling them, so they may avoid or seek out sensory input. Some students will find it hard to finish tasks or plan ahead, and others may find it hard to break out of a pattern of thinking to look at a problem in a different way. This is because executive functioning may be hard for them. Students with autism may have trouble with their motor skills, which may take a lot of effort or concentration and make it hard for them to pay attention to what is being taught.

**Kuwait Times:** What are the challenges that specialists face with their autistic patients?

**Dr Al-Ajmi:** Those who take care of autistic indi-

viduals face some challenges. Children who suffer from autism spectrum condition exhibit a wide variety of symptoms, the most prominent of which are behaviour that is repetitive and agitated as well as persistent impairments in communication. Specialists encounter a variety of obstacles, including those related to personal connections, professional strata, financial balances and, most crucially, a lack of service availability and management procedures.

**Kuwait Times:** Is autism determined at birth?

**Dr Al-Ajmi:** Just because you have autism does not mean you also have another condition or disease. It indicates that your brain functions differently than the brains of other people. It's something that comes naturally to you from birth. It's possible that you'll discover the signs of autism while you're very young, or you will not notice them until you're much older. If you have autism, you will always have autism. It is a permanent condition. Some persons require assistance to successfully complete particular tasks.

**Kuwait Times:** Can autism be cured?

**Dr Al-Ajmi:** Autism is not a medical illness that can be treated or "cured", as the term would imply. All attempts at treatment lie in raising the level of skills in autistic individuals, and many people with non-severe autism cannot notice any disorder. So you will find a child gifted in a hobby or sport, and maybe superior to their peers in the fields of mathematics and science. Some of their problems may lie in their unwillingness to communicate with others, or excessive nervousness in some situations that we see as normal. Autistic patients refuse to be intruded into their circle, and their integration into any routine is very difficult and requires a lot of training.



Dr Moudi Abdullah Al-Ajmi



## Kuwait's FM meets Omani counterpart

**KUWAIT:** Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Sunday met with Omani counterpart Badr Al-busaidi at the Foreign Ministry in Muscat. The two sides reviewed the distinguished relations between the two brotherly countries and ways to develop them to achieve benefits for the two countries. They also discussed their hopes for the success of the work of the ninth session of the Omani-Kuwaiti Joint Committee hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, stressing the importance of raising the pace of bilateral cooperation in various fields. The two Ministers also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common concern. Sheikh Salem arrived in Muscat - leading Kuwait's delegation to the ninth session of the joint committee. —KUNA



## Local

# Health minister affirms support for university medical staff, scientists

## MoH adopts WHO's anti-epidemics programs

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti Health Minister Ahmad Al-Awadi affirmed the Ministry's full support for the medical staff and scientists of Kuwait University and Sabah Al-Salem University City stressing the importance of high quality educational output. The statement came during a press conference held on Sunday after the ministry and Kuwait University signed a memorandum of understanding in the presence of Undersecretary of the Ministry, Dr Mustafa Reda, the Director of Kuwait University, Dr Fahd Al-Dubais, and a number of deans and Ministry officials.

Minister Al-Awadi said the agreement aims to turn Sabah Al-Salem University City into a medical city with international standards explaining that Kuwait University has precedence in the quality of education. He also hoped that this will be the beginning of future cooperation between the Ministry and Kuwait University as well as

other national universities in the country.

Head of the Healthy Cities Office at Kuwait's Ministry of Health Dr Amal Al-Yahya said that this agreement is an essential step in transforming Sabah Al-Salem University City into a medical university city explaining that university cities are different as they consist of several different sectors, buildings, professors and accommodate about 40,000 students. Accrediting the city as a medical city contributes to the advancement of Kuwait's classification in this field and enhances health outcomes and community health by increasing research projects, concluded Al-Yahya.

### Anti-epidemics programs

In another development, the Ministry of Health has adopted World Health Organization's programs for monitoring and predicting and responding to outbreaks of epidemics, a min-

istry official said on Sunday. The whole world has dedicated attention to latest treatments for viral and communicable diseases, conducting intensive studies to reach most effective treatments, said Dr Buthaina Al-Mudhaf, the MoH assistant undersecretary for public health, in an address to "Kuwait second infection control conference," speaking on behalf of Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi.

The conference sheds light on latest innovations and challenges facing efforts for combating the infectious diseases, Dr Al-Mudhaf said, indicating at participation of elite national cadres, delegations from other GCC countries, representatives of high-esteem universities and scientific institutions in the event. Dr Al-Mudhaf expressed gratitude to the personnel of the department of preventing epidemics and sterilization and the top leaders for their continuous encouragement

for scientific progress at the national level.

Speaking to journalists on the convention sidelines, Dr Al-Mudhaf affirmed that the epidemiological status in the country has been stable, alluding to rise of number of vaccination seekers noting that the proportion of those who had taken the jab exceeded 85 percent of the population. She also stressed that the elderly and people suffering from chronic diseases must take all vaccinations against COVID-19 and its variants.

Dr Ahmad Al-Mutawaa, the conference chairperson, said the three-day convention was scheduled to address latest innovations, treatments and various challenges in the face of combating the pandemic. Dr Kholoud Al-Fadhala, the conference scientific committee chairperson, affirmed its significance for shedding light on vital issues such as safety for patients and health care workers. — KUNA

## Kuwait supports efforts to reduce carbon emissions

**KUWAIT:** National Assembly Member of Parliament (MP) Khaled Al-Tammar on Sunday, stressed the importance of supporting solutions aimed at reducing carbon emissions, explaining that Kuwait presented a document at a national level in 2021 to reduce those emissions for 2020-2035. This came in the participation of MP Al-Tammar during his representation of the Kuwaiti caucus in Committee for Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade meeting of the 146th InterParliamentary Union Conference (IPU) in Bahrain.

Al-Tammar said that this step would help in avoiding carbon dioxide emissions of about 3.6 gigatons per year over the period of 2020-2050, contributing about 14 percent of the target required to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030. The Kuwaiti document to reduce carbon emissions affirms its full commitment to the decisions of the Paris Agreement, as it reduced its emissions by 7.4 percent of its total carbon emissions for the year 2035, added Al-Tammar.

He mentioned that Kuwait Environment Public Authority is working on preparing a national low-carbon strategy by 2050, in cooperation with UN environmental program to reduce carbon emissions on a national level. He stressed the need to stop the unjust deforestation of forests for economic and commercial goals, indicating that agriculture is being affected by high heat waves resulting from global warming, which threatens the sustainability of agricultural systems and its ability to provide food security. The Kuwaiti caucus participating in the 146th IPU Conference, is chaired by Undersecretary Thamer Al-Dhufairi, Secretary Dr. Mohammad Al-Mahan, Treasurer Hamad Al-Obaid, and MPs Khaled Al-Tamar and MP Jenan Bu Shehri.

### Cyberspace threats

In another development, Kuwaiti parliament member Dr Jenan Bushehri said that there is a thin line between protecting individuals from cybercrime threats and not violating their right of freedom of speech. She stressed that facing impact of such threats on national security should not be at the expense of freedom of speech.

This came in Dr Bushehri's remark at the meeting of the Committee for International Peace and Security in the 146th conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Bahrain where they discuss a draft resolution on combating cyber-attacks and crimes and



National Assembly Member of Parliament (MP) Khaled Al-Tammar



Kuwaiti MP Dr Jenan Bushehri

their new threats to global security. She stressed the need to take into consideration coordinating between democracy and modern technologies.

She called that electronic interference in the presidential or parliamentary elections or others be considered as crimes against state security, especially with the increasing talks about attacks on electoral systems in some countries. Bushehri said

that these challenges facing democracy around the world must be taken seriously, stressing the need to adopt international legislation to combat them. The Kuwaiti caucus participating in the 146th IPU Conference is chaired by undersecretary Thamer Al-Dhufairi; Dr Mohammad Al-Mahan (secretary); Hamad Al-Obaid (treasurer) and MPs Khaled Al-Tamar and Dr Jenan Bushehri. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Ministry of Interior officials supervise and inspect huge drug seizures. — KUNA photos

## MoI seizes drug, arrests suspects

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Acting Minister of Defense Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said that the country is facing a fierce war by drug traffickers. "We will not allow drugs traffickers to harm our children and youth," he said while supervising the seizure of 120 kg hashish, 36,000 captagon pills, one kg of

shabu, and 250 gm of heroin. The minister affirmed that the rule of law applies to everybody, according to a statement from the Ministry of Interior's general department of security relations and media.

He appreciated the relentless efforts of the security personnel at all sectors in confronting drug smugglers and repelling all smuggling methods and attempts, according to the statement. He called on the anti-narcotics personnel to be vigilant, and exert all energies to pursue and seize those who smuggle, promote and manufacture these toxins, it

noted. The minister was accompanied by some senior officials at the ministry, including acting assistant undersecretary for criminal security affairs Sheikh Mubarak Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

In another development, custom officials at the airport have detained an Asian man with 280 pieces of hashish after he arrived at the airport. "The Asian came from New Delhi and after inspections, the officers found 280 pieces of Hashish hidden in his bag. The suspect has been sent to the concerned departments for further procedures," sources revealed to Kuwait Times.



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## Local

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P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.comConference examines  
global research on  
Arab cultural heritage

KUWAIT: A conference shedding the light on the archaeology of the Arabian Peninsula is being held in Kuwait City for three days starting Sunday, March 12. The fifth International Seminar of the Archaeology of the Arabian Peninsula will examine the way of life of people in the Arabian Peninsula during the late antiquity and early Islamic period.

"The seminar represents an opportunity for participating researchers to exchange ideas and present findings from their research on the topic," Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) by designation Mohammad Al-Jassar told KUNA.

The conference is organized by NCCAL and the Centre Français de Recherche de la Péninsule Arabique (CEFREPA), one of 27 research institutes set up by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs across the world. Head of CEFREPA Abbas Zouache said he was happy to be involved in this conference.

Researchers will focus on sharing information about the period's material culture — defined as the physical objects made by humans, such as pottery and artefacts made of glass and stone. Discussions will revolve around topics such as the typology, dating and provenance of the artefacts. The conference will help update archaeological data in the region and enrich regional research on the topic, Jassar told KUNA.

Kuwait University's Dr Hasan Ashkanani will present at one of the sessions and chair another. Dr Fahad Al-Wahaibi and Dr Abd Al-Hadi Al-Ajmi will chair two other sessions. Academics from universities in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, France, the UK and Poland are lecturing on different subjects. One of the talks, for example, will go over the underwater cultural heritage in the context of early Islamic settlement structures on Failaka Island. Another will delve into whether the "Arab-Persian Gulf in the Early Islamic Period an Artistic Region" by looking at "The Case of Christian Stucco Decorations from the Gulf Islands".

Researchers will get the chance to visit early and late Islamic historical sites at Failaka Island, such as Al-Qusur, Al-Qurainyah, Al-Saida and fishermen coastal sites. Trips to the Tareq Rajab Museum and Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyya are also on the agenda.

Warehouse fabricating  
expiry dates busted

KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Ministry inspectors discovered a warehouse where labels of expiry dates on meat were being replaced with new dates to be distributed to restaurants. Two tons of expired meat were found. Legal action is being taken against the suspects.

Art exhibit adds modern  
twist to traditional textile

Sadu House celebrates sadu-themed pieces by four Kuwaiti artists-in-residence



KUWAIT: Sheikh Al-Sabah and her daughter Sheikh Bibi Duaij Al-Sabah (center) pose with diplomats during the exhibit. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Sadu House launched an exhibition Saturday to showcase sadu-inspired artwork created by four Kuwaiti artists through its Sadi residency program. Sadi 2023: Symbolism and Storytelling, which opened on March 11, 2023, will remain on display until March 25 to celebrate the work of Retaj Al-Khaldi, Norah Al-Shammari, Sayer Al-Sayer, Samaa Al-Refai and Mohmoud Shaker.

Chairperson of Al-Sadu Society Sheikh Bibi Duaij Al-Sabah said the Sadi artist and residency program gives the opportunity to a group of artists to create art pieces that transform sadu from a traditional textile into something contemporary and attractive to a younger audience.

Each year the artists are given a theme from which they can create their art pieces. This year's theme is storytelling and symbolism. She added that artists have done a great job after months of workshops, lectures, and one-on-one time with artists and weavers, in addition to studio spaces allocated for them. Sheikh Bibi said she is looking forward to welcome a new group of artists every year, creating a larger collection of these pieces and taking it internationally.

Kuwaiti artist Shammari, who holds a bachelors in graphic design and a masters of fine arts in design, displayed her art work that focuses on the self, expressed through layers and strokes. Shammari explained her artwork as a manifestation of the self, or rather the journey of the self, brought to life through contrasting colors and interesting compositions.

"My concept focuses on how with technologies' prevalence in our society, we forget that everything we need is already within us, and all we need to do is use our imagination and our hands. Those are enough tools for everyone to be creative and this is what inspired me to create my work," she said.

Multimedia artist and designer Khaldi, also participated in displaying her artwork at Sadi. According to Khaldi, her work is based on local, social, and cultural themes. She also referred to her artwork as a linking equipment that connects her with people.

Sayer is an architectural designer with a wide-ranging interest in arts and crafts, spatial planning and re-



Kuwaiti artist Norah Al-Shammari and her husband.



Sheikh Bibi Duaij Al-Sabah



Attendees point at one of the displayed artworks at the exhibit.

search. In his work, he attempts to combine contemporary concepts, quality craftsmanship and a sense of humor. Sayer said his art pieces stemmed from a relentless desire to partake in the creative process. Images and objects around him stood alone, usually devoid of their origins, inspiring early efforts to mimic and recreate his surroundings.

Refai is a Kuwaiti visual artist who smears colors on surfaces to make feelings tangible. She described her art as the place where she shatters and comes together to form a home for herself and the other. Beyond

creating art, she dedicates her time conducting research on art while also curating exhibitions for international artists.

Shaker is a Kuwaiti author and artist whose curiosity towards human subjects, and the idea of being a human with feelings, has largely inspired both his writings and art where he often dissects the self, its feelings and its emotion. According to Shaker, he seeks to create experiences that push himself and others to pose deeper questions and delve into the unspoken, in an attempt to probe the depths of the human soul.

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KUWAIT: Faraa Al-Saqqaf, Adiba Al-Fahad and Walid Al-Ansari pose for a picture with "Green Path" graduates.

Loyac's 'Green Path'  
celebrates second  
batch of graduates

KUWAIT: Loyac's arts academy "LAPA" has graduated its second batch of student s who participated in the "Green Path" program which signifies Loyac's keenness to improve environmental awareness about climate change and its effects on Kuwait and the world in general.

The 72-hour intensive training program started last year in cooperation with "Youth of Shamiyah" within the "Green Spaces" strategy adopted by Loyac. Under the sponsorship of Boursa Kuwait, LAPA celebrated the graduation of 24 male and female students between the ages of 16 and 25. Certificates were distributed according to the number of theoretical and practical training hours in the reserve as well as the achievements made in the field of reducing fossil fuel consumption, soil preparation for agriculture, plant propagation skills, waste management and sorting among others.

Head of Loyac's administrative council Faraa Al-Saqqaf said: "It is the first program of its kind in Kuwait that will achieve a leap in environmental awareness and will contribute to the creation and development of environmental cadres specialized in the agricultural field, through practical means witnessed by the reserve."

"At the initiative of Adiba Al-Fahad, who thanks to her management, supervision, training and experience in the agricultural sector, the youth were able to gain experience in the basics and pass the hours required to hold the certificate of 'environmental protector'. The private sector, represented by the Kuwait Boursa, had a vital role in financing the costs of the program, as well as the government sector, represented by the Ministry of Youth, had an active contribution by pro-

viding the garden, which provided students with a space to complete their environmental and agricultural work," she added.

Nasser Al-Sanousi, director of the marketing and institutional communication at Kuwait Boursa said: "The stock exchange's support for this initiative stems from its firm belief that protecting the natural environment is a priority for the company and its employees. Although the stock exchange does not operate in an environmentally sensitive sector, it is aware of the impact of its operations on the environment and the importance of addressing environmental issues as a collective responsibility in which all members of society participate."

"Therefore, we are committed to keeping the environmental impact of its operations to a minimum, as well as constantly improving the company's environmental management practices to reduce energy and other resource consumption, in addition to promoting recycling in its operations and encouraging its employees to adopt responsible environmental behaviors," he added.

After receiving a shield of appreciation from Saqqaf, the representative of the Public Authority for Youth and Director of the Voluntary Work Department at the Authority, Walid Al-Ansari, expressed his deep happiness in cooperating with Lapa, wishing that the reserve would become one of the landmarks of Kuwait in volunteer and environmental work.

Adiba Al-Fahad expressed her great pride in the participating students and their remarkable achievements saying: "It was an honor to work with the rising generation, and I hope that the experience will be beneficial to them at the local and global levels."



Nasser Al-Sanousi





Young Georgians shun Moscow, push for EU dream

## More migrants brought ashore to Italy as locals march for victims



LEICESTER: Gary Lineker (2R), former England footballer turned sports TV presenter for the BBC, arrives at the King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England, ahead of the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Chelsea. —AFP

# BBC chief refuses to quit amid chaos

## Lineker forced to ‘step back’ from presenting the flagship Premier League highlights show

LONDON: Britain's finance minister on Sunday said "people's confidence" in the BBC needed to be restored as the broadcaster's boss vowed not to quit amid the chaos surrounding Gary Lineker's removal as Match of the Day host. Lineker was forced to "step back" from his duties presenting the flagship Premier League highlights show after accusing the UK government of using Nazi-era rhetoric in announcing its policy to tackle illegal immigration.

The BBC said on Friday that Lineker, England's fourth highest goalscorer of all-time, had breached guidelines on impartiality and the corporation would seek "an agreed and clear position on his use of social media" before an on-screen return.

Former BBC chief Greg Dyke warned on Saturday that "it looks like - the perception out there - that the BBC has bowed to government pressure," deepening an ongoing row over impartiality at the broadcaster. Finance minister Jeremy Hunt told Sky News on Sunday that he "profoundly" disagreed with Lineker's remarks, but that the decision was one for the BBC and its director general Tim Davie.

"The reason that it is a great national institution that we all treasure so much, is because it is respected for impartiality," he said. "We need to make sure that what comes out of this is that people's confidence in the impartiality of the

BBC is restored." Lineker's critics claim the public-funded broadcaster has allowed him to use the platform afforded him as the face of its much-loved football show to influence contentious political issues. But his backers accuse the broadcaster of taking their cues from Conservative politicians, pointing out that current BBC chairman Richard Sharp facilitated a loan guarantee for former prime minister Boris Johnson while applying for the job.

**Prime Minister reacts**

The decision to remove Lineker caused chaos to scheduled sports programming across the BBC's television and radio output. Former England players Ian Wright and Alan Shearer were among the pundits who refused to take up their usual roles on Match of the Day, followed by the programme's commentators.

As a result, the longest-running football television programme in the world was aired for the first time without a presenter, pundits or even commentary in a shortened 20-minute highlights package of six matches from the English top-flight.

Despite the disrupted format, BBC entertainment correspondent Lizo Mzimba tweeted Sunday that viewing figures were up nearly half a million on last

week's audience, with 2.58 million people tuning in.

Weekend preview show Football Focus and results programme Final Score were also pulled from the schedule, as was Sunday's round-up show Match of the Day 2, while BBC Radio 5Live's coverage was disrupted. When asked if he should resign over the Lineker issue, Davie replied: "Absolutely not."

"I think that my job is to serve licence-fee payers and deliver a BBC that is really focused on world-class impartial landmark output, and I look forward to us resolving this situation and looking forward to delivering that.

He added: "To be clear, success for me is Gary gets back on air and together we are giving to the audiences that world-class sports coverage which, as I say, I'm sorry we haven't been able to deliver today." Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said Saturday he hoped the stand-off can be "resolved in a timely manner."

**'Immeasurably cruel'**

Lineker is a freelance broadcaster for the BBC, not a permanent member of staff, and is not responsible for news or political content so does not need to adhere to the same strict rules on impartiality. However, former BBC boss Mark Thompson told the broadcaster on Sunday that the former

Leicester, Everton, Barcelona and Tottenham striker may have technically breached the guidelines.

He pointed to a section that says that non journalists "who nevertheless have an additional responsibility to the BBC because of their profile at the BBC" should avoid "taking sides on party political issues, or political controversies". The row was sparked by Lineker's response to a video in which Home Secretary Suella Braverman unveiled plans to stop migrants crossing the Channel on small boats. Lineker, the BBC's highest-paid star with an annual salary of £1.35 million (\$1.65 million, 1.53 million euros) according to the figures released last year, wrote on Twitter: "This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the '30s."

The Conservative government intends to outlaw asylum claims by all illegal arrivals and transfer them to other countries, such as Rwanda, in a bid to stop the crossings, which totalled more than 45,000 last year.

A YouGov poll published on Monday showed 50 percent backing the measures, with 36 percent opposed. But another of its polls published Saturday showed that 53 percent opposed Lineker's removal, compared to 27 percent who backed it. —AFP

## Ukraine readies counteroffensive

KYIV: The Ukrainian military was preparing Sunday for an upcoming counteroffensive, with a top commander saying his forces' ongoing defence of Bakhmut in the face of fierce and sustained Russian attacks was necessary to "buy time" for that push.

The remarks came as British intelligence said the frontline had shifted in the fight for Bakhmut-the longest and bloodiest battle of Moscow's year-long invasion-but that any further Russian advance in the devastated town would be "highly challenging".

Some military experts have questioned the sense of continuing to hold the city, but the commander of Ukraine's ground forces, Oleksandr Syrsky, said that it helped win time in preparation for the coming counteroffensive.

"The real heroes now are the defenders who are holding the eastern front on their shoulders, and inflicting the heaviest possible losses, sparing neither themselves nor the enemy," Syrsky was quoted as saying in a statement on Saturday. "It is necessary to buy time to build reserves and launch a counteroffensive, which is not far off."

In a video released on Saturday, Yevgeny Prigozhin, chief of Russian mercenary group Wagner, said that his forces were close to the administrative centre of the city. Standing on the rooftop of a high-rise building in what is said to be Bakhmut, Prigozhin is seen pointing towards a building in the distance.

"This is the building of the town administration, this is the centre of the town," he said, clad in full military gear. "It is one kilometre and two hundred metres away." Speaking as artillery boomed in the background, Prigozhin said the most important thing now was to receive more ammunition from the army and "move forward".

Wagner has been spearheading offensives against cities in eastern Ukraine including Bakhmut. Both sides have suffered heavy losses. The Ukrainian defence ministry on Saturday reported that its forces had repelled "more than 100 enemy attacks" over the last day along the eastern front.

**'A killing zone'**

In an interview with the French newspaper Journal du Dimanche, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Olga Stefanishyna underscored the human cost of Russia's assault on Bakhmut. "Thousands of Russian soldiers died at a considerable rate in this battle," she said. "The human mass of its infantry is a formidable weapon, it seems inexhaustible in volume and in time."



DOLYNA: Volunteers carry remains of a Uragan rocket as they clean the area around the Orthodox Svyato-Heorhiyivskyy Skyt of the Sviatohirsk Cave Monastery destroyed in a shelling in the village of Dolyna, Donetsk region, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. —AFP

But even if it did capture the "small town", she added, "it will not impact the strategic corridors we still control in the region". British military intelligence said that the Bakhmutka River in the centre of the city now marked the front line.

"Ukrainian forces hold the west of the town and have demolished key bridges over the river, which runs north-south through a strip of open ground 200 metres-800 metres wide," the British defence ministry said.

"This area has become a killing zone, likely making it highly challenging for Wagner forces attempting to continue their frontal assault westwards." Wagner chief Prigozhin, an ally of President Vladimir Putin, has been entangled in a power struggle with the defence ministry.

He has several times claimed battlefield victories ahead of Russia's army, criticised the country's top brass and accused the military of not sharing ammunition with Wagner forces. On Saturday he said he was ready to ask Russia's top commanders for forgiveness but at the same time appeared to mock Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov.

He said they were "outstanding military commanders" and added that Russia's greatest mili-

tary leaders including Georgy Zhukov and Alexander Suvorov "could have learnt" from them. "I absolutely-totally-support all their initiatives," Prigozhin added.

**Shelling of Kherson**

Since Russia's retreat from the city of Kherson late last year, it has been regularly pounded by Moscow's troops. The Russian army has kept shelling the southern city, killing three people and wounding another two, Ukrainian officials said Saturday. "Russian terrorists are shelling Kherson again," said Andriy Yermak, the head of Ukraine's presidential office, posting a picture of firefighters next to a charred car. Galyna Kolisnyk, 53, said the Russians struck when she was in a store. "When we entered, literally five minutes later this tragedy happened," she told AFP.

"Explosions began, our car got hit," she said. "This is horrible." Kherson is the capital of one of the four regions-along with Donetsk, Lugansk and Zaporizhzhia-that Russia claims to have annexed but does not fully control. Donetsk's separatist mayor Alexei Kulemzin said Saturday that Ukrainian shelling had killed two people including a young boy. —AFP

## New protests hit Greece over train tragedy

ATHENS: Thousands of demonstrators staged fresh protests in Greece on Sunday as anger grows over the country's deadliest rail crash, ratcheting up pressure on the government over the tragedy. Protesters flooded Athens' Syntagma Square in front of parliament, waving banners that read "We won't forget, we won't forgive" and "We will become the voice of all the dead".

Fifty-seven people, many of them students, were killed when a passenger train and freight train collided head-on in central Greece on February 28. Four railway officials have been charged but public anger has focused on long-running mismanagement of the network, and the country has been rocked by a series of sometimes violent mass protests. On Sunday about 12,000 demonstrators gathered outside parliament while 5,000 took to the streets of the second city Thessaloniki, police said. "It was anger and rage that brought me here," Markella, a 65-year-old Athens protester who gave only one name, told AFP. Another demonstrator, 26-year-old Alexandros, added: "We're getting desperate. You don't know what to say, what to do-all you can do is join the protest." The rallies came in response to calls from various bodies, from trade unions to political groups, to take to the streets.

According to a police statement, "an isolated incident occurred when a small group of people hurled marbles, stones and other objects at the police forces on Karaiskaki Square, causing minor damage". A total of ten arrests and two detentions were made and no injuries were reported.

The biggest protests over the crash so far came on Wednesday when tens of thousands demonstrated nationwide, with clashes erupting, while workers staged strikes. Public and private sector employees are expected to walk out again Thursday. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who is fighting to be re-elected within months, has faced calls from some protesters to quit. He has come under fire for initially pointing to "human error" for the accident, and blaming the stationmaster on duty at the time who allegedly routed the trains onto the same stretch of track by accident. —AFP



## International

# More migrants brought ashore to Italy as locals march for victims

## 487 migrants onboard the first boat were safely brought to the port of Crotona

**ROME:** Three boats overcrowded with migrants were brought safely to Italian ports on Saturday, the coastguard said, as thousands of marchers remembered the victims of last month's deadly shipwreck off Calabria's coast. The rescue of more than 1,300 migrants came the same day as three more bodies from the shipwreck nearly two weeks ago were found, bringing the death toll to 76. The bodies recovered were those of two girls, both under the age of 10, and that of an adult male, said Italian news reports.

The February 26 shipwreck just off the shore of Calabria, has drawn sharp criticism of the right-wing government led by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni for its failure to intervene in time to save the migrants.

In Cutro on Saturday, near the site of the disaster, thousands of marchers accompanied a cross made of splintered wood from the shipwreck, which was carried through the streets to the water's edge. "This cross is a symbol of suffering today," said Domenico "Mimmo" Lucano, a former Calabrian mayor, the ANSA news agency.

"During these emergencies, Calabrian communities are shaken, and what prevails is a spirit of solidarity that the government doesn't show," he said. Lucano is known for his activism on behalf of migrants. On Friday, the coastguard began a rescue operation of three boats, one south of the Calabrian city of Crotona and two further south off Roccella Ionica. Coastguard videos showed a large fishing boat pitching violently back and forth in nighttime rough

seas with dozens of people visible on the deck. Other images showed inflatable rescue boats approaching another fishing vessel packed with people.

The 487 migrants onboard the first boat were safely brought to the port of Crotona at about 0200 GMT Saturday morning, the coastguard said. Another operation in which 500 migrants were rescued to a coastguard ship was wrapping up, it added. ANSA had earlier reported that the ship had docked at the port of Reggio Calabria.

Two coastguard patrol vessels rescued a third boat carrying 379 people, transferring the migrants to a Navy ship headed to the Sicilian port of Augusta, it said. Italy's defence ministry said it had begun to air transfers of migrants away from the crowded migrant centre on the island of Lampedusa, which it said was now over capacity.

The recent shipwreck has put the government on the defensive. On Thursday, Meloni held a cabinet meeting at Cutro, near the disaster site, and announced a new decree that included stiffer prison sentences for human traffickers, but no new measures to help save lives.

Her far-right Brothers of Italy party, which won elections last year, had promised to curb arrivals, but Italy has recently seen a sharp rise in the number of migrants attempting to reach its shores via the dangerous Mediterranean crossing.

The interior ministry says more than 17,500 people have arrived by sea so far this year—almost three times the number for the same period last year. — AFP



**STECCATO DI CUTRO:** Relatives of victims of the February 26, 2023 shipwreck take part in a protest march in Steccato di, Cutro, Calabria region, southern Italy, as part of the movement 'Stop the massacre, now!' — AFP

## Death sentence for Swedish-Iran dissident

**TEHRAN:** Iran's judiciary on Sunday confirmed a death sentence for a Swedish-Iranian dissident for "terrorism" more than two years since his disappearance at an airport in Turkey. Habib Chaab has been held in Iran since October 2020 after he vanished during a visit to Turkey and was put on trial in Tehran—which does not recognise dual nationality.

Chaab, convicted of "corruption on earth" for heading a rebel group, was sentenced to death on December 6. On Sunday, the judiciary's Mizan Online website said Iran's Supreme Court had upheld the ruling.

"The death sentence of Habib Farajollah Chaab on charges of corruption on earth... was approved by the Supreme Court," Mizan report. It said he was sentenced for "the formation, management and leadership of a rebel group called Harakat al-Nidal, and the design and execution of numerous terrorist operations in Khuzestan province".

Iran has accused Harakat al-Nidal of "cooperation with other terrorist groups" including in a 2018 attack on a military parade in Ahvaz, the Khuzestan provincial capital, that authorities said killed 25 people and wounded almost 250.

Chaab is the latest person to be sentenced to death over membership of Harakat al-Nidal, or Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahvaz, which Iran considers a "terrorist group". Iranian prosecutors have said the group's main objective was "the disintegration of the Iranian province of Khuzestan" in the country's southwest.

According to the prosecution, other leaders of Harakat al-Nidal are based in Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden, with the group receiving financial and logistical support from Saudi Arabia. Last week, Mizan said a court in Ahvaz had sentenced to death six members of the group over attacks carried out by "orders of their European leaders".

They had been found guilty of "armed operations" between 2017 and 2019 that killed four people, including a soldier and two members of Iran's Basij paramilitary force, the report said. Iranian state television had aired a video of Chaab in which he claimed responsibility for the 2018 military parade attack and admitted to working with Saudi intelligence services. Oil-rich Khuzestan is home to a large Arab minority, and its people have long complained of marginalisation.

### Dual nationals on death row

Iran executes more people yearly than any other nation except China, according to rights groups including Amnesty International. Three dual nationals including Chaab have been sentenced to death or executed over security-related charges since the start of the year, according to the judiciary.

In January, the judiciary executed Alireza Akbari, a former Iranian official with British citizenship who had been convicted of espionage, bringing the tense ties between London and Tehran under new strain.

The Tehran Revolutionary Court in February sentenced to death German-Iranian Jamshid Sharmahd, 67, over his connection with a deadly mosque bombing in 2008. Sharmahd's sentence is pending confirmation by the Supreme Court. At least 16 Western passport holders, most of them dual nationals, are detained in Iran. Tehran insists all have been subject to proper judicial process. — AFP

## German Catholics challenge Vatican with reforms

**FRANKFURT:** Germany's Catholic Church has ended a landmark renewal project by agreeing a slew of reforms including blessing same-sex marriages and allowing female deacons, at the risk of angering the Vatican. Bishops, priests, nuns and lay representatives of the Church gathered in Frankfurt from March 9-11 for the last assembly of Germany's "Synodal Path", a process launched in 2019 in response to the clerical sex abuse scandal.

Some 200 delegates voted on 15 separate issues, among the most high-profile of which was the overwhelming agreement to ordain women into the diaconate. Deacons can assist priests during Mass, perform baptisms and bless marriages.

The final decision on whether to allow female deacons remains with Pope Francis. The delegates in Frankfurt did not go so far as to vote in favour of female priests, a far more contentious issue. The "Synodal Path" participants also backed offering blessings for same-sex couples, in defiance of the Vatican which considers homosexuality a sin.

Crucially, the measure was supported by a majority of German bishops, who have the authority to perform the ceremonies in their diocese without Vatican approval. The result was welcomed by the head of the German Bishops' Conference Georg Baezting as a "very good" outcome. Blessings for same-sex relationships are already offered in Germany by some Catholic priests, but the public show of support is likely to encourage more such ceremonies.

The German reform drive, which has included controversial discussions about priestly celibacy and



**VATICAN CITY:** File photo shows Pope Francis (R) arrives to lead his weekly general audience at Paul VI hall at the Vatican as people take pictures of him with their cell-phones. — AFP

changing the decision-making structure in Church, has sparked deep tensions with Rome and even triggered fears of a schism. Baezting played down those concerns in Frankfurt. "The Synodal Path neither leads to a division nor is it the beginning of a national Church," he told delegates. Baezting hopes the German proposals will be incorporated in Pope Francis's global synod, which will see a discussion about Church reforms in October.

Germany's Catholic Church remains the country's largest religion, counting 21.6 million members in 2021. But it has lost around three million members over the last decade and struggled to recruit new priests, spurring calls for modernisation and renewal.

Much of the exodus came in the wake of revelations of child sex abuse by clergy, mirroring similar scandals around the world. A study commissioned by the German Bishops' Conference and released in 2018 showed that 1,670 clergymen had committed some type of sexual attack against 3,677 minors, mostly boys, between 1946 and 2014. — AFP

## CBK: Very limited exposure of...

Continued from Page 1

punished the banking sector in total on Thursday, but by Friday, shares in some larger banks posted gains. However, regional lenders remained under pressure, including First Republic Bank, which slumped nearly 30 percent in two sessions on Thursday and Friday, and Signature Bank, a cryptocurrency-exposed lender, which has lost a third of its value since Wednesday evening. Yellen said on Sunday that the government was working with the US deposit guarantee agency, the FDIC, on a "resolution" of the situation at SVB, where approximately 96 percent of deposits are not covered by the FDIC's reimbursement guarantee.

"I'm sure they (the FDIC) are considering a wide range of available options that include acquisitions," she said. Yellen said reforms made after the 2008 financial crisis meant the government was not considering a bailout for SVB. "During the financial crisis, there were investors and owners of systemic large banks that were bailed out... and

the reforms that have been put in place means that we're not going to do that again," she said. "But we are concerned about depositors and focused on trying to meet their needs."

Following the 2008 failure of Lehman Brothers and the ensuing financial meltdown, US regulators required major banks to hold additional capital in case of trouble. US and European authorities also organize regular "stress tests" designed to uncover vulnerabilities at the largest banks. SVB's implosion represents not only the largest bank failure since that of Washington Mutual in 2008, but also the second largest failure ever for a retail bank in the United States.

Little known to the general public, SVB specialized in financing start-ups and had become the 16th largest US bank by assets: At the end of 2022, it had \$209 billion in assets and approximately \$175.4 billion in deposits. Earlier on Sunday, Britain's finance minister Jeremy Hunt warned that the country's technology and life sciences sectors were at "serious risk" following the SVB closure, noting that the bank manages the money of some of the UK's most promising businesses. He added, however, that the governor of the Bank of England had made it "very clear" that there was no systemic risk to the UK's financial system due to the SVB's collapse. — Agencies

countries increases the vulnerability of countries challenged by the effects of climate change," the Iraqi premier told the Basra meeting.

As part of the wider plan, the government cited the creation of green belts around cities to act as wind-breaks against dust storms. Iraq was once dubbed "the country of 30 million palm trees", but decades of conflict and failing public policies have ravaged the national symbol as urbanization has shrunk traditional green spaces. Lush palm groves that once protected large cities such as Baghdad or Karbala have given way to concrete neighborhoods.

Sudani pledged that Baghdad would soon organize a regional conference to strengthen cooperation and exchange expertise on combating climate change and other environmental pressures. "I call on friendly countries and all United Nations organizations to support us in facing the effects of climate change," Sudani said. Saudi Arabia, Iraq's wealthy neighbor, in 2021 announced a plan to plant 10 billion trees on its territory within a decade, as well as to plant 40 billion additional trees in collaboration with other countries. — AFP

## Pence slams Trump over Capitol attack

**WASHINGTON:** Former US vice president Mike Pence said Saturday that history would hold former president Donald Trump "accountable" for his role in the 2021 attack on the US Capitol, US media reported. The remarks are likely to widen the rift between the former running mates, who have been at loggerheads since Pence refused to go along with Trump's efforts to overturn the 2020 election results and remain in power.

"President Trump was wrong," Pence said in a speech at the annual Gridiron Dinner in Washington, a white-tie gala put on by journalists that draws top politicians. "I had no right to overturn the election. And his reckless words endangered my family and everyone at the Capitol that day. And I know that history will hold Donald Trump accountable," Pence was quoted as saying by multiple media outlets.

Some of the thousands who stormed the US Capitol on Jan 6, 2021, called for Pence to be hanged, forcing him to seek a safe location. Trump has already declared his intention to seek a new term as president in 2024 elections, and Pence indicated he may challenge him for the Republican nomination. The Gridiron Dinner is usually a light-hearted event with skits and musical entertainment, and Pence ini-



Mike Pence

tially sought to poke fun. "I will wholeheartedly, unreservedly support the Republican nominee for president in 2024 - if it's me," he said. Near the end of his speech, Pence said there was one issue he would not joke about. "The American people have a right to know what took place at the Capitol on January 6th," he said, according to The Washington Post newspaper. "But make no mistake about it, what happened that day was a disgrace, and it mocks decency to portray it in any other way."

Pence's sharp remarks aimed at Trump were unexpected at the gala. "Was at the dinner and can confirm @Mike\_Pence definitely caught the room by surprise - lots of dropped jaws," tweeted Maryam Mujica, a former State Department official. — AFP

## Saudi unveils new airline to compete...

Continued from Page 1

"close to a deal" with Boeing for an aircraft order "valued at \$35 billion".

The kingdom's busiest international airport is currently in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah, where flag carrier Saudia is based. Known as the "Gateway to Makkah", the city welcomes millions of Muslims performing the hajj and umrah pilgrimages each year. Officials have in recent years tried to position Riyadh, in central Saudi Arabia, as a rival to business hub Dubai.

"They want to make it a cosmopolitan city compet-

ing with the likes of Dubai and the likes of Doha from an investment perspective, from a tourism perspective, from an infrastructure perspective," Khalil Lamrabet, former CEO of the Saudi Air Connectivity Program, told AFP last November. "And to do that you need the country to develop a dedicated hub in Riyadh."

The capital currently has around eight million people, but officials have said they want the population to grow to 15-20 million by 2030. The Saudi strategy hinges partly on tapping the domestic market in a country with a population of around 35 million, which officials see as a major advantage for national carriers over rivals Emirates and Qatar Airways. "There is sizable outbound traffic out of the kingdom as well as sizable domestic traffic," Lamrabet said. "The reliance on transfer (flights) will not be as high as the other hubs in the region." — AFP

## Iraq to plant 5m trees in...

Continued from Page 1

Sudani said the government was working on a wider "Iraqi vision for climate action", speaking at a conference in the southern city of Basra attended by foreign ambassadors and UN officials. The plan would include promoting clean and renewable energy, new irrigation and water treatment projects and reduced industrial gas flaring, he said, without announcing details on funding or timeframes. Sudani said Iraq was "moving forward to conclude contracts for constructing renewable energy power plants to provide one-third of our electricity demand by 2030".

Sudani also cited "efforts to preserve Iraq's rights in the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers", the two waterways whose flows have been reduced, with Iraqi officials blaming dams upstream in Turkey and Iran. "The unilateral water control in the upstream



## International

# Iran says more than 100 arrested over poisonings of schoolgirls

## Tehran points at possible links to exiled opposition group MEK

**PARIS:** Iran has announced more than 100 arrests nationwide over the mystery poisonings of thousands of schoolgirls, charging that the unidentified alleged perpetrators may have links with “hostile” groups. In the wave of cases since late November, schoolgirls have suffered fainting, nausea, shortness of breath and other symptoms after reporting “unpleasant” odors on school premises, with some being treated in hospitals.

State media reported late Saturday that the Iranian interior ministry had announced the arrests over the suspected poison attacks in more than 200 schools that have sparked fear and anger among pupils and their parents. “More than 100 people who were responsible for the recent school incidents were identified, arrested and investigated,” the ministry said in a statement carried by state news agency IRNA. “Among those arrested are people with hostile motives and with the aim of instilling terror in the people and students and to close schools.”

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had last Monday called for the perpetrators of the “unforgivable crime” to be tracked down “without mercy”. The ministry added that “fortunately, from the middle of the last week until today, the number of incidents in schools has decreased significantly, and there have been no reports of sick students”.

The statement pointed at possible links to an Albania-based exiled Iranian opposition group that Tehran considers a “terrorist” organization, the People’s Mu-

jahedin of Iran or Mujahedeen-e-Khalq (MEK). “The investigation of these criminal people, including the discovery of their possible connection with the terrorist organizations such as the MEK and others, is ongoing,” reported IRNA.

Shahin Gobadi, Paris-based spokesman for the MEK, said the accusations were “a ridiculous show to cover up the role of the institutions under Khamenei’s command in this big crime” and urged Tehran to accept an international investigation. “The crime of poisoning thousands of schoolgirls... is the work of no one but the clerical regime and its security and repressive apparatus,” he said in a statement.

The poisonings started two months into the protests that gripped Iran following the September 16 death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, an ethnic Kurd who had been arrested over an alleged violation of strict dress rules for women. Iran has blamed those protests, which it commonly labels “riots”, on hostile forces abroad linked to its arch foes the United States, the Zionist entity and their allies. More than 5,000 pupils have been affected in poisoning cases in approximately 230 schools across 25 out of Iran’s 31 provinces, the latest official tally said. The ministry said arrests were made in the provinces of Tehran, Qom and Gilan in the north, Razavi Khorasan in the northeast, West Azerbaijan, East Azerbaijan and Zanjan in the northwest, Kurdistan and Hamadan in the west, Khuzestan in the southwest and Fars in the south. — AFP



**NEW YORK:** Activists from New York-based Iranian women’s rights group Woman Life Freedom attend a rally condemning the mass poisoning of Iranian female students on March 11, 2023. — AFP

## Rights group accuses Burkina forces of ‘massacring’ civilians

**OUAGADOUGOU:** A human rights group has accused government forces of “massacring” at least 21 civilians in a raid on a village in northern Burkina Faso. Children were among those killed when more than 100 hooded attackers in military fatigues descended on Toessin-Foulbe earlier this week, shooting and torturing victims, the NGO said.

All but two of the dead belonged to the Fulani minority ethnic group, the Collective Against Immunity and Stigmatisation of Communities (CISC) said. The attack took place at around 0900 GMT on Wednesday morning, the NGO said, with “allegations of torture and extrajudicial executions of civilians”.

“The suspected perpetrators of this massacre are believed to be elements of the defence and security forces and the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (VDP)” the rights group said on Friday. Set up in December 2019, the VDP is made up of civilian volunteers who are given two weeks’ military training before working alongside the army.

“The death toll was reported to be 20, including one woman and three children,” the NGO said. “Seven women were reportedly injured and three people are missing,” it added, saying on Saturday that another man’s body had been found.

### ‘Women tortured’

It said “more than a hundred members of the FDS and VDP, dressed in military fatigues, all hooded and armed” entered the village on “pick-up trucks and motorbikes” before shooting the men. “Women were tortured to make them say where the terrorists were hiding,” the NGO said. “They were our soldiers and the VDP... They were wearing army uniforms and had a Burkina flag,” a witness who also counted “21 bodies” told AFP. A resident said members of the village were “suspected of collaborating with armed terrorists”. The Fulani people are often singled out because some members of the community belong to jihadist groups. A government spokesman did not immediately respond to the accusations.

CISC called for an independent judicial inquiry. Last month, the NGO accused the army of killing at least 25 civilians in the east of the country and called for an investigation. The government said it had launched a probe. One of the world’s poorest nations, Burkina Faso has been battling the jihadist insurgency since it spilled over from neighbouring Mali in 2015.

More than 10,000 civilians, troops and police have been killed, according to an NGO estimate, while more than two million people have fled their homes. Ibrahim Traore, the army captain who seized power nearly six months ago and is now acting president, has stressed his determination to fight the jihadists. — AFP



**WATSONVILLE:** An aerial view shows people wading through a flooded neighborhood in the unincorporated community of Pajaro in Watsonville, California. — AFP

## Latest California storm leaves at least two dead

**PAJARO:** Another powerful storm pummeled California overnight into Saturday, forcing thousands to evacuate and resulting in at least two deaths, while causing a levee to give way in coastal Monterey County. “We were hoping to avoid and prevent this situation, but the worst case scenario has arrived with the Pajaro River overtopping and levee breaching at about midnight,” Luis Alejo, a Monterey County supervisor, said Saturday on Twitter. Residents told AFP they were alerted by local fire officials in the middle of the night that they needed to evacuate. “Just the noise of the fire department—their sirens and all—woke us up,” said Moses, a resident of the area for around 20 years who preferred to give only his first name.

He said officials later came and knocked on his door multiple times, but that he decided to wait until 5:00 AM to make a decision. After returning home from surveying the flooding, Moses said water was beginning to cover his street. “That’s when I told my wife, ‘hey, we got to get out of here,’” he said. The area remained under a flood warning Saturday afternoon, the National Weather Service said. Friday night, state emergency services director Nancy Ward announced that the storm had already claimed at least two lives.

Images posted on Twitter by the state’s National Guard account showed guardsmen rescuing residents trapped in their cars by high water. At least one road

was washed away in Santa Cruz County, just north of Monterey. Residents in several towns, mostly in the north, have been ordered to evacuate. An unusually intense and seemingly endless series of storms has battered California for weeks. The latest storm was expected to dump as much as nine inches (23 centimeters) of rain on already saturated ground.

### ‘Pineapple express’

Part of a powerful atmospheric river known as a “Pineapple express”—for the warm, subtropical moisture it brings from Hawaii—this latest storm will speed the melting of the enormous snowpack that has built up in higher elevations. The resulting runoff threatens to aggravate already serious flooding. In Pajaro on Saturday, the fire department and national guard used drones to survey the flooded areas, checking for people stranded in their homes, AFP reporters saw.

Two cousins, Angel Martinez and Christian Garcia, waded through the water carrying a plastic bag of food salvaged from the kitchen. They told AFP their neighborhood was a “wreck,” with water three-feet (one-meter) deep in their backyard.

They were only able to grab phone chargers, some blankets and a first aid kit when they hastily evacuated. US President Joe Biden on Friday approved an emergency declaration that clears the way to expedite federal aid to the western state. Biden called Governor Gavin Newsom on Saturday to reaffirm full federal support for the impact of flooding and landslides on the state, a White House pool report said. Newsom said California was “deploying every tool we have to protect communities from the relentless and deadly storms battering our state.” Storms in January were blamed for the loss of 20 lives. — AFP

## Young Georgians shun Moscow, push for EU dream

**TBILISI:** Georgia’s young protesters, having forced parliament into a U-turn on controversial new legislation, are determined to maintain the pressure on the government, which they believe is steering the country away from Europe. Thousands of young and mainly peaceful protesters flooded the capital Tbilisi this week. Many of them, speaking to AFP, insisted they were not motivated by party allegiances in the fiercely partisan country.

The over-arching reason they braved tear gas and water cannon, they said, was a firm belief that the ex-Soviet country should anchor itself to Europe. The rallies erupted Tuesday when parliament began to introduce a “foreign agent” bill reminiscent of Russian legislation used to suppress media and civil society. Under pressure from the protesters, the ruling Georgian Dream party formally voted down the bill Friday to the cheers and whistles of protesters outside par-

## Escaped jihadist prisoners killed in Mauritania

**NOUAKCHOTT:** Three escaped jihadist prisoners were killed in Mauritania during an operation to recapture them, the government said on Saturday. A police officer died, and a fourth prisoner was detained, officials said. The operation took place overnight Friday in the rugged heartland mountainous area of Adrar, a security official said on condition of anonymity. The four jihadists had escaped from a Nouakchott prison the previous Sunday.

Security forces “came under heavy fire which led them to engage in combat with the terrorist elements”, the defence and interior ministries said. The government hailed a “quality operation” carried out by security forces in this immense desert country of 4.5 million inhabitants. No information had been released on the whereabouts of the jihadists in recent days, nor on how they reached the north. But a security official said during the week that Ould Cheikh’s “excessively dangerous” escape plan had been “very well organised and planned for a long time”.

During the search for the fugitives, internet coverage has been disrupted all week across the country, NetBlocks, an organisation that monitors this activity around the world, told AFP, linking these disruptions to the hunt for them.

### Deadly jailbreak

During the original escape, two guards were killed and two injured, said the interior ministry. The escape was a rare event in a nation spared the insurgency sweeping through the Sahel. According to a military official, two of the prisoners had been sentenced to death, while the other two were awaiting trial for membership of a terrorist organisation. One of the prisoners killed was Saleck Ould Cheikh, who had been on death row since 2011 for his part in a plot to assassinate former Mauritanian president Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, a military official confirmed. The death penalty has not been enforced in Mauritania since 1987. Ould Cheikh had already escaped prison in December 2015 before being arrested in Guinea Bissau and sent back to Mauritania after three weeks on the run.

The second prisoner on death row participated in attacks on the army in the north of the country in 2005, the military official said. Mauritania has not experienced an attack on its soil since 2011, the result of security and political efforts made since the 2000s to curb the jihadist threat. At the same time, jihadism was spreading to neighbouring Mali, then across the Sahel. The absence of attacks has fuelled suggestions a secret non-aggression pact exists between Nouakchott and the jihadists. Washington claimed to have found documents in 2011 at the Pakistani hideout where former Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was killed, listing an attempt at rapprochement between the group and the Mauritanian government in 2010.—AFP



**TBILISI:** Georgian anti-government protesters rally outside the parliament as lawmakers vote to call off controversial “foreign agent” bill that sparked an international outcry and mass protests in the Caucasus country earlier this week, in Tbilisi. — AFP



MONDAY, MARCH 13, 2023

## Business

## Saudi Aramco reports 'record' \$161 billion profit for 2022

## High oil prices, volumes sold and stronger refining margins propelled profit growth

RIYADH: Saudi Aramco said on Sunday it achieved "record" profits totaling \$161.1 billion last year, drawing an outraged response from activists warning about the ravages of climate change. The mostly state-owned energy giant, the world's second most valuable company behind Apple, said in a filing with the Saudi stock market that net income for 2022 was up 46 percent from \$110 billion in 2021.

The results - the strongest since Aramco became a listed company in 2019 -- were "predominantly due to the impact of higher crude oil prices and volumes sold, and stronger refining margins," it said. Global energy prices surged after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.

"Given that we anticipate oil and gas will remain essential for the foreseeable future, the risks of underinvestment in our industry are real-including contributing to higher energy prices," Aramco CEO Amin Nasser said on Sunday. Aramco has pledged to achieve "operational net-zero" carbon emissions by 2050. That applies to emissions that are produced directly by Aramco's industrial sites, but not the CO2 produced when clients burn Saudi oil in their cars, power plants and furnaces.

The market would remain tightly balanced in the short to medium term, adding that he was cautiously optimistic, he said. Nasser was speaking to the press after the Saudi Arabian oil giant reported its highest ever annual profit since the company was listed.

He said spare capacity remained tight at 2 million barrels per day, while demand for jet fuel was increasing alongside China's re-opening from tight Coronavirus-related restrictions.

"If you considered China opening up and a pick-up in jet fuels and very limited spare capacity, we are talking 2 million barrels, so as I said we are cautiously optimistic in the short to midterm and the market will remain tightly balanced," he said.

A deal agreed between Iran and Saudi Arabia on Friday to re-establish relations after years of hostility that had threatened stability and security in the Gulf would have a positive effect on global energy markets as it promotes regional stability, Nasser said.

Aramco's crude supplies to its main Asian customers, including China and India, were not impacted by the uptick of Russian sales into Asia on the back of Western sanctions. "We have a track record of maintaining reliability and an excellent customer base. It didn't impact our supply to these main markets," he said.



RIYADH: Saudi Aramco achieved "record" profits totaling \$161.1 billion last year.

On recent imports of Russian diesel into Saudi Arabia, Nasser said the kingdom had always been importing products for its domestic market since before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Nasser said Aramco was looking globally at liquefied natural gas (LNG) market opportunities, when asked about potential acquisitions in the year ahead. The company is in "active talks and discussions" in terms of LNG investments, he said without elaborating.

Nasser cautioned that he still did not see enough investment to sustain demand in the long term going into the sector, saying that supply wouldn't be adequate in the mid- to long-term if that trend continued. "We need to make sure that there is additional supply in the market otherwise this tightness of supply in the mid- to long-term will have an impact," Saudi Arabia has pledged to achieve net

zero carbon emissions by 2060, drawing skepticism from environmental campaigners. Officials are simultaneously championing further investments in fossil fuels to ensure energy security and stave off inflation and other economic woes.

## Growth 'driver'

The company's yearly net income figure is nearly double the \$88.2 billion the firm pulled in in 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic. The profits fuelled overall economic growth in Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, which officials put at 8.7 percent in 2022, the highest rate in the G20.

Under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's de facto ruler, Saudi Arabia has sought both to open up and diversify its oil-reliant economy, spending heavily on much-hyped projects like a fu-

turistic megacity known as NEOM. Officials have touted growth in non-oil activities, which increased 6.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022 over the same period in 2021, according to data published on Thursday by the national statistics authority.

Yet government spending "is a major driver for this growth" and that "will always be to some extent linked to oil revenue", underscoring Aramco's central role in the economy, said Justin Alexander, director of the consultancy Khalij Economics. Energy prices are expected to stay elevated in 2023, in part because of production cuts approved last October by the OPEC+ cartel that Riyadh co-leads with Moscow-a move harshly criticized by Washington. Aramco floated 1.7 percent of its shares on the Saudi bourse in December 2019, generating \$29.4 billion in the world's biggest initial public offering. — AFP

## Worry for tech startups after SVB failure

NEW YORK: Silicon Valley Bank's stunning collapse has led to the freezing of tens of billions of dollars stored there by startups and their private equity backers, raising fears of a wider tech sector fallout. The company, whose website says it is "the financial partner of the innovation economy," was taken over Friday by the US Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to prevent further damage.

"SVB knew the entrepreneurial community," Joseph DeSimone, a professor at Stanford University and founder of several startups, told AFP. "They helped us recruit people, helped with securing mortgages for transplants, gave financial advice to new executives... So their disappearance is a real loss," he said. The company previously boasted that "nearly half" of technology and life science companies that had US funding banked with them, leading many to worry about the possible ripple effects of its collapse.

For banks that are FDIC-insured, only \$250,000 per account is guaranteed. But according to SVB's latest annual report, 96 percent of its total \$173 billion in deposits was uninsured. The FDIC said Friday that all accounts would quickly get access to the insured portions of their deposits, but that the rest would depend on how much is recovered from sales of the bank's assets, an often lengthy process. "The real victims of the SVB fallout are the depositors: startups with 10 to 100 employees, who cannot make payroll, and will have to furlough or shutdown work-



SANTA CLARA: A delivery person drops off pizzas at Silicon Valley Bank's headquarters in Santa Clara, California. — AFP

ers as soon as Monday," tweeted Garry Tan, head of the well-known incubator Y Combinator. He warned that "years of US innovation" are on the line, as an entire "generation of American startups" could be destroyed in a month or two.

Activist investor Bill Ackman raised a similar alarm on Twitter, saying that SVB's collapse "could destroy an important long-term driver of the economy." "If private capital can't provide a solution, a highly dilutive gov't (government) preferred bailout should be considered." According to several US media reports, SVB had discussed on Thursday and Friday a possi-

ble buyout with several banks, but could not find a solution quickly enough. Champ Bennett, cofounder of the video platform Capsule, revealed on Friday that the \$5 million raised in mid-February during the company's first seed funding round was housed at SVB and now inaccessible.

"What happens next is anyone's guess, but it doesn't look good," he tweeted. Bennett added that an intervention should not be viewed as "bailing out 'The 1' or 'Big Tech'," pointing to the "thousands of the most hardworking, talented individuals" at impacted companies who are currently "struggling." — AFP

star analyst Eric Compton, the suddenness of SVB's demise highlights "that it can be very difficult to predict how funding pressure can change in any given quarter and when these risks can materialize," he said in a note this week.

Officially closed and put into receivership by US authorities on Friday, SVB was at risk due to a heavy concentration in its client profile, according to Morgan Stanley. SVB "primarily banks technology, life science, and healthcare companies and is an integral part of the venture capital ecosystem," Morgan Stanley said. But the tech sector has been hard hit by the dramatic pivot in US monetary policy, with much higher borrowing rates leading to heavy deposit withdrawals.

Confronted with the need to raise money quickly, SVB sold about \$21 billion in securities, resulting in a

## Commerce ministry launches its latest digital services

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced on Sunday the launch of its latest digital services to reconcile licensing activities and companies according to the international classification of activities. The ministry stated on its official page on the social networking site "Twitter" that companies can benefit from the services provided by entering the company's manager or delegate to the 'FAQ' portal, authenticating through the "My Identity" application, and then selecting the request to reconcile activities and registering the commercial registration number.

The next step is to certify the validity of the data, submit the application, and issue the commercial registration visa, it stated. It is noteworthy that the ministry has added 17 commercial activities within the limits applied in the Unified Guide to Classifying Economic Activities in the GCC countries, including the establishment of private universities and colleges, trade in used clothing and retail sale for the purpose of recycling.



## SVB demise sign of worry, but limited contagion risk

NEW YORK: The surprisingly rapid implosion of Silicon Valley Bank has markets jittery over a potential sign of widespread turmoil, but analysts see only a limited risk of financial contagion. SVB's woes are the result of "idiosyncratic stresses and not one that we see as systemic that would affect the banking industry," said CFRA Research's Ken Leon, saying stricter US regulations enacted after the 2008 financial crisis have helped contain trouble.

A note from analysts at Morgan Stanley put it simply, saying, "We want to be very clear here ... we do not believe there is a liquidity crunch facing the banking industry, and most banks in our coverage have ample access to liquidity." Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen described the US banking sector as "resilient," while Cecilia Rouse, chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, also cited US reforms in arguing disaster would be averted. "Our banking system is in a fundamentally different place than it was a decade ago," Rouse said Friday at a White House briefing.

Following the 2008 demise of Lehman Brothers and the ensuing financial meltdown, US regulators required major banks to hold additional capital in case of trouble. US and European authorities also organize regular "stress tests" designed to uncover vulnerabilities at the largest banks. For Morning-

star analyst Eric Compton, the suddenness of SVB's demise highlights "that it can be very difficult to predict how funding pressure can change in any given quarter and when these risks can materialize," he said in a note this week.

loss of \$1.8 billion. Because many of SVB's clients held more than the \$250,000 that are reimbursed from US-insured institutions, customers began withdrawing funds en masse, precipitating the bank's failure. Following SVB's disclosure on Wednesday, investors punished the banking sector in total on Thursday. But by Friday, shares in some larger banks posted gains.

But that left many regional lenders still under pressure, including First Republic Bank, which slumped 15 percent and Signature Bank, a cryptocurrency-exposed lender, which plunged 23 percent. SVB's failure has also focused attention on the risks to financial institutions from the Federal Reserve's aggressive policies to counter inflation. On the one hand, higher interest rates help the banks by allowing them to charge more interest for loans. At the same time, the shift dents demand for loans, said CFRA's Leon. —AFP



## Business

# VW joins e-car price war as global rivalry heats up

## Local challengers race ahead in key market China

FRANKFURT: German giant Volkswagen is set to follow Tesla's lead with a high-profile price drop as the battle for global dominance in the electric car segment intensifies, and local challengers race ahead in key market China. A new version of Volkswagen's flagship ID.3 electric car model will go on sale from the end of March for just under 40,000 euros (\$42,000), the VW brand announced this week.

That is a 3,000-euro markdown from the current ID.3 price tag, putting it on par with US rival Tesla's popular Model Y. Industry insiders see the move as a direct response to several rounds of price-cutting by the Elon Musk-owned company in recent months, including discounts of up to 20 percent in Europe and the United States.

In Germany, Tesla's sales soared by more than 900 percent year-on-year in January as a result, making it the top-selling e-car in the country that month. Although the 10-brand VW group was Europe's leading e-car manufacturer in 2022 with 352,000 vehicles sold, Tesla's audacious markdowns have forced the German firm's hand, said industry analyst Ferdinand Dudenheoffer.

"Volkswagen sees how big the threat is from Tesla," he told AFP. The automaker will have "no choice" but to enter "a price war" to defend its place in the

hotly contested market for battery-powered vehicles, even if that means profit margins take a hit for a while. VW group CEO Oliver Blume has so far ruled out a general price drop on all e-cars, but the topic is bound to come up when the group presents its 2022 financial results on Tuesday.

But Musk is not VW's only headache. In China, the world's largest car market, the industry's electrification has shifted into higher gear and VW is rapidly falling behind domestic competitors.

### China challenge

The Asian giant currently accounts for some 40 percent of VW group sales, mostly vehicles with traditional internal combustion engines, giving it a market share in China of 16 percent. But in the electric car segment, the Volkswagen brand has eked out a market share of just 2.4 percent, trailing Tesla at 7.8 percent and China's BYD at 16 percent. A slew of other Chinese automakers such as Wuling, GAC and Chery are also outperforming VW, according to data compiled by the financial daily Handelsblatt.

Fellow German carmakers Mercedes-Benz and BMW are faring no better in China, their e-models holding a market share of less than one percent each. "In the world's largest car market, German

manufacturers have so far lagged behind local brands," industry expert Stefan Bratzel said in his annual report on electromobility. Of the more than five million electric vehicles sold in China in 2022, VW accounted for just 155,700.

### Traffic jam entertainment

"The times when German traditional carmakers could take their market shares (in China) for granted are gone," said Gregor Sebastian, an analyst at the Mercator Institute for China Studies. "In Germany, driving performance remains a key factor" when customers choose a new car, he said. "But in China, where many people spend a lot of their driving time stuck in traffic jams and highly value new technologies, the car's interaction with the smartphone and overall connectivity is more important," he added. VW's China chief Ralf Brandstaetter said the group needed to make cars "in China, for China" if it wanted to boost e-sales there-and do so faster. "The Chinese develop a new car in two and a half years. VW takes just under four years to do that," he recently said in Germany's Sueddeutsche newspaper. With VW expecting China to make major strides in autonomous driving in the near future, the German group last year said it was teaming up with Chinese AI chip



It will soon cost less to drive away with VW's ID.3 as a price war intensifies in the battery electric car market. — AFP

specialist Horizon Robotics to accelerate the development of smart-driving technologies.

And even with all the changes sweeping the industry, the reputation of German carmakers remains a trump card in China, said Sebastian. "The competition is tough," he said. "But German carmakers like Volkswagen have over 80 years' experience building cars for different markets and customers, that will give them an advantage." — AFP

## China retains CB chief in unexpected move

BEIJING: China retained its central bank chief in a surprise move on Sunday, as the country appointed a cabinet focused on fighting economic headwinds. Yi Gang was confirmed as governor of the People's Bank of China at a meeting of China's national legislature, against expectations that retirement-age Yi would step down. Two top economic officials—commerce minister Wang Wentao and finance minister Liu Kun—were also retained, as well as National Health Commission director Ma Xiaowei, who oversaw China's zero-COVID policy. The cabinet faces the task of revitalizing the Chinese economy, which last year expanded just three percent—one of its weakest performances in decades. General Li Shangfu, who was

sanctioned by the US government in 2018 for buying Russian weapons, was named defense minister.

US-China tensions have worsened in recent weeks, exacerbated by the entry of an alleged Chinese spy balloon into US airspace and accusations that Beijing might supply Moscow with weapons to use against Ukraine. President Xi Jinping slammed the United States this week for leading an effort of "containment, encirclement and suppression of China".

Li's appointment is "a deliberate pushback against US sanctions", said Manoj Kewalramani, China expert at the Takshashila Institution in Bengaluru, India. The move "demonstrates Beijing's willingness to engage in brinkmanship" and will "add another hurdle in US-China engagement, which is already very constrained", he told AFP.

### Key Xi allies

The National People's Congress also confirmed key Xi allies to its cabinet. Top Xi aide Ding Xuexiang and He Lifeng, a longtime colleague of Xi's, were nominated to vice premier positions by new

premier Li Qiang. Ding and He received almost all votes from more than 2,900 legislators, with former mayor of Tianjin Zhang Guoqing as well as former Shaanxi province party secretary Liu Guozhong also selected as vice premiers.

Xi has stacked the top levels of government with loyalists as he cements his grip on power. Trusted ally Li Qiang was confirmed as premier on Saturday, just a day after Xi was unanimously selected by legislators for a norm-breaking third term as president. "Both Ding and He have been close political allies to President Xi, and Mr He and President Xi have known each other for decades," Nomura analysts wrote in a recent note. "Such close relationships may help the new government's policy delivery and cross-ministry coordination," the analysts said.

Xi's decision to pack the Communist Party's top leadership with loyalists has stoked concerns about him prioritizing ideology at the expense of economic growth. China has set a growth target of "around five percent" for 2023, one of the lowest in decades, as the world's second-largest economy widely



Yi Gang

missed its growth target in the face of strict COVID curbs and a simmering property crisis. The national legislature this week approved a broad restructuring of government departments, aimed at boosting self-reliance in manufacturing. — AFP



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
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## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 09 MARCH 2023

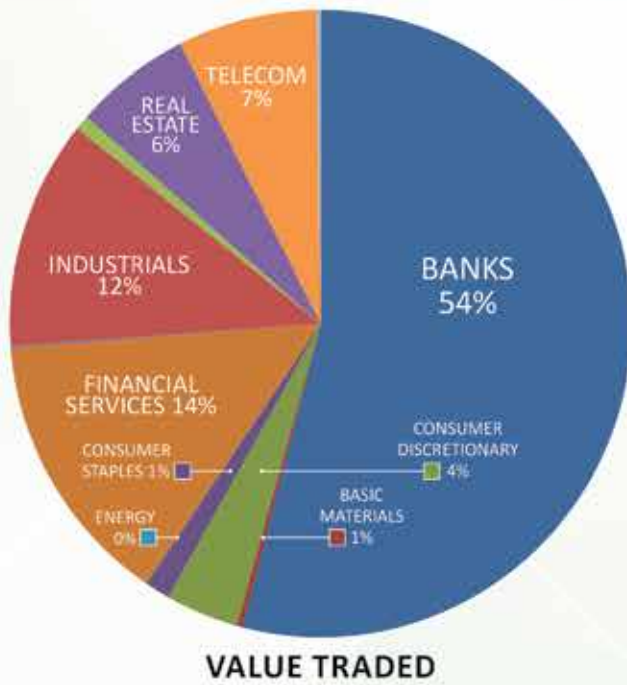
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Market	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Premier Market	33,038	8,138.14	0.2%	0.8%	2.4%	260,814,434	112,573,332	21,870	16.5	1.2	84.8%
Main Market	5,914	5,501.00	-1.1%	-0.9%	-1.2%	192,041,352	23,372,255	11,833	12.1	0.7	15.2%
All Share	38,952	7,283.41	0.0%	0.5%	1.7%	452,855,786	135,945,587	33,703	13.0	0.8	100%

Sector	M. Cap (KD ml)	Last Close	WTD %	MTD %	YTD %	Quantity Traded	Value Traded	No. of Trades	P/E	P/B	% of Total M. Cap
Banking	25,815	1,832.00	0.4%	1.2%	4.0%	116,390,127	73,472,489	10,656	22.4	1.3	66.27%
Basic Materials	438	845.00	-0.5%	0.1%	-1.4%	525,535	409,557	220	8.2	1.3	1.12%
Consumer Discretionary	531	1,472.00	1.0%	1.1%	3.5%	18,819,815	5,180,070	1,851	12.7	0.9	1.36%
Consumer Staples	146	479.00	-0.4%	0.1%	1.6%	4,506,705	1,757,452	228	NM	1.0	0.37%
Energy	128	1,029.00	1.4%	1.1%	-12.6%	1,885,429	70,763	137	11.0	0.5	0.33%
Financial Services	2,613	1,222.00	-2.0%	-1.1%	-1.2%	179,084,614	19,390,168	8,170	11.6	0.8	6.71%
Health Care	82	462.00	0.5%	0.5%	0.1%	190,496	123,882,440	3	13.4	2.5	0.21%
Industrials	3,084	979.00	-0.9%	-1.2%	-6.5%	31,146,603	16,084,952	4,378	13.4	0.8	7.92%
Insurance	443	1,619.00	-0.8%	-0.5%	4.3%	4,085,460	1,023,957	533	10.1	0.8	1.14%
Real Estate	2,089	1,123.00	-1.2%	-1.7%	-5.6%	77,150,644	8,285,812	4,163	13.7	0.5	5.36%
Technology	0	677.00	4.7%	-0.1%	-7.9%	77,667	7,033	14	NM	0.8	0.00%
Telecommunications	3,584	1,170.00	-0.5%	-0.1%	0.1%	17,445,889	9,858,802	3,137	14.2	2.0	9.20%
Utilities	0	479.00	0.0%	0.0%	-1.1%	1,546,802	280,649	213	13.8	1.7	0.00%

Top Gainers					Top Losers				
Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	last Close	Change %	Volume
IPG	460	5.75%	22,043	10,224,000	24	ALOLA	31.9	-27.50%	28,590,787
ASC	93.0	4.73%	77,667	7,033,000	14	TAAMEER	14.3	-22.70%	3,723,398
MRC	60	4.35%	323,857	18,616,000	34	GIH	371	-10.17%	936,782
JAZEERA	1,830	3.98%	937,978	1,679,168,000	265	SULTAN	83.7	-10.00%	783,499
AMAR	64	3.58%	8,529	536,000	3	KGL	54.6	-9.00%	207,189

Top Volume					Top Value				
Stock	Last	Change %	Volume	Value	Trades	Stock	Last	Change %	Volume
KFH	870	1.05%	41,327,257	36,006,458	4,007	KFH	870	1.05%	41,327,257
ALOLA	31.9	-27.50%	28,590,787	951,318	1,177	NBK	1,110	1.37%	16,851,151
NCCI	119	0.00%	28,409,798	3,456,085	395	AGLTY	598	-0.50%	12,704,969
GFH	77	-0.13%	27,693,436	2,129,356	1,033	ZAIN	552	-0.72%	13,826,912
NRE	81.1	-8.57%	21,109,539	1,795,526	1,286	BOUBAYAN	738	-2.89%	8,781,156



### Market Summary:

- Premier market volume and value dropped 28% and 36%, respectively. Main Market volume rose 6% while value dropped 10%.
- Premier and Main indexes both retreated from resistance with Premier Index taking over most of the liquidity.
- Technically, the All Share index closed at 7283, with support levels at 7248, 7233, and 7214, and resistance at 7318. The Premier index closed at 8138, with support levels at 8116, 8064, and 8013, while resistance at 8184. The Main index closed at 5501, with support levels at 5495, 5484, and 5467, while resistance at 5526.



## Business

# British tech sector 'at serious risk' after SVB collapse: Govt

## SVB bankruptcy has 'no implications' for UK banks

**LONDON:** Britain's technology and life sciences sectors are at "serious risk" following the closure of the Silicon Valley Bank, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt warned on Sunday. The California-based SVB bank, which was closed by US authorities on Friday, manages the money of some of the UK's most promising businesses, Hunt said.

"There is a serious risk to our technology and life sciences sectors, many of whom bank with this bank," Hunt said in an interview with British television channel Sky News. "Most people won't have heard of the Silicon Valley Bank but it happens to look after the money of some of our most promising and exciting businesses." The bank is expected to reopen on Monday under a new name with the US deposit guarantee agency, the FDIC, taking control.

Hunt said the governor of the Bank of England had made it "very clear" that there was no systemic risk to the UK's financial system due to the SVB's collapse. The government would bring forward plans "very soon" to ensure people are able to meet their cash flow requirements and pay staff.

It would also put a longer term solution in place to minimize or completely avoid losses to British companies, he added. The British Treasury said Saturday that the problems of the failed SVB bank were "specific to the firm" and had no "implications for other banks operating in the UK". The bank failed after its customers, mainly from the tech sector, made massive withdrawals, and after its latest attempt to raise new money proved unsuccessful. Little known to the general public, SVB specialized in financing start-ups and had become the 16th-largest US bank by assets.

Its demise is not only the largest bank failure since Washington Mutual in 2008, but also the

second-largest retail bank failure in the US. The Bank of England said it intended to pursue insolvency with regards to the bank's British subsidiary. "It was looking inevitable that the dramatic loss of confidence in SVB would also sweep its UK arm into insolvency," said Susannah Streeter of financial firm Hargreaves Lansdown.

"The run on the US bank spooked customers banking with the British subsidiary, despite protestations that it was ring-fenced from its parent," she added. Sky News reported that the Bank of London, which launched just two years ago, is among those mulling a bid for SVB's British arm.

### No fallout on banks

The problems of the failed SVB bank were "specific to the firm" and had no "implications for other banks operating in the UK," the British Treasury said Saturday. The UK banking system, one of the largest in the world, "remains strong and resilient," the finance ministry said in a press release, adding the government was meeting with representatives of the technology sector to address their concerns.

US authorities closed the California-based Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) on Friday with the US deposit guarantee agency, the FDIC, taking control. The bank is expected to reopen on Monday under a new name. Finance minister Jeremy Hunt spoke to the governor of the Bank of England on Saturday morning regarding Silicon Valley Bank UK, the US bank's UK subsidiary, to ensure that its failure "is managed smoothly, and that any disruption is minimized".

Treasury officials have been speaking to firms affected and held a roundtable with industry representatives on Saturday "to discuss the situation and the worries they face", added the statement.



**SANTA CLARA, US:** A Brinks armored truck sits parked in front of the shuttered Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) headquarters in Santa Clara, California. —AFP

"The government recognizes that tech sector companies are often not cashflow positive as they grow, and that they rely on cash deposits to cover their day-to-day costs," it said. The bank failed after its customers, mainly from the tech sector, made massive withdrawals, and after its latest attempt to raise new money proved unsuccessful. Little known to the gen-

eral public, SVB specialized in financing start-ups and had become the 16th-largest US bank by assets. Its demise is not only the largest bank failure since Washington Mutual in 2008, but also the second-largest retail bank failure in the US. The Bank of England said it intended to pursue insolvency with regards to the bank's British subsidiary. —AFP

## SVB failure rattles USDC and other cryptocurrencies

**NEW YORK:** The supposedly "stable" cryptocurrency USDC fell sharply after the firm that created it, Circle, announced it holds \$3.3 billion in failed Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and has dropped its peg to the dollar. Circle said late Friday it had been unable to withdraw its reserves from SVB, whose sudden collapse rattled financial markets.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation on Friday took over SVB, a major lender to the tech world, in the second-largest bank failure in US history.

SVB is expected to reopen on Monday under a new name, with billions in customer deposits now under FDIC control. The FDIC guarantees deposits-but only up to \$250,000 per client and per bank.

The agency said Friday it would provide certificates to customers with uninsured funds-those above the \$250,000 limit-so that they would be the first to receive funds eventually recovered while the bank is in receivership. But the process of liquidating the bank's assets can be long, with no certainty of just how much will be recovered.

The USD Coin, or USDC, was launched in 2018 as a "stablecoin," meaning it was indexed to a currency backed by a central bank, in this case the US dollar. It is listed as the second largest "stable" currency worldwide, based on its volume in circulation (around \$40 billion), behind Tether.

Stablecoins are supposed to be backed by equivalent reserves in immediately available assets, either cash or readily convertible financial securities. Overnight Friday to Saturday, the USDC fell to its lowest level ever, dropping to 87 cents before recovering to around 94 cents.

Other stablecoins have also suffered. The Dai, the fourth-largest stablecoin by volume in circulation, fell to 95 cents, while the Frax (sixth largest) fell to 94 cents, its lowest ever. —AFP

## HYBE may call off acquisition of SM Entertainment

**SEOUL:** K-pop supergroup BTS' management agency HYBE said Sunday it will discontinue its acquisition process of rival SM Entertainment, ending a weeks-long fight for management rights over the company. HYBE has been competing with South Korean internet giant Kakao after purchasing a nearly 15 percent stake in SM from its founder Lee Soo-man last month, which prompted the company's shares to more than double in a month.

"In light of recent developments, HYBE discussed the matters with Kakao and reached an agreement to suspend the process of acquiring SM's management rights," the agency said in a statement. It cited the "potential negative impact" on HYBE's shareholder value as well as the fact that the recent competition with Kakao had fueled "overheating of the market" as reasons, adding the price of acquiring SM had exceeded the fair acquisition price range. "Concurrently, the two companies agreed to cooperate on matters related to their platforms," the company said. SM welcomed the decision and thanked shareholders, fans, employees and artists for their support "throughout the unexpected turmoil over the past few weeks".

SM was founded by Lee Soo-man, who is widely referred to as "the godfather of K-pop" and credited for producing key figures in an earlier generation of artists such as BoA, Girls' Generation and TVXQ, which paved the way for the industry's current success. —AFP

## Gulf Bank sponsors KTech Career Fair

**KUWAIT:** As part of its continuous efforts to empower the youth, Gulf Bank participated in this year's Kuwait College of Technology (KTech) Career Fair, from March 6 to 8, 2023.

Throughout the career fair, Gulf Bank representatives shed light on the nature of the workplace at the Bank - by providing detailed explanations on the work structure and job opportunities available for recent graduates; in addition to conducting personal interviews for applicants.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Human Resources, Salma Al-Hajjaj, said, "Gulf Bank's participation in this year's Kuwait Technical College (KTech) Career Fair is part of our continuous effort to support young Kuwaiti talents, and work towards developing their capabilities." Al-Hajjaj mentioned that Gulf Bank is keen to attract young talents from various fields, as part of its efforts to consolidate its position as the bank of the future, and to align with its



Salma Al-Hajjaj



strategy for 2025. She indicated that the younger generation is capable of keeping pace with the language of the times, and with the latest innovations and rapid technological developments in the banking sector; both locally and globally.

Al-Hajjaj also affirmed the Bank's eagerness to support Kuwait Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" - which targets private sector employment and the development of Kuwaiti youth. This has been reflected in the increasing numbers of national employments at Gulf Bank in the recent years.

She continued: "We are proud that Gulf Bank is one of the leading banks that invests gener-

ously in human capital to enhance the competencies of its employees, as they are the main focus to achieve its strategic objectives. We will continue to provide them with the latest expertise and skills required to keep pace with the major banking developments that the banking industry is going through." Al-Hajjaj further stated that recruitment, training, and development are the key pillars required for the Bank, to establish the principles of economic sustainability. These pillars help to develop Kuwaiti talents and encourage them to work and grow towards becoming future leaders in the private sector.



**KUWAIT:** Bengt Schultz, Munir Salous, Najib Nasser and Wadih Abdel Ahad during the opening of Al-Sayer Car Rental at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya governorate.

## Al-Sayer Car Rental opens new outlet at Crowne Plaza Hotel

**KUWAIT:** Committed to exceeding customer expectations and as part of the strategic expansion of the Group towards delivering quicker service in the hospitality sector, Al-Sayer Car Rental has opened a brand-new office at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya governorate.

The opening ceremony was represented by Bengt Schultz, Chief Operating Officer and Munir Salous, Senior General Manager Car Rental from Al-Sayer with Najib Nasser, Cluster General Manager and Wadih Abdel Ahad, Cluster Director of Sales and Marketing of Crowne Plaza & Holiday Inn Kuwait Al-Thuraya City.

Commenting on the opening ceremony Munir Salous said, "We have embarked on an ambitious journey to enhance the brand image of Al-Sayer

Car Rental to International Standards. With the opening of our outlet here in Crowne Plaza Hotel Farwaniya, we now have even better network of 7 locations across Kuwait and we have a positive outlook on further expansion of this network. From a strategic point we also aim to enhance digital service for our customers that includes advanced web solutions".

Bengt Schultz said "Al-Sayer is confident on expansion plans for our Group specially Car Rental Division and we are excited to associate with five-star hospitality partners Crowne Plaza Hotel. Since its inception in 1976 Car Rental and Leasing operations has recorded exceptional growth in the ranks of one of the leading companies in the region on the strong foundation of unparalleled service".

According to Najib Nasser, "It gives us great pleasure to have Al-Sayer's Car Rental booth with us here on premises at the Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza Kuwait Al-Thuraya City. The legacy, long history and legendary service of Al-Sayer Holding is a testament to their commitment to serve their customers and we

are very happy to be a small part of their continued journey. Wishing the team continued success for now and the future".

### Integrated rental solutions

At the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Al-Sayer Car Rental will offer Toyota vehicles, the most reliable product in the automotive industry; from small sedans to medium class vehicles, and the toughest 4X4 Land Cruisers.

Premium range of cars from Lexus will also be available for customers, in addition to chauffeur driver service available upon request, meaning Al-Sayer Rental portfolio includes all options to meet customers' requirements. Supporting the hospitality sector Al-Sayer Car Rental also has an outlet at Al-Bastaki International Hotel, Bneid Al-Gar in Assimah governorate. Also committed to delivering quicker service to the growing business sector in Ahmadi governorate, Al-Sayer Car Rental and Leasing had recently opened a brand-new building for Head Office, Sales Operations and Service Center.







Puppets overlook an empty cloak room prior to the Snow White fairytale puppet show.



Puppets are seen in a storage prior to the Snow White fairytale puppet show at the UNESCO recognized Salzburg Marionette Theatre in Salzburg, Austria. — AFP photos



## ‘True artistry’: Austria puppets charm with age-old craft

It takes as long to train to be a puppeteer at the world-famous Salzburg Marionette Theatre as it does to become a doctor. The puppets and their startlingly lifelike movements take years to master, which is why the Austrian theatre’s work has UNESCO World Heritage status. “It’s like playing an instrument. You can’t think about which string to pull during the show,” said Edouard Funck, a puppeteer and costume designer.

Most puppets have at least 11 strings, so the puppeteer can make them “kiss each other, hug each other, hit each other, (or) whatever we want.” Some complicated puppets have dozens of strings, requiring up to five people to operate

them, said the 34-year-old French-born performer. Their movements are so subtle that audiences sometimes believe a puppet has “moved her lips”, said Funck, when it’s just “the illusion that is created on stage”.

### Lengthy apprenticeship

The theatre’s founder, Austrian sculptor Anton Aicher, invented a special control bar to manipulate the puppets a century ago. “Because the control bar is so small, we can make the puppets interact closely,” Funck said. The puppeteers make the puppets themselves, spending their mornings designing, carving and dressing them

before returning later to perform. Despite the lengthy apprenticeship, the theatre has no problem finding recruits, said Funck, who dreamed of being a puppeteer as a child. Ilse Laubbichler, 79, who has been coming to the theatre since her own childhood, took her four grandchildren to see “Snow White” there for the first time. “I love the characters, the movement of the puppets-this is true artistry,” she said. — AFP

Puppeteers prepare the stage prior to the Snow White fairytale puppet show.



Puppeteer Edouard Funck is seen with faceless puppets in a storage prior to the Snow White fairytale puppet show.



Puppeteer Ursula Winzer works on a puppet prior to the Snow White fairytale puppet show.



Puppets are seen in a storage prior to the Snow White fairytale puppet show.

## Greek granny famed for helping refugees dies

A 93-year-old Greek grandmother, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for helping refugees flooding into Europe, died on Sunday, the state news agency reported. Emilia Kamvysi and two other elderly women became instant celebrities in 2015 when they were pictured bottle-feeding a refugee baby whose parents had just landed on Greece’s Lesbos island after a perilous sea crossing. The arrivals were among more than a million refugees and migrants, many fleeing

the Syrian civil war, who reached EU shores during the influx.

The three elderly women were children of ethnic Greek refugees from Turkey, and became a symbol of the solidarity of the people of Lesbos with the huge numbers of arriving Syrians. Greek state news agency ANA reported Kamvysi’s death and said her funeral would take place in her village on Lesbos on Monday.

The other two grandmothers had already passed away-Maritsa Mavrapidou in 2019 at the age of 92, and Efstratia Mavrapidou in 2022, aged 96. The trio had insisted they had done nothing special. “What did I do, my son?” Kamvysi, famously told Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos. “They were gentle people and they were just passing through,” she later told AFP. — AFP

## US writer Paul Auster suffering from cancer, wife says

American author Paul Auster, whose stylistic novels about outsiders and down-and-outers brought him fame, is suffering from cancer, his wife said Saturday. Auster, 76, is being treated at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, his wife and fellow writer Siri Hustvedt posted on Instagram. “My husband was diagnosed with cancer in December after having been ill for several months before that,” she wrote.

“I have been living in a place I have come to call Cancerland.” “Many people have crossed its borders either because

they are or have been sick themselves or love someone, a parent, child, spouse, or friend who has or had cancer,” she wrote.

Auster has written more than 30 books which have been translated into more than 40 languages. He shot to fame in 1982 with “The Invention of Solitude,” a haunting memoir of his father. He followed that up with “The New York Trilogy,” a noirish take on the detective genre.

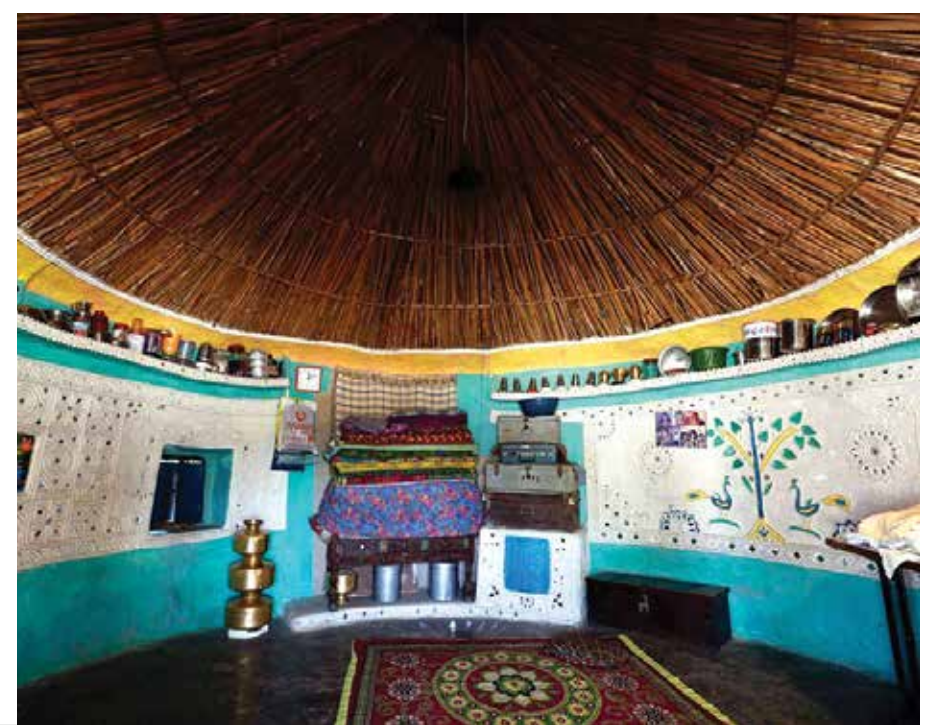
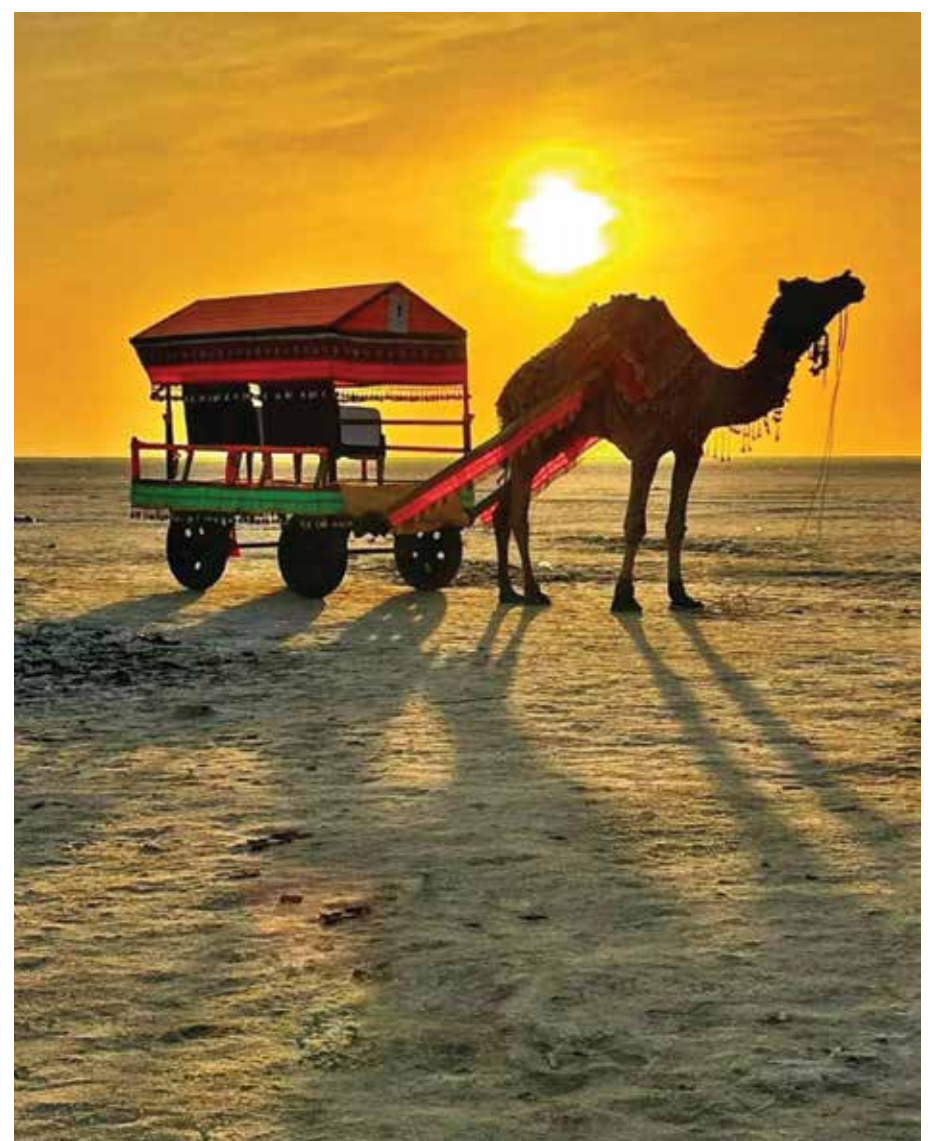
Hustvedt didn’t specify what type of cancer her husband has or his prognosis. “Living with someone who has cancer and is being bombed with che-

motherapy and immunotherapy is an adventure in closeness and separation,” she wrote. “This tightrope isn’t always easy to walk...” — AFP

US writer Paul Auster







# The Rann of Kutch: India's largest salt marshes



**T**he Rann of Kutch, one of the largest salt marshes in the world, located mostly in India's Gujarat state in the Kutch district, with some parts extending into the Pakistani province of Sindh. The region is divided into the Great Rann, which covers around 18,000 square kilometers, and Little Rann covering around 5,100 square kilometers and is known to be bone-dry all winter, then totally flooded in the summer because of heavy rainfall. The Kutch district is inhabited by various groups and is particularly famous for its arts and crafts. — KUNA



## S Africa rapper Costa Titch dies after collapsing on stage

**T**he South African rapper Costa Titch died on stage while performing, police said Sunday, as they opened an investigation in the circumstances of the 28-year-old's sudden death. The artist "collapsed while he was performing" on Saturday evening at the Ultra South Africa concert in the Johannesburg suburb of Nasrec, police told AFP.

They said a post-mortem would establish the cause of death. Costa Titch scored a major hit with "Big Flexa," which has more than 45 million Youtube views, showcasing the amapiano local subgenre of house music blending house, jazz and lounge music. Videos on social media of his concert Saturday show him performing with his microphone in hand when he appears to fall. He continues singing but collapses again, prompting other artists to come to his aid.

Costa Titch, whose real name is Costa Tsobanoglou, died a month on from the assassination of another popular South African rapper Kiernan Forbes, known as AKA. Forbes was shot dead outside a Durban restaurant and an

investigation is ongoing into what has been seen as a likely contract killing. Tributes swiftly appeared for Titch on Sunday with Julius Malema, leader of radical leftist party EFF, posting an image of a broken heart alongside Costa Titch's name on social media.

The Southern African Music Rights Organization wrote on Twitter: "SAM-RO is saddened by the passing of popular rapper Costa Tsobanoglou, better known as Costa Titch. Heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and broader music industry." "RIP, Costa Titch. Great talent gone too soon," tweeted rapper Da L.E.S. — AFP



## Cheetahs back in wild in India after seven decades

**T**wo Namibian cheetahs relocated to India last year were released into the wild, more than seven decades after the world's fastest land animal was declared extinct in the South Asian country. "Both cheetahs are doing good," India's Environment Minister Bhopendra Yadav tweeted Saturday after the male and female darted from quarantine enclosures of Kuno National Park into the wild.

"Big day for the cheetah reintroduction program," Yadav added. Obaan and Asha were among eight cheetahs brought to India last September after India's top court ruled in 2020 that the species should be reintroduced on an experimental basis. The program is a major prestige project for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who presided over the release of the animals into an enclosure after their arrival.

Twelve more of the globally listed "vulnerable" big cats were translocated from South Africa last month, with India aiming to bring in about 100 of them over the next decade. The last Asiatic cheetah to roam the sub-continent was believed to have been hunted down in 1947 by an Indian prince.

The spotted feline was declared officially extinct in India in 1952. Kuno National Park, a wildlife sanctuary in central India, was selected for relocation of the African cheetahs—a different subspecies—for its abundant prey and grasslands. The African cheetah's introduction in India is the first intercontinental relocation of the planet's fastest land animal.

Critics have warned the creatures may struggle to adapt to the Indian hab-

itat due to competition for prey from a significant number of leopards in the national park. Cheetahs are one of the oldest big cat species, with ancestors dating back about 8.5 million years, and they once roamed widely throughout Asia and Africa in great numbers. But today, after their extinction from many countries across the Middle East and Asia, only around 7,000 remain, primarily in the African savannahs.— AFP



This handout photograph Bureau (PIB) shows a wild cheetah being released at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh state. — AFP





Photo shows Reza Doust (left) painting while Arshan Rahimi playing his music.



Iranian artist Reza Doustis.



Photo shows a painting by Iranian artist Reza Doust.



Photo shows a painting done on stage by Iranian artist Reza Doust.

## DOUST AND RAHIMI CREATE ART DURING 'THE SOUND OF LIFE' EVENT



Iranian Musician Arshan Rahimi playing music.

By Faten Omar

**D**en Gallery celebrated International Women's Day by organizing a live painting and music event titled 'The Sound of Life'. "The idea of Sound of Life is to do a live painting with live music playing, where my painting is to explain this music," Iranian artist Reza Doust told Kuwait Times. He explained that on International Women's Day, he wanted to talk about young Iranian women who are fighting for their rights. "I drew an innocent girl standing without showing her face with a dark background to express the black history of Iran, but the girl is full of bright colors because she wants to be free and seen," he said.

Doust pointed out this is his first time painting live in front of a big crowd. "The live music was very touching; I could not stop crying while painting. It was a great

experience. The main goal is to show support for these young girls. They just want to live like any other girl in the world; they do not have special demands or a desire to fight," he said.

Doust revealed he got an offer to do a larger painting at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre in the next season. "I will also exhibit my artworks in the Netherlands in May and do a similar live demonstration. And in September, I will have a show with CAP gallery in Kuwait," he revealed. He called on people to be open to art and expose themselves to foreign artists. "I would love to see more people show interest in such events, where this is a good opportunity for people in Kuwait to meet artists from other countries to learn more about the different ways they see the world."

Iranian musician Arshan Rahimi performed live music during the event, ex-



pressing his happiness to see Kuwait care about art and artists. "Art is the last lifeline for humans," he affirmed. "Art is a common universal language between peoples. We can communicate our feelings to each other through art. I am proud to present my work of art with one of the most famous artists, Reza Doust, in my second homeland Kuwait," he said.

"We presented a mix of visual and auditory arts for an hour that was full of

emotions on the occasion of International Women's Day at Den Gallery, where a beautiful audience attended to celebrate women. The success of this event exceeded our expectations, and we are proud to present this work to every woman, as she is the foundation of society. Thank you to all art lovers who attended and the Den Gallery family," Rahimi said.



Photo shows Iranian artist Reza Doust painting on stage.

### 'Upending the world': Swiss teachers take on ChatGPT

**"I**t is dizzying," Eric Vanoncini acknowledged to the classroom full of anxious teachers as reams of text generated by the ChatGPT bot unfurled on the large screen behind him. "It risks upending the world of education as we know it." The high school English and philosophy teacher had gathered dozens of educators for one of several workshops hastily organized in the Swiss canton of Geneva following urgent appeals for guidance on how to deal with the new know-it-all bot.

The release in November of ChatGPT, which uses artificial intelligence to convincingly mimic human writing, has sparked concerns in schools worldwide of a looming cheating epidemic. "It is worrying," Silvia Antonuccio, who teaches Italian and Spanish, told AFP after the workshop "I don't feel at all capable to distinguish between a text written by a human and one written by ChatGPT."

The software by California company OpenAI has been trained on billions of words and tons of online data, enabling it to write surprisingly human-like texts, including passable school essays. Stories abound about the bot receiving good grades in various disciplines, including recently passing a US law school exam.

#### Like the Tour de France

Standing in the darkened, crowded classroom, Vanoncini showed off the tool, asking ChatGPT to write his introduction... about ChatGPT. The result, emerging on screen within seconds, was a succinct, well-written text "with no spelling mistakes", he pointed out, acknowledging: "It is quite astonishing."

Students have, of course, already realized its potential.

Vanoncini recalled how a colleague had been crushed to realize that his usually mediocre class's sudden sterling performance on an assignment was probably not down to his energetic pep-talk. "But what can we do?" one of the attending teachers asked in exasperation. Vanoncini acknowledged it was complicated, dismissing suggestions that programs being churned out to detect the use of ChatGPT and other AI tools would solve

the problem. "Most experts agree that no tool is 100 percent effective." "It's a bit like the Tour de France," he said, pointing to how anti-doping officials develop tools for detecting drug use and cyclists swiftly come up with ways to get round them. "It is a cat and mouse game."

#### Collecting 'cow eggs'

There are however ways for teachers to spot texts generated by the bot, which is prone to making mistakes.

While it may produce texts with the feel of a thinking human, it is actually just a very powerful text prediction tool, Vanoncini said. "It is not created to state what is true... but to generate what is probable." As a result, you can ask ChatGPT a question based on a mistaken assumption and receive a seemingly logical, but deeply flawed response.

"I asked: 'How do you collect cow eggs?'" he said, to a chorus of laughter. In response, the bot first advised him

to put on gloves to avoid getting bacteria on his hands and then gave tips on how to find a cow's nest, "typically made from hay or straw". Karim Aboun, a high school accounting teacher, seemed inspired by that example.

To catch cheats, he suggested, "you could maybe provide a plausible question that contains an error and see if the students use this tool without realizing the premise of the question is wrong".

#### 'Not afraid'

Another participant meanwhile pointed out that students from wealthier, more well-educated families have always benefitted from homework polishing, suggesting ChatGPT could simply be "leveling the playing field". Vanoncini agreed it could potentially be a way to "democratize" help with schoolwork. But with OpenAI now considering launching a subscription version set to cost \$42 a month, how long "will it really be that democratic?" he asked. Vanoncini nonetheless stressed there are multiple potential positive applications for the bot within education, including using ChatGPT-generated texts as a basis for class discussion and analysis.—AFP



Teachers are seen behind a laptop during a workshop on ChatGpt bot organized by the School Media Service (SEM) of the Public education of the Swiss canton of Geneva. — AFP



## Sports

# Winds of rebellion blow through women's football ahead of WCup

## Players demand better conditions, call for equal pay

## News in Brief

### NHL's Bruins make history

**NEW YORK:** The Boston Bruins became the fastest team in NHL history to reach the 50-win mark in a season by defeating the Detroit Red Wings 3-2 on Saturday. Garnet Hathaway broke a 2-2 deadlock with 6:06 remaining in the third period, knocking in a backhand off a rebound of an AJ Greer shot for his first tally since being obtained in a trade with Washington earlier this month. Patrice Bergeron and Hampus Lindholm also scored for the Bruins, who rallied from 2-0 down for the triumph, while goaltender Linus Ullmark made 29 saves for Boston, which improved to 50-9 with five overtime losses. By reaching 50 wins in only 64 contests, the Bruins broke the former NHL standard for 50 wins, set in 66 games by the 1995-96 Red Wings and 2018-19 Tampa Bay Lightning. — AFP

### NFL, NBA ex-champ dies

**WASHINGTON:** Bud Grant, who won NFL and NBA titles and coached the Minnesota Vikings into four Super Bowls, died Saturday, the club announced. He was 95. "We are absolutely devastated to announce legendary Minnesota Vikings head coach and Hall of Famer Bud Grant has passed away," the Vikings statement said. "We, like all Vikings and NFL fans, are shocked and saddened by this terrible news." Grant was a reserve for the 1950 NBA champion Minneapolis Lakers who ended his basketball career in 1951 to join the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles, playing as a defensive end and wide receiver. In 1952, Grant departed for Canada's Winnipeg Blue Bombers and played for five years in the Canadian Football League before becoming the Winnipeg coach in 1957. Grant guided the Blue Bombers to four Grey Cup crowns until leaving after the 1966 season to take over the NFL's Vikings, where he made defensive toughness and stoic expressions trademarks, emphasizing emotional control and banning sideline heaters in the cold outdoor conditions of Minnesota games to better focus his players. — AFP

### Middlesbrough eye promotion

**LONDON:** Middlesbrough closed the gap on Championship rivals Sheffield United as the race for promotion to the Premier League took a fresh twist on Saturday. Michael Carrick's Middlesbrough won 3-1 at Swansea to move within four points of United after their 1-0 home defeat against Luton. Carlton Morris' 15th goal of the season gave fourth-placed Luton victory at Bramall Lane. And after Joel Piroe gave Swansea a half-time lead at the Liberty Stadium, Middlesbrough hit back through goals from Aaron Ramsey, Cameron Archer and Chuba Akpom, who has now scored 23 times this term. Nathan Tella took his goal tally for the campaign to 16 as leaders Burnley eased to a 3-0 victory over bottom of the table Wigan at Turf Moor. On-loan Southampton forward Tella headed in the opener after 14 minutes and struck again two minutes after half-time, with Lyle Foster adding a third late on. —AFP

### McKellar's influence lauded

**WELLINGTON:** Reinstated ACT Brumbies coach Stephen Larkham says the groundwork laid by predecessor Dan McKellar has handed him an "armchair ride" through their unbeaten start to the Super Rugby Pacific season. The Brumbies beat the Queensland Reds 23-17 in a bruising all-Australian affair at Canberra on Saturday to join New Zealand's Waikato Chiefs as the only teams with three wins from three. The Chiefs sit atop the standings courtesy of collecting three bonus point victories including Friday's 28-7 drubbing of the Otago Highlanders. But Larkham is satisfied with his team's tenacity in winning tight affairs against strong opposition in the New South Wales Waratahs, Auckland Blues and the Reds to once again emerge as Australia's most likely outfit to challenge New Zealand's traditional dominance of the competition. — AFP

### Scheffler grabs 2-shot lead

**MIAMI:** American Scottie Scheffler birdied the final hole to complete a seven-underpar 65 and take a two-shot lead into Sunday's final round of the Players Championship. With Spain's world number one Jon Rahm having withdrawn from the tournament with illness and number three Rory McIlroy missing the cut, Scheffler, who is 14-under, can regain the top spot in the world rankings with a top-five finish at TPC Sawgrass. He faces an international challenge, though, with Australian Min Woo Lee on 12-under after carding 66 and his compatriot Cam Davis a further two strokes back. English pair Tommy Fleetwood and Aaron Rai are level in fourth place, five shots back of Scheffler along with South African Christian Bezuidenhout and American Chad Ramey, the 18-hole leader. — AFP

**PARIS:** In a Women's World Cup year, players from several national teams have spoken out to condemn managerial methods, demand better conditions or call for equal pay, and the sacrifices are paying off with four months to go until the showpiece in Australia and New Zealand. In France, a revolt by some of the country's top players, led by captain Wendie Renard, led to the sacking of coach Corinne Diacre on Thursday.

Canada's national team threatened to go on strike in a row over pay, funding and contractual issues. Meanwhile, 15 members of Spain's squad decided in September to withdraw from international duty, calling for major changes, including the departure of coach Jorge Vilda. He remains at the helm. Jonas Baer-Hoffmann, the general secretary of global footballers' union FIFPro, said in many cases the leadership of the sport was lagging behind the aspirations and achievements of women players.

"Whether it is the players' own conditions and economic support, the coaching environments, the lack of professional structures in their federations and leagues—they don't match what is asked and delivered by the players on the pitch and to grow the sport," he told AFP. "No player should have to sacrifice a part of their career to achieve what they are asking for and it shows how un-

responsive the leadership in many organizations still is to truly commit to women's football."

### Stars to miss WCup?

Players from France, Canada and Spain are not the first to agitate for change. Ada Hegerberg, the first-ever winner of the women's Ballon d'Or, withdrew from the international scene in 2017, citing concerns over the inequality of treatment given to men's and women's teams by the Norwegian federation. The United States team, led by superstars Carli Lloyd, Megan Rapinoe and Alex Morgan, filed a complaint against the US Soccer Federation alleging wage discrimination.

Their fight eventually led to a landmark collective bargaining deal last year which would mean the US men's and women's teams evenly sharing World Cup prize money paid by FIFA. Morgan offered her support to the French rebels on social media. "You know it's serious when the most capped player/skipper can't support or play" for France, said Morgan, an ex-teammate of Renard at French side Lyon.

It is striking to see so many rebellions taking place so close to the World Cup, which kicks off on July 20. The possibility that some of the biggest stars will not feature in Australia and New Zealand is "a very real threat", ac-



France's defender Wendie Renard.

cording to Baer-Hoffmann. "We hope that those with the abilities to change those circumstances don't feel like this is a power play to fight over but see that the protest comes from a place of a genuine desire to improve the game, make it accessible for all."

In Canada and in France, the rebels have won out. Diacre was dismissed on Thursday, while Canada Soccer president Nick Bontis recently resigned, admitting change was needed at the top of the organization. Canada Soccer has since proposed an equal pay deal that it said will make their women's team the

second best-paid in the world. Yet both disputes have left a mark, with Renard speaking of concerns for her mental health. Christine Sinclair, Canada's all-time top scorer, told a government hearing that she had "never been more insulted than I was by Canada Soccer's own president last year, as we met with him to discuss our concerns". In Spain, however, there is no sign of a return for the players who quit after the Spanish Football Federation backed Vilda. He has therefore effectively called up a B team for recent games, although top scorer Jennifer Hermoso has made a comeback. — AFP

## Shooting scheduled from March 16-18

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Preparations are underway at Sheikh Sanaj Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex for the Late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah Cup tournament. The tournament which is scheduled from March 16-18, 2023 is organized by Kuwait Shooting Sport Club.

President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi said Kuwait Shooting continues its efforts and participation

in local tournaments organized by the club, as well as regional and international events in preparation for the qualifying tournaments for the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics.

Al-Otaibi highly appreciated the support Kuwait Shooting Sport and Shooters receive from President of Asian Shooting Confederation, Honorary President of KSSC Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah who is keen on organizing this annual event in order to encourage and motivate shooters.

He said this tournament is a good opportunity to discover promising talents. Al-Otaibi thanked HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad



Duaij Al-Otaibi



Rashid Al-Kandari

Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for their generous support. The tournament will include trap, skeet, archery, 10m pistol and rifle, 50m rifle and 25m rapid pistol.

## Germany's Kuwertz grabs grand prize

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Rider Bjorn Kuwertz from Germany won the grand prize of the sixth round of Kuwait Equestrian Federation League. Kuwertz's win came as he led the grand prize run at a height of 140-145 cm, following a differentiation round in 35:96 seconds without faults. He was followed by Annaz Al-Annaz (from Kuwait) and Antonio Mirruzzu from Italy. Meanwhile, at 130-135 cm height, Abdullah Al-Roudan took the first position, followed by Ghazi Al-Jeraiwi, Abdullah Al-Awadhi, Ahmad Al-Ansari and Abdullah Al-Osaimi. KEF Administrative Director Suffayan Bu-Qammaz said the sixth round of Kuwait Equestrian league witnessed strong competitions between several riders. 16 riders participated in the grand prize round.



## India dominate Australia as Kohli ends ton drought

**AHMEDABAD:** Virat Kohli hit his first Test century in more than three years with a towering 186 as India batted themselves out of danger of a series-leveling defeat to Australia in the fourth Test on Sunday. The hosts finished their first innings on 571 to overhaul Australia's 480 and get a first-innings lead of 91 on another run-filled day four at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

Kohli was the last man out after he fell to Todd Murphy in the final session of play as India lost their ninth wicket and Shreyas Iyer did not bat due to back pain. Australia reached three for no loss at stumps with Travis Head getting the runs while alongside nightwatchman Matthew Kuhnemann.

The left-handed Kuhnemann made a surprise

entry to the crease after opener Usman Khawaja, who hit 180 in Australia's innings, did not come out to bat after getting hurt on the field. Kohli ruled the day with his 28th Test ton after he got a single off spinner Nathan Lyon in the second session to bring the house down as fans went wild with celebration. Kohli, who now has 75 international tons across three international formats, kissed his locket before looking up to the sky.

Resuming on 59 after reaching his first Test half-century on Saturday since January 2022, the landmark came after a patient innings of 241 balls. Kohli then hit a flurry of fours after reaching his hundred and along with an attacking Axar Patel, who made 79, put on a marathon stand of 162 for the sixth wicket. Khawaja attempted to catch an Axar six at the boundary but could not stay inside the rope, hurting his foot in the process and limping off the field.

Kohli got past 150 after tea and Axar raised his third half-century of the series to wear down the opposition bowlers on a pitch vastly different from the rank turners in the previous three matches. Spinners

overcoming eight match points on the way to the final, where he fell to Daniil Medvedev. He needed more than three hours to win his Indian Wells opener over Thomas Etcheverry in three sets. Murray, 35, said the quicker win over Albot would pay dividends as the week progresses.

"You know, if you've had a shorter match, there's probably less aches and pains, so it's easier to sleep," he said. "The day off as well becomes probably a bit more productive, because there is just less fatigue, less soreness from the match. "So (I am) probably able to practice at a slightly higher intensity and practice more specific things, whereas yesterday I just really hit a few balls, and that was it. "Even this morning when I got up I was still a bit fatigued when I got up, bit of soreness in the lower back and things, which I would imagine by Monday that won't be there."

That's a good sign for a mouth-watering third-round clash with fellow Briton Jack Draper, a 6-4,



Virat Kohli

Lyton and Murphy bowled 110.5 overs between to get three wickets each on another day of hard grind for the bowlers. Axar went into fifth gear after his fifty as he slogged and smashed Kuhnemann for two sixes in an over before being bowled off an inside edge by Mitchell Starc. — AFP

6-2 winner over yet another Brit, Daniel Evans. Despite a career that includes three Grand Slam titles and two Olympic gold medals, Murray said he felt nervous during Saturday's match. "I'm not sure exactly why," he said. "Maybe I felt like it was a good opportunity for me and that the draw had opened up slightly. "And obviously I wanted to try and finish the match quickly."

The recipe for getting those quicker wins is simple, Murray said. "Playing better will give you the chance to win matches quicker," he said. "I do know that being seeded in tournaments and having a higher ranking means that you're generally playing players that are not quite as good as you, so if you go on the court and finish well then you finish the matches a bit quicker. "Whereas for me, that has not been the case. Hopefully I can keep pushing myself up the rankings, keep building that confidence and maybe get a few more straightforward draws as well." — AFP



Sports

# Curry’s late heroics lift Warriors over Giannis-less Bucks 125-116

## Kawhi scores 38 points, leads Clippers to victory

SAN FRANCISCO: Stephen Curry rallied the defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors in the fourth quarter on Saturday to deliver a 125-116 overtime victory over Milwaukee. The two-time NBA Most Valuable Player scored 22 of his 36 points in the fourth quarter and overtime, with key three-pointers and a timely block helping Golden State stretch a home win streak to seven games.

“We feed off our crowd’s energy,” Curry said. “Whatever it is in terms of our focus and energy and effort, it’s giving us a chance no matter what the score is down the stretch.” The Bucks, playing without two-time NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo due to his sore right hand, saw their nine-game road win streak snapped and their NBA-best record fall to 48-19.

Milwaukee led by five in the final minute, but Curry sank a three-pointer, made a fast break layup to tie the game, then answered a Jrue Holiday three with one of his own with 18 seconds remaining to lift the Warriors level at 111-111. His late block of Holiday in the paint on a drive to the hoop helped ensure the game went into overtime. “It felt like playoff-type energy and atmosphere,” Curry said. “I know they were missing Giannis but we’ve been searching for a long time to try and figure out how to perform and execute down the stretch in a game like this.

“We got down five with under a minute and come back. And I think it has been a long time since we won an overtime game. So all those things—dig deep and figure out a way to get it done.” Curry, who turns 35 on Tuesday, scored nine points in overtime to seal the victory, playing 43 minutes in all to achieve his first victory in four tries since returning March 5 from a left leg injury. “I’m great. I’m just getting old,” a visibly worn-down Curry said after the finish. “Everybody contributed and that’s

the way it has to be for us the way we’re built right now,” Curry made eight of 11 shots from the floor in the fourth quarter and overtime, and sank four of seven from behind the arc. “That’s a great way to get a win,” Curry said. In Atlanta, Jason Tatum delivered game highs of 34 points and 15 rebounds in powering the Boston Celtics over the host Hawks 134-125. Jaylen Brown added 24 points as the Celtics improved to 47-21, while the Hawks, paced by 35 points and 13 assists from Trae Young, fell to 34-34.

**Kawhi sparks Clippers**

Kawhi Leonard scored 38 points to lead the Los Angeles Clippers over the visiting New York Knicks 106-95. Paul George added 22 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Clippers. Immanuel Quickley led the Knicks with 26 points. Clippers guard Russell Westbrook overtook Isaiah Thomas for ninth on the NBA’s all-time assists list with a third-quarter pass to set up a George dunk for his 9,062nd career assist.

Talen Horton-Tucker had game highs of 37 points and 10 assists in leading Utah to a 119-111 victory at Charlotte. Zach LaVine scored 36 points and DeMar DeRozan added 27 to lead the Chicago Bulls to a 119-111 victory at Houston. Wendell Carter scored seven of his 27 points in overtime to spark Orlando over visiting Miami 126-114. Jimmy Butler scored 38 points to lead the Heat. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points to lead Oklahoma City’s 110-96 victory at New Orleans.

Desmond Bane scored 25 points while David Roddy came off the bench to score 24 and spark the Memphis Grizzlies over visiting Dallas 112-108. Tim Hardaway Jr led the Mavericks with 23 points, but Dallas was without Luka Doncic due to a left thigh strain and Kyrie



SAN FRANCISCO: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors pump fakes and watches Jevon Carter #5 of the Milwaukee Bucks leap past him in the air during the second quarter at Chase Center on March 11, 2023. —AFP

Irving with a right foot injury, while Ja Morant was still away from Memphis for personal reasons. Harrison Barnes scored 19 points to lead seven double-digit

scorers for Sacramento in a 128-119 victory at Phoenix. Jalen Smith scored 20 points off the bench to lead Indiana’s 121-115 victory at Detroit. —AFP

## Bayern alone on top as Dortmund drop points

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund led twice but were held 2-2 by bitter local rivals Schalke to lose ground on Bayern Munich who earlier won 5-3 against Augsburg and ended Saturday two points clear atop the Bundesliga. Kenan Karaman scored Schalke’s second equaliser with 10 minutes left to frustrate visiting Dortmund’s hopes of keeping pace in the title race.

With many attacking stars missing including captain Marco Reus, it took defender Nico Schlotterbeck to put Dortmund ahead, hammering in a low drive from outside the box. Schalke equalized five minutes into the second half through Marius Buelter, who latched onto a pinpoint cross from winger Rodrigo Zalazar. Dortmund re-took the lead after 60 minutes, when a defense-splitting pass from Emre Can found Rafael Guerreiro who slammed home.

With 10 minutes remaining, Schalke pegged Dortmund back once more when an unmarked Karaman headed past keeper Alex Meyer. Schalke sat deep in the dying stages, frustrating Dortmund’s attempts to find a winner and held on for a draw which will be celebrated like a win by fans whose team sits in the relegation zone. Schlotterbeck said the result was “too little” for Dortmund’s ambitions this season, while manager Edin Terzic said his side “gave away victory” by losing control. “The game got wild, just like how Schalke wanted it to be.”

A “satisfied” Schalke manager Thomas Reis credited his team’s fight, saying “when you come back like that, you need to enjoy it.” Earlier on Saturday, two goals from Benjamin Pavard and a first in Bayern colours for Joao Cancelo helped the leaders romp to a 5-3 home victory over Augsburg. Bayern midfielder Jamal Musiala said his side “were getting back into the swing of things” but was disappointed they conceded three goals at home after



MUNICH: Bayern Munich’s midfielder Leroy Sane (left) and Augsburg’s midfielder Elvis Rexhebecaj (right) vie for the ball during the German first division Bundesliga football match between Bayern Munich and Augsburg on March 11, 2023. —AFP

also reaching the Champions League quarter-finals with Wednesday’s win over Paris Saint-Germain.

“Each of those three goals were goals we shouldn’t concede,” the 20-year-old said after the win over Augsburg. “We are angry about it. We always want to keep a clean sheet.” Four of Bayern’s five goals came from defenders, calming fears the side may be toothless after the

pre-game scratch of striker Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting. Augsburg led after just two minutes through Mergim Berisha, who scored the only goal in his team’s surprise 1-0 win over Bayern in September. Bayern manager Julian Nagelsmann praised his side’s “important reaction” after the early setback, but lamented “taking our foot off the pedal at the end” of the match. —AFP

## City sink Palace

LONDON: Manchester City moved within two points of Premier League leaders Arsenal as Erling Haaland’s penalty clinched a gritty 1-0 win against Crystal Palace on Saturday. Pep Guardiola’s side struggled to break down Palace until Haaland netted from the spot with 12 minutes left at rain-lashed Selhurst Park. Haaland’s 34th goal in all competitions since joining from Borussia Dortmund last year was enough to seal City’s fifth win in their last six league games.

Having kept the pressure on Arsenal, the champions will hope Mikel Arteta’s men slip up when they travel to Fulham for their game in hand on Sunday. “Of course Arsenal is on an incredible run. Still we are there,” Guardiola said. “Here in the typical winter game, a difficult one, we were there all the time and then we won it.” City weren’t at their fluent best but the hard-fought victory was essential to stop Arsenal moving further into the distance in the title race. “My experience is that every time we come here it has been very tough. We always struggle because we want to score more goals,” Guardiola said.

“They will waste time so we have to push to do it. Everything pleased me. It is not easy, they defend six players in the box and Erling had two men marking him. It was a question of patience.” Now Haaland and company will focus on the second leg of their Champions League last 16 clash against Leipzig in Manchester on Tuesday, with the tie delicately balanced at 1-1. Palace are on the longest current winless run in the Premier League, failing to take maximum points from any of their 10 games in 2023, a dismal sequence that leaves them just four points above the relegation zone.

Guardiola left Kevin De Bruyne and Kyle Walker on the bench, Walker’s exile coming just days after police launched an investigation into allegations the England defender indecently exposed himself in a bar. City made a strong start as Rodri’s powerful volley was parried by Palace keeper Vicente Guaita. Ruben Dias’s attempt to turn in the rebound was blocked by Jeffrey Schlupp before Jack Grealish shot just wide moments later. City were nearly caught out when Manuel Akanji was forced to race back to block Wilfried Zaha’s shot after Phil Foden carelessly surrendered possession. Guardiola has claimed Foden is back to his best after a difficult season for the England playmaker. But Foden struggled in the first half and Guardiola was on his feet barking at his star when his misplaced pass went straight to Palace’s Luka Milivojevic. Haaland scored his first Premier League hat-trick against Palace in August as City came from two goals down at half-time to win 4-2. —AFP

## Sundowns hammer African giants Ahly, secure last-8 place

JOHANNESBURG: South African club Mamelodi Sundowns became the second qualifiers for the CAF Champions League quarter-finals after hammering mighty Egyptian visitors Al Ahly 5-2 in Pretoria on Saturday. Chilean Marcel Allende put the home team ahead within three minutes before a 50,000 crowd, which was silenced soon after when Mohamed Sherif equalised.

Goals from Themba Zwane and Teboho Mokoena

gave Sundowns a 3-1 half-time advantage that was cut when South African Percy Tau netted for Ahly just past the hour mark. Namibian Peter Shalulile then took the game away from the visitors, scoring twice in the closing stages of the Group B showdown.

Last Tuesday, runaway Group C leaders Raja Casablanca of Morocco became the first qualifiers for the knockout phase. It was only the second time Ahly have conceded five goals since their 1976 debut in the premier African club competition—they suffered a 5-0 drubbing away to Sundowns four years ago. While Sundowns can look forward to a seventh quarter-finals appearance in eight editions, record 10-time African champions Ahly are in deep trouble.

The club that featured in five of the last six Cham-

pions League finals must win away to Coton Sport of Cameroon on March 17 to have any hope of survival. But if Al Hilal of Sudan beat 2016 champions Sundowns in Omdurman the following day, they will join the South Africans in the knockout phase. With two rounds remaining, Sundowns have 10 points, Hilal nine, Ahly four and Coton are pointless. Group winners and runners-up advance to the quarter-finals.

“We have to stay focused because there is a long way to go,” said Sundowns coach Rhulani Mokwena, a 36-year-old who never played top-level football. “I am privileged to coach very good footballers. Credit must also go to the wonderful supporters who once again created an uncomfortable environment for our opponents.” —AFP

# Classifieds

### Hospitals & Clinics

Sabah Hospital 24812000  
Amiri Hospital 22450005  
Maternity Hospital 24843100  
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital 25312700  
Chest Hospital 24849400  
Farwaniya Hospital 24892010  
Adan Hospital 23940620  
Ibn Sina Hospital 24840300

Al-Razi Hospital 24846000  
Physiotherapy Hospital 24874330/9

**Clinics**

Kaizen center 25716707  
Rawda 22517733  
Adaliya 22517144

Khaldiya 24848075  
Kaifan 24849807  
Shamiya 24848913  
Shuwaikh 24814507  
Abdullah Salem 22549134  
Nuzha 22526804  
Industrial Shuwaikh 24814764  
Qadsiya 22515088

Dasmah 22532265  
Bneid Al-Gar 22531908  
Shaab 22518752  
Qibla 22459381  
Ayoum Al-Qibla 22451082  
Mirqab 22456536  
Sharq 22465401  
Salmiya 25746401

### Change of Name

I, Ismail, holder of Passport No. Z4825276, do hereby change my name to Ismail (as Given name) Bakariya (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Ismail Bakariya and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#3179) - 10-03-2023



## Arsenal power 5 points clear

Casemiro sent off as Man United and Southampton draw



LONDON: Fulham's English midfielder Harrison Reed (right) vies with Arsenal's Belgian midfielder Leandro Trossard during the English Premier League football match between Fulham and Arsenal on March 12, 2023. — AFP

**LONDON:** Arsenal powered five points clear at the top of the Premier League with a stylish 3-0 win at Fulham, while Casemiro was sent off in Manchester United's 0-0 draw against struggling Southampton on Sunday. Mikel Arteta's side had seen second placed Manchester City close the gap with victory at Crystal Palace on Saturday. The Gunners responded with the kind of composed display that has been the hallmark of their unexpected title charge.

First-half goals from Gabriel Magalhaes, Gabriel Martinelli and Martin Odegaard - all set up by the influential Leandro Trossard - put Arsenal on course for a fifth consecutive league win. With 11 league games left, the north Londoners have the title in their sights. Since being knocked out of pole position after a defeat against City, which came during a run of four games without a win, Arsenal have shown the mettle of potential champions with a strong response to that wobble.

It was Arsenal's 11th victory from 14 away league

matches this season, underlining the durability and maturity that has them in position to win the title for the first time since Arsene Wenger's 'Invincibles' in 2004. There was more good news for Arsenal in the last 14 minutes as Brazil forward Gabriel Jesus made his first appearance since injuring his knee at last year's World Cup. With legendary Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger watching from the stands, the Gunners ensured their celebrity fan got satisfaction from his trip to Craven Cottage.

Gabriel put Arsenal ahead after 21 minutes as the Brazilian centre-back rose above three Fulham defenders to meet Trossard's corner with a powerful close-range header. Arsenal were rampant and they struck again with another aerial raid in the 26th minute. Trossard was the provider once more, teasing his way down the left flank before lofting a cross towards Martinelli, who easily out-jumped Antonee Robinson to head home from close-range.

The Brazilian forward's fifth goal in his last six ap-

pearances took him to 12 in all competitions, making him Arsenal's leading scorer this term. Odegaard put the result beyond doubt in the final seconds of the first half as Arsenal benefitted from more abject Fulham defending. Producing his third assist of the afternoon, Trossard's cross reached Odegaard in the Fulham area and the midfielder, granted far too much space, controlled on his thigh and set himself for a fierce strike that fizzed past Bernd Leno.

**Casemiro woe**

At Old Trafford, Casemiro's dismissal forced third placed United to settle for a drab goalless draw. United are unbeaten in their last 22 home games, but this was a limp performance in their first league match since last weekend's humiliating 7-0 defeat at bitter rivals Liverpool. Erik ten Hag's team looked fatigued after beating Real Betis in the Europa League last-16 first leg on Thursday and had to hold on for a point after Casemiro was dismissed in the 34th minute.

The Brazil midfielder's initial booking for a high challenge on Carlos Alcaraz was changed to a red card following a VAR check. It was the former Real Madrid star's second sending off in eight appearances following his red card against Crystal Palace, leaving him facing a four-match suspension. Casemiro's emotional response to his premature departure left him in need of consoling by United team-mate Antony as he left the pitch.

Southampton remain bottom of the table after their battling draw. West Ham moved out of the relegation zone with a 1-1 draw against Aston Villa at the London Stadium. West Ham, who started the day in 18th place, moved up one spot but were still booed off at full-time. Villa went ahead with their first effort on target, Ollie Watkins heading in Emiliano Buendia's cross in the 17th minute. West Ham equalized nine minutes later when Said Benrahma converted a penalty awarded for Leon Bailey's shove on Lucas Paqueta. Sixth placed Newcastle host Wolves in Sunday's late game. — AFP

## Kvaratskhelia pushes Napoli 18 points clear

**NAPLES:** Khvicha Kvaratskhelia helped move Napoli another step closer to a first Serie A title in more than three decades with a wonder goal in Saturday's 2-0 win over Atalanta to push his team 18 points clear. Georgia winger Kvaratskhelia lashed in the opening goal of the game on the hour mark after spellbinding dribbling left Atalanta's defense wondering which way to look before the ball finished in the back of the net.

His 11th league strike of the campaign set Napoli on their way to stretching their lead on Inter Milan who fell to a shock 2-1 defeat at lowly Spezia on Friday. Amir Rrahmani made sure of the points with 13 minutes remaining with a towering header from substitute Eljif Elmas' corner. "We're enjoying ourselves, we're playing well even if it was difficult to begin with tonight because Atalanta are a good team," Rrahmani told DAZN.

"Of course we say it's normal, we're in a situation in which you can see with our fans how much they can feel it." Lazio can cut the yawning gap between Napoli and the rest to 17 if they win at Bologna in Saturday's late match and take second spot. But it's surely only a matter of time until southern Italy's biggest club win the Scudetto - for the first time since 1990, when Diego Maradona was still strutting his stuff in sight of Mount Vesuvius.

Kvaratskhelia was key to what ended up being a straight-forward win but been a nervy affair following their home defeat to Lazio last weekend. Before he struck Napoli had struggled to create opportunities, Serie A's leading Victor Osimhen going closest shortly after the break with a ambitious bicycle kick and header from a corner. And they needed Pierluigi Gollini, on loan from Atalanta, to be at his best to deny decent efforts



NAPLES: Atalanta's Danish defender Joakim Maehle (left) and Napoli's Georgian forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia go for a header during the Italian Serie A football match on March 11, 2023. — AFP

from Luis Muriel and Duvan Zapata before Rrahmani sealed the points.

Napoli now turn their attentions to the visit of Eintracht Frankfurt on Wednesday, a 2-0 first-leg lead to protect and a debut spot in the Champions League quarter-finals within their grasp. "When you come to Naples you enter into the history, what the people want, the feeling for the team that can become pressure," said Spalletti. "You need to have imagination and believe that you can win." A third defeat in four matches will likely damage Atalanta's bid for Europe's top club competition as they stay sixth and five points behind the top four.

Roma sit fourth and hosted Sassuolo on Sunday while AC Milan, who are fifth and level on 47 points with Jose Mourinho's team, have struggling Salernitana at the San Siro on Monday. Earlier Udinese snapped a six-match winless streak with a 1-0 victory at Empoli. Andrea Sottil's team are ninth on 35 points, level with Bologna and Juventus, after just their second win since the start of October. — AFP

## PSG bouncing back from European exit

**PARIS:** Kylian Mbappe broke away to score a last-minute winner as Paris Saint-Germain beat Brest 2-1 on Saturday, a result that will go a small way towards healing the wound of their midweek Champions League exit at the hands of Bayern Munich. PSG have been left with just the Ligue 1 title to play for in the remaining months of the season after the Qatar-owned club were knocked out of Europe's elite club competition in the last 16 with a 3-0 aggregate defeat.

They took the lead on their trip to Brittany in the 37th minute when Carlos Soler followed in to score after Mbappe's shot had been parried by Brest goalkeeper Marco Bizot. Yet the home side, battling to avoid relegation, drew level before half-time through Franck Honorat and it looked like they would hold on for a precious point in their fight to avoid relegation. But then Mbappe, who had just been booked for kicking Brest midfielder Haris Belkebla in the back of the calf, was sent through on goal by Lionel Messi and rounded Bizot to score.

Despite an unconvincing performance, the result allows PSG to extend their lead at the top of Ligue 1 to 11 points over nearest challengers Marseille, who face Strasbourg on Sunday. "People can say it is a little victory but it is a victory. Not everything was perfect but we had lots of chances and we shouldn't let the fact we needed a last-minute winner hide that," PSG coach Christophe Galtier told broadcaster Canal Plus.

"To come here and win three days after our disappointment against Bayern was very important. We are in a fight for the title. The context is obviously not favorable but winning was the main thing." PSG, who are chasing what would be a French record 11th league title and a ninth in the Qatar era, were missing a host of players at the Stade Francis-Le Ble, including Neymar. The



BREST: Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (left) fights for the ball with Brest's Dutch goalkeeper Marco Bizot (right) on his way to scoring a goal on March 11, 2023. — AFP

Brazilian is recovering after undergoing an operation on damaged ankle ligaments in Doha and is not expected to play again this season.

Spanish international Soler was one of three players brought into the Paris line-up following Wednesday's 2-0 defeat in the second leg of their tie against Bayern in Germany. The former Valencia player almost opened the scoring early on, but his powerful shot from a Messi assist was tipped onto the post by Bizot. Soler did then open the scoring, only for Honorat to control a long ball forward by Romain Del Castillo and hold off Sergio Ramos and Timothee Pembele before firing in the equaliser.

Bizot saved well from Messi in the second half but the Dutch goalkeeper could not prevent Mbappe scoring the winner as the France superstar took his tally for the season to 31 in all competitions for his club. He is level at the top of the Ligue 1 scorers' charts on 19 goals with Canada's Jonathan David, who scored a hat-trick for Lille in their 3-3 draw with Lyon on Friday. Rennes, who are fifth, drew 0-0 at Auxerre in Saturday's other game. — AFP