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VOLVO

**3** 386th Air Expeditionary Wing showcases base's capabilities



**10** NBK, PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional sign MoU



**13** Pakistani biryani: A spicy recipe for delectable debate



**16** Adekoya bounces back from ban to win Asiad hurdles gold



## Qatar launches construction on mega gas field expansion

Qatari Amir lays foundation stone of project amid rising demand

### Crown Prince swears in Chief Justice



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Judge Dr Adel Majed Boursli, who took oath as the new President of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Head of the Court of Cassation. — KUNA

**RAS LAFFAN, Qatar:** Qatar's state-owned energy giant began construction Tuesday on a project to expand production from the world's biggest natural gas field through an export terminal on the Gulf emirate's northeast coast. There has been mounting demand for Qatari gas as European consumer nations have scrambled to replace lost Russian deliveries since President Vladimir Putin ordered a full-scale war on Ukraine early last year.

Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani presided over a glitzy ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the North Field expansion at Ras Laffan, QatarEnergy's onshore gas processing base 80 km north of Doha. Sheikh Tamim wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that the project "falls within our strategy towards strengthening Qatar's position as a global producer of lique-

fied natural gas (LNG)". Qatari Energy Minister Saad Al-Kaabi called the project a "leap towards our country's leadership in the field of energy".

By increasing production at the field, which extends under the Gulf into Iranian territory, Qatar is set to raise its output of LNG by 60 percent or more to 126 million tons a year by 2027. LNG from the expansion is expected to start coming online in 2026. Asian countries led by China, Japan and South Korea have been the main market for Qatari gas, but it has also been increasingly sought by European countries since Russia's invasion of Ukraine early last year.

Chairman of France's TotalEnergies Patrick Pouyanne told reporters the North Field Expansion was a "huge project", coming as demand for LNG from Europe increases.

Continued on Page 6



RAS LAFFAN: Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani lays the foundation stone for the North Field expansion on Oct 3, 2023. — AFP

### Libya flood relief hampered by 'turf wars' and division

**TUNIS:** More than three weeks after Libya's deadly flood disaster, the divided country's two rival administrations remain bitterly at odds on how to manage the massive aid and reconstruction effort. The aftermath of the disaster on Sept 10-11 has seen the rival camps in the east and west of the war-scarred country both announce their own plans for a reconstruction conference. The United Nations, Western governments and international observers warn that Libya's dysfunctional politics are hampering efforts to help the tens of thousands of displaced survivors rebuild their lives.

The UN mission chief in Libya, Abdoulaye Bathily, stressed Monday that the competing efforts "are counterproductive, deepen the existing divisions in the country (and) impede reconstruction efforts". The United States, Britain, France, Germany and Italy backed his call for "a unified Libyan national mechanism" coordinated with international partners "to deliver transparent and accountable relief".

Claudia Gazzini of think-tank the International Crisis Group warned that Libya's two rival administrations might "use this crisis in opportunistic ways", including by possibly diverting funds. "There are already signs of turf wars (and corresponding disinformation campaigns) between the rivals over who should take charge of reconstruction efforts," she warned.

The humanitarian needs are enormous in the devastated eastern city of Derna, where a huge flash flood broke through two upstream dams and swept entire neighborhoods into the Mediterranean, leaving behind an apocalyptic wasteland. Local authorities have declared a death toll of 3,845, but have yet to release an official

Continued on Page 6

### Physics Nobel goes to electron researchers

**STOCKHOLM:** France's Pierre Agostini, Hungarian-Austrian Ferenc Krausz and Franco-Swede Anne L'Huillier won the Nobel prize in physics on Tuesday for research using ultra quick light flashes that enable the study of electrons inside atoms and molecules. Their technique employs pulses measured in attoseconds, a unit so short that there are as many in one second as there have been seconds since the universe's birth over 13 billion years ago, the jury said. The laureates' research has made it possible to examine moves or changes so rapid that they were previously impossible to follow, with potential applications in both electronics and medical diagnostics.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences likened the process to how the flapping wings of a hummingbird turn into a blur for the human eye, but can be slowed and examined using high-speed photography. "We can now open

the door to the world of electrons. Attosecond physics gives us the opportunity to understand mechanisms that are governed by electrons," Eva Olsson, chair of the Nobel Committee for Physics, said in a statement.

In 1987, L'Huillier "discovered that many different overtones of light arose when she transmitted infrared laser light through a noble gas," the Nobel Committee noted, adding that she has continued to explore this phenomenon, "laying the ground for subsequent breakthroughs". In the early 2000s, Agostini and Krausz worked on experiments that made it possible to isolate light pulses that lasted only a few hundred attoseconds. Agostini is a professor at Ohio State University in the United States, while Krausz is a director at the Max Planck Institute in Germany.

L'Huillier, only the fifth woman to be awarded the Physics Prize since 1901, is a professor at Lund University in Sweden. L'Huillier told reporters she was in the middle of teaching a class when she received the call from the Academy, making it "difficult" to finish the class, to whom she told nothing, "I am very touched... There are not so

Continued on Page 6

### Armenia ratifies key ICC treaty, angering Russia

**YEREVAN:** Armenian lawmakers approved a key step towards joining the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Tuesday, a move that is set to escalate tensions with the ex-Soviet country's traditional ally Moscow. Russia said it was "wrong" to ratify the treaty to join the international court, which in March issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin over the war in Ukraine and the illegal deportation of children to Russia. ICC members are expected to make the arrest if the Russian leader sets foot on their territory.

The vote illustrated a growing chasm between Moscow and Yerevan, which

has grown angry with the Kremlin over its perceived inaction over Armenia's long-standing confrontation with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani forces last month swept through the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh — where Russian peacekeepers are deployed — and secured the surrender of Armenian separatist forces that had controlled the mountainous region for decades.

An online broadcast from the Armenian parliamentary session showed a majority of 60 deputies voting in favor of the proposal, with 22 — mainly opposition lawmakers — voting against joining the ICC. The Kremlin immediately criticized Armenia's decision. "We are doubtful that, from the point of view of bilateral relations, Armenia's accession to the Rome Statute is correct," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Continued on Page 6

### Nobel prize for physics 2023

Work on the movement of electrons inside atoms and molecules



**Pierre Agostini**  
France  
Ohio State University,  
United States



**Ferenc Krausz**  
Hungary/Austria  
Max Planck Institute  
of Quantum Optics,  
Ludwig Maximilians University,  
Germany



**Anne L'Huillier**  
France/Sweden  
Lund University,  
Sweden

- Awarded for demonstrating "a way to create extremely short pulses of light that can be used to measure the rapid processes in which electrons move or change energy"
- The three physicists succeeded in creating attosecond pulses of light. There are as many attoseconds in one second as there are seconds since the birth of the universe about 13.8 billion years

AFP Photo/Ohio State University, Christof Stache/AFP, AFP Photo/Lund University  
Source: nobelprize.org



YEREVAN: Armenian lawmakers attend a session at the parliament on Oct 3, 2023. — AFP



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# Zain showcases its digital corporate comms strategy

## Company sponsors Kuwait PR Association's Digital PR Forum



Sheikh Khalid Al-Abdullah with Waleed Al-Khashti, Jamal Al-Nasrullah and forum guests.

In my view

### Governors and beautiful Kuwait



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

Local@kuwaittimes.com

We would like to draw attention to decree 6 of 1962, which approved the administrative division of Kuwait. Subsequently, decree 97/1989 was issued concerning the governorate system, and later, decree 21/1992 was amended by law 18/2000. In addition, the fatwa and legislation department introduced amendments to the governors' law in 2006, which created the position of vice-governor. The government also pursued a new law to appoint governors and establish two new governorates.

These legislative efforts aimed to empower governors and enhance their role in developing their respective governorates. Decree 21 and its subsequent amendments enabled the formation of sub-councils for each area or city to oversee various aspects, including security, cleanliness, landscaping, road maintenance and the provision of essential services.

The key question arises: When will the governors, or some of them, begin to fulfill the duties outlined in decree 21 and its amendments? These duties, emphasized 13 times, grant governors significant authority to transform their governorates into clean and beautiful paradises. Have any governors established sub-councils for the areas within their governorates to monitor the work of ministers in those regions and report back to the governor, who possesses the legal authority to ensure ministers carry out necessary improvements within his jurisdiction?

In many areas, issues persist, such as unsightly encroachments on roads, dead trees, deteriorating streets and unsightly graffiti or damaged property. Reckless youth pose a danger by driving recklessly, especially during the rainy season. Cooperative branches have turned into trash landfills, mosque courtyards have been encroached upon, and green spaces meant for children in some areas have become neglected storage areas plagued by rodents and filth. Neglected maintenance has turned walking areas into ruins, and some areas lack the aesthetic touches that bring joy to their residents.

If I were a governor, I would swiftly implement the law and establish councils for each area or city comprised of retired Kuwaitis, assigning each responsibility for beautification and development in their designated block. Governors, according to the law, wield significant legal authority and can advocate for increased budgets and support teams from their respective areas. I believe the government would welcome this creative and innovative approach. The government must select governors wisely, as they represent the future of Kuwait. Many of the world's most successful and beautiful countries owe their success to creative governors.

It is high time to move beyond the old mindset that governors must be former leaders or individuals with a military or police background, or those chosen for political expediency. Instead, let us select active Kuwaiti personalities who are creative and deeply connected to their areas. By fostering competition between governorates, we can tap into the competitive spirit of the Kuwaiti people. This is the surest path to a more beautiful and cleaner Kuwait.

KUWAIT: Zain recently sponsored the Digital PR Forum, an informative event organized by the Kuwait Public Relations Association at the Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST). The forum gathered notable consultants, academics, and experts from the PR and media fields, and came under support from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), and under the patronage of Kuwait PR Association's Honorary President Sheikh Khalid Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah.

Zain's support to this forum came to affirm the company's active participation in academic and cultural gatherings that enrich various experiences and offer the public an opportunity to enhance their expertise in public relations, corporate comms, and media. These fast-moving industries were hugely impacted by the tech revolution and the accelerated development in technologies like AI, something the forum has tackled in great detail.

During the event, Zain joined a special panel to discuss digital corporate communications strategies and the emerging challenges organizations face in light of advancements in modern technologies. Maryam Al-Musallam, Sponsorships and Events Team Leader at Zain Kuwait's Corporate Affairs and Relations Division, showcased the company's digital corporate comms strategy, and introduced its core pillars to the audience.

During the panel, Al-Musallam shed more light on the core pillars on which Zain's corporate comms strategy centers around: building and maintaining corporate relations with internal and external audiences, having strong media relations and active social media engagement, focusing on corporate social responsibility and sustainability initiatives to give



Maryam Al-Musallam during the panel.

back to the community, and enriching entrepreneurship and innovation in the community.

Through its continuous social presence, Zain reaches out to the community's most vibrant sectors, including sports and youth, education and culture, the environment and sustainability, innovation and entrepreneurship, charitable and humanitarian efforts, national initiatives, diversity and inclusion programs, and more.

The company's comprehensive corporate comms strategy serves a number of goals, like connecting with members of the community, delivering Zain's vision and corporate values, solidifying its brand presence, outlining a comprehensive crisis management plan, maintaining relations with the media, and more. The Digital PR Forum aimed at exploring the latest trends and challenges of digital public relations, while work-

ing to introduce digital-ready workflows and recommendations for governmental and private institutions to help them better communicate with their audiences.

The event featured four insightful sessions, attended by media students and PR professionals. The first session, Managing PR Crises, was presented by Yousef Kazem, the official spokesman of the Kuwait Government's unified e-services app, Sahel. The second session, Recent Global Trends in PR and Media, was presented by Dr Ali Dashti, professor of PR and Media at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST). The third session, Managing Your Digital Reputation, was presented by Khalid Al-Khulaifi, certified trainer and PR & media consultant. The fourth session, Modern Methods for Organizing Activities and Events, was presented by Jamal Al-Nasrullah, Chairman of the Kuwait Public Relations Association.



### Huawei commemorates cancer awareness month

KUWAIT: In honor of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Huawei CBG, Kuwait hosted the "Huawei Empowering Women 2023" event at the prestigious Grand Hyatt on 1 October. This event served as a platform to raise awareness about breast cancer, highlight innovation, and brought together a notable assembly of influential women. This extraordinary all-women affair

featured three distinguished honorary guest speakers: Dr Manal Al Hasawi, Dr Anood Al Rabeaa, and Dr Hanan Al Sarraf. They shared their insights and expertise on various topics related to women's health and empowerment.

The overarching theme of the evening was the color pink, symbolizing breast cancer awareness and solidarity with women facing health challenges. A

live music band set the tone for a memorable evening, creating an atmosphere of unity, strength, and celebration. A key highlight of the event was the introduction of the Huawei Watch GT 4, a cutting-edge wearable device designed to enhance the lives of women.

The event provided an exclusive opportunity to explore the watch's impressive specifications and features. Adding a touch of creativity to the evening, an Origami artist graced the event and hosted a small Origami workshop. Attendees had the chance to channel their artistic side by creat-

ing their own Origami masterpieces.

Following the presentations and workshop, attendees were guided to the "Experience Corner," where they could get up close and personal with the Huawei Watch GT 4. This hands-on experience allowed guests to appreciate the watch's design and functionality. The corner also featured a backdrop for attendees to capture memorable photos. "Huawei Empowering Women 2023" was not only a celebration but also an opportunity to empower and uplift women, emphasizing the importance of health and innovation in their lives.

### IFC expertise available for Kuwait public, private sectors

KUWAIT: The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is available and rendered to the Kuwaiti public and private sectors to boost their cooperation and achieve the state's comprehensive development plan, said an official on Tuesday. Speaking to KUNA, Hela Cheikhrouhou—Regional Vice President, Middle East, Central Asia, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—said her visit to Kuwait mainly aimed at exploring venues of cooperation with the private sector and identifying the capabilities of Kuwaiti companies to enter the emerging market.

Cheikhrouhou stressed that it is important to bolster cooperation between the public and private sectors in Kuwait, revealing that she would be meeting with several officials from the government and private entities during her visit. Cheikhrouhou reiterated that

the IFC was a pioneer in public and private sector partnerships, generating \$46 billion since 2004 to provide better services to some 150 million individuals globally.

The IFC had previously worked on projects with the Kuwaiti private sector, she revealed. The IFC official added that the corporation had worked with Kuwait's Zain telecommunication company on four projects in Iraq and Malawi, providing financial facilities worth \$261 million and earning \$414 million through the network expansion projects.

The IFC had worked with several countries in the region, pointed out Cheikhrouhou, revealing that the corporation worked with Jordan last March and invested in "green bonds" in cooperation with the Jordan Kuwait Bank (JKB) to fund environmentally friendly projects in the kingdom. She expressed



Hela Cheikhrouhou

hopes of building new partnerships with Kuwaiti companies to boost development within Kuwait and also abroad, affirming that there were real opportunities for such collaboration. Back to IFC efforts, Cheikhrouhou said that the corporation's investments beyond borders had reached \$4.7 billion, stretching over 170 projects worldwide. This fiscal year, the IFC had allocated \$43 billion in funds directed towards special financial institutions in developing countries, said the official, affirming that the corporation believed in the role of the private sector in combating poverty and providing job opportunities.

She affirmed that countries in the GCC had an unrivaled opportunity to boost investments in the sustainable development domain in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. She noted that there were real indicators that GCC countries were leading the way in this domain, with reports displaying that the sustainable development finances of Gulf countries had jumped from \$600 million in 2021 to \$8.5 billion in 2022. The IFC is one of the members of the World Bank and operates in over 100 countries, utilizing its capital and expertise to prepare markets and provide opportunities in developing countries. — KUNA



Local

# 386th Air Expeditionary Wing showcases base's capabilities

## Commander underscores Kuwait's commitment to strengthening military assets



C-130J Super Hercules cargo plane at Ali Al-Salem air base — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Caracal aircraft



Col Abdulaziz Behbehani with MSgt Harrison Hobbs inside Caracal aircraft

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The 386th Air Expeditionary Wing hosted a Media Day at Ali Al-Salem Air Base to showcase the base's capabilities and highlight the strong partnership between the US Air Force, Kuwait, and their coalition partners. The event provided an opportunity for the media to witness firsthand the crucial role this air base plays in enhancing regional stability and delivering combat power.

Col Abdulaziz Ali Behbehani, Search and Rescue Commander at Ali Al-Salem Air Base, revealed Kuwait owns six Eurofighter jets, along with a fleet of American-made aircraft, solidifying its status as a regional power with cutting-edge air defense capabilities. He expressed optimism for future deals with the United States and coalition forces, underscoring Kuwait's commitment to strengthening its military assets.

Col Behbehani emphasized the importance of international cooperation, especially with the United States, in terms of sharing experiences and cultures. He highlighted Kuwait's meaningful military exchanges and productive exercises with American, Italian and Canadian forces, which have enriched its expertise within the Kuwaiti air force. He also highlighted ongoing training exchange programs among Kuwait, the United States and Canada, emphasizing their commitment to readiness and preparedness.

Despite volatile circumstances in the region, Behbehani proudly noted that Kuwait remains a bastion of security and safety, thanks to its unwavering readiness to counter any threats, supported by the robust infrastructure of Kuwaiti military bases. This dedication to security is a testament to Kuwait's commitment to regional stability and defense.

Col Julie Gaulin, Commander of the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing at Ali Al-Salem Air Base, said cooperation between the US military and Kuwait is a dynamic and integral aspect of operations. This partnership extends to daily engagements on the airfield, where Kuwaiti and US defenders and military personnel work seamlessly together, demonstrating the strength of their collaboration. US forces receive training both in the United States and at the base, benefiting from the expertise of Kuwaiti and coalition partners. This comprehensive training equips them to effectively deter any threats that may arise in the region.

Col Gaulin mentioned that the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing is currently undergoing a rotation, with daily personnel numbers ranging from 500 to 2,000 individuals during these phases. After completing the rotation, the base maintains a standard of around 1,500 personnel daily. She also noted that a significant portion of the forces deployed to various areas of operation in the Middle East transit through Kuwait.



Col Julie Gaulin



Colonel Abdulaziz Ali Behbehani



Lieutenant-Colonel Ryan Matthies

highlighting its strategic importance as a gateway for military deployments in the region.

Additionally, she highlighted the diverse workforce at the 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, with women making up an impressive 20 percent of its force, underlining the importance of alliances and partnerships for achieving collective objectives.

The 386th Air Expeditionary Wing stressed the challenges of today cannot be tackled by the air force alone, emphasizing the significance of alliances and partnerships in delivering a resolute message to potential adversaries. They aim to be an indispensable partner in the region, focusing on maximizing regional capabilities to address mutual security concerns and promoting security and stability in the region through their military presence. Their "Project Combat Power" underscores their role in executing a mission of national, regional, and global significance, delivering dominant coalition airpower to secure and stabilize the US CENTCOM areas of responsibility.

Lieutenant Michael Greisman and Lieutenant Hannah Moriarty-Engasser revealed that Ali Al-Salem Air Base is currently undergoing an impressive scale of development with 42 active construction projects with investment totaling \$35 million. Looking ahead, the installation development plan for the next five years reveals an even more ambitious endeavor, with 77 projects on the horizon, carrying a combined price tag of \$102 million. What makes this initiative particularly noteworthy is the collaborative funding effort involving both the United States and Kuwait.

Lieutenant-Colonel Ryan Matthies, Commanding Officer/Operational Support Hub – Kuwait of Camp



Local media during the morning session



Local Media with 386th Air Expeditionary Wing team pose for a group photo

Canada at Ali Al-Salem Air Base, pointed out that the dedicated troops at Ali Al-Salem Air Base are on the frontlines of missions across the region, playing a pivotal role in fostering peace and security. Their unwavering commitment to these missions reflects a shared ethos of cooperation and partnership. He also highlighted that Camp Canada within Ali Al-Salem Air Base serves as a tangible symbol of Canada's dedication to regional stability and security, showcasing its close partnership with the US Air Force and a coalition of nations united in their commitment to peace.

During the event, local media representatives were taken on a tour to see the C-130J, MQ9, and Kuwaiti Caracal aircraft, with explanations of their capabilities and features. Additionally, the media had the opportunity to participate in a firefighter demo with gear try-on and witness a security forces military working dog demo.

### 'Kuwait Hackathon'

KUWAIT: The National Cyber Security Center announced 'Kuwait Hackathon', an event where cyber security programmers can compete for cash prizes, to take place on October 11 - 14, 2023. The center has allocated grand prizes of KD 20,000 for the first place winner, KD 10,000 for the second place winner and KD 5,000 for the third place winner. Registration is open for Kuwaiti citizens aged 18 years and above, and can be done on <https://joincoded.typeform.com/to/HJA4jDEo>. The last day to register is October 10, 2023. The event is organized under the patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaleel Al-Sabah.

## Workshop discusses judicial principles and application

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The United States Department of Justice's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training (OPDAT) held a joint workshop with the Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies (KIJLS) titled "Judicial Principles and Application - A Judicial Conference" at KIJLS center on Monday. The workshop was at the presence of the Councilor Hani Al-Hamdan, United States' Deputy Chief of Mission to Kuwait James Holtsnider, Councilor Adnan Al-Jaser and judges from Kuwait, United States, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

During the opening remarks, Hamdan said that this conference represents the ongoing cooperation between the institute and OPDAT, adding this workshop is held to exchange specialized knowledge in the legal and judicial fields. He also mentioned this workshop will be rich in important topics and issues related to judicial rulings and their applications. Therefore, it is a real contribution to development in this field, especially as the US Department of Justice has shown great interest in this conference and has sent a number of competent and high-level judges to attend it. "Today's conference aims to enhance modern means of sharing culture and experiences in the field of legal issues. The participants' contributions will enrich the discussion and enhance the presentation," he said.

Holtsnider said that this the second time for him to have the opportunity to participate in this conference and the second time to have three honorable judges joining. "The conference is going to be about sharing traditional ideas between the two countries. From the American judges, we will get a chance to hear about American constitutional law, traditional independence and traditional authority. The American system is divided into three parts: Congress that writes and creates the law, the executive that administers and executes the law, and the



KUWAIT: (From left) James Holtsnider, Adnan Al-Jaser, Hani Al-Hamdan pose for a photo during a workshop titled 'Judicial Principles and Application - A Judicial Conference' on Monday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat.

judiciary that is able to make decisions and exercise authorities," he explained.

Hamdan told the press that this time, judges from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain also participated, and this is part of Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies' efforts to become a regional training center in the Arabian Gulf. This collaboration from the US Embassy has yielded results, with the participation of Saudi and Bahraini judges. A part of the institute's message and objectives is to establish and spread legal culture, enhance judges' skills and strengthen their experiences through interaction.

Holtsnider added this training program is beneficial for both Kuwait and the US because it is a chance for both sides' judges, and judges from Saudi and Bahrain as well, to share their experiences and learn how things are done in other countries. "Sometimes there are solutions in some countries that cannot apply very easily to others. The main goal is to train the judges and build the relationship between the four countries. Obviously, the United States and Kuwait have a strong relationship, but to add in our colleagues and friends from Bahrain and Saudi Arabia is also very good. Sometimes people ask about the applicability of law in different countries. It is an area where we can learn from each other, even in a different system. Learning and continuing professional education is the most important part," he pointed out.

## Awareness campaign about women's health

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Heart diseases professor at Kuwait University Dr Mohammad Zubaid, who is also a member of the Kuwait Heart Foundation's board of directors, provided insights into an ongoing study conducted by the heart foundation. Dr Zubaid mentioned that the study, set to conclude in two months, commenced in May. Its primary goal is to monitor and follow up on heart attack cases admitted to Kuwait hospitals, focusing on treatment and patient care.

This extensive study encompasses 4,000 patients of both genders, with a special emphasis on 1,000 women who have heart disease. Dr Zubaid elaborated on the sidelines of the "Because You Are Different" awareness campaign, a collaboration between Kuwait Heart Foundation and health experts, that this campaign seeks to raise awareness about non-classical symptoms of heart attacks that affect women and bridge the existing knowledge gap concerning women's heart health.

Dr Zubaid emphasized that the study's outcomes would provide crucial information regarding age groups, associated risks and types of diseases affecting women. These findings would be instrumental in guiding healthcare strategies. He expressed his gratitude to all participants involved in this important endeavor.

Endocrinologist and diabetes consultant Dr Waleed

Al-Dhahi, who also serves as the Head of Kuwait Diabetes Society, underscored the global prevalence of heart diseases. While men are generally more susceptible to heart diseases, women who suffer from obesity and smoke face a higher risk than their male counterparts. Dr Dhahi highlighted diabetes as a primary contributor to heart disease in the region, emphasizing that individuals with diabetes are four times more likely to develop heart disease than those without this condition.

Dr Hanan Al-Fadhlah, director of the professional diploma program in general medical practice and the head of the general practitioner program committee at the health ministry, shed light on the committee's mission. Their primary objectives include the professional development of primary healthcare doctors. This encompasses training newly appointed doctors and providing ongoing support for 12 months to ensure their readiness to serve at primary healthcare centers. Additionally, they organize lectures and workshops, covering various topics to facilitate professional development and keep doctors informed about the latest advancements in primary care.

Head of the internal medicine team at Ahmadi Hospital Dr Rashed Al-Hamdan, who is also a member of the Kuwait Heart Foundation, drew attention to the unique challenges faced by women concerning heart and blood vessel diseases. These diseases are particularly worrisome due to the lack of awareness regarding symptoms that differ from those experienced by men. Dr Hamdan pointed out that women in the Middle East are more susceptible to heart diseases due to high obesity rates, with 30 percent affected, in contrast to 16 percent among men.



KUWAIT: Participants are pictured during 'Because You Are Different' awareness campaign.

## Oversight saves KD 7 million in 6 months

**KUWAIT:** The prior oversight of Kuwait's State Audit Bureau (SAB) regarding a number of topics studied and researched between April 1 and September 30 resulted in achieving financial savings of a total of KD seven million (about \$22.6 million) to the public treasury, Kuwait's State Audit Bureau (SAB) said on Tuesday. In a press statement, Marwa Al-Rashidi, an official at the SAB prior oversight department, said the bureau gave opinions on 1,793 topics worth KD 2.5 billion (about \$8.1 billion) during the above-mentioned period.

About 85 percent of the total topics issued during that period were represented in the ones submitted by the government ministries and departments, estimated at KD 2.37 billion (about \$7.6 billion), she added. The number of the Ministry of Health's issues was the highest, reaching 762, estimated at KD 770 million (about \$2.4 billion), she said. The SAB didn't accept the documents for 595 issues, worth about KD 486 million (about \$1.5 billion), as they did not abide by the SAB's regulations, she pointed out. —KUNA

## Kuwait eyes pan-Arab economic integration

**CAIRO:** Kuwait has intent on achieving full Arab economic and industrial integration through activating origin provision of cumulation in line with the Greater Arab Free Trade Area, affirmed Industry Public Authority official Dr Abdullah Al-Hajeri on Tuesday. Al-Hajeri spoke to KUNA following the 12th meeting of the Arab Rules of Origin technical committee, highlighting the vast importance of the provision of cumulation.

Cumulation, he explained, allows for capitalizing on crude materials available in Arab countries within the Greater Free Trade Area instead of having to import commodities from non-Arab nonmember countries. He further explained that this could be achieved through implementing mechanisms corresponding to newly-risen economic directions on regional and international fronts, guided by related bilateral or multilateral agreements.

Discussions during the meeting handled completing and reviewing the general provisions of the rules of origin to ensure compatibility with international developments. Al-Hajeri added, Kuwait was represented by a delegation from ministries of finance, commerce, and industry, as well as the General Administration of Customs and the Public Authority of Industry. — KUNA

### Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** A picture shows a view of the central administration building at Sabah Al-Salem Kuwait University City in Shadadiyah. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Debate rages on the role of artificial intelligence

## Kuwait marks International Architecture Day

**KUWAIT:** The National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters organized a debate on the role of artificial intelligence in the field of architecture and its effects on the labor market and intellectual property rights. The debate, which was held at the National Library of Kuwait on the occasion of International Architecture Day (the first Monday of October annually), witnessed discussions at five levels between two teams, the first of which included professors of architecture at Kuwait University, Dr Mohammed Al-Ajmi and Dr Rawa Al-Shaheen (two supporters), and engineers Zahra Ashkenani and Aba Salah (two opponents).

The two teams reviewed the first level of the debate, entitled (Rise or Fall) and the extent to which humans accept what is new. In the second level, they reviewed the impact of artificial intelligence on the labor market. In the third debate, they discussed artificial intelligence as a tool that facilitates

the work of the designer, while in the fourth, they discussed the creativity of artificial intelligence. The fifth and final debate was about intellectual property in artificial intelligence.

The supporting team stressed the 'great role' of artificial intelligence and the need to keep pace with development and enact the necessary legislation to regulate work. He considered that "the current generation prefers to try everything new" and although there were fears at the beginning, they overcome these fears after some time as they become a part of our lives—like the beginning of the internet, which has become mandatory to deal with in our time".

He pointed out that the majority of architecture graduates work in the field. Artificial intelligence "will not cancel their role but is considered a support tool that reduces the cost, especially since the architectural profession is not threatened with

extinction". As for the opposing team, they argue that artificial intelligence seeks to cancel the role of humans, contributes to the limitation of their thinking, and prevents them from making any effort to complete their work.

He noted that artificial intelligence "is devoid of emotions and does not simulate the psychological aspect, while humans have an important role and should not be replaced by devices". Professor of Architecture at Kuwait University, Dr Mohammed Al-Ajmi, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that a specialized study concluded that by 2029, artificial intelligence will surpass the human mind in all areas. Al-Ajmi added that artificial intelligence is "a means that serves humans and provides them with comfort, and we will not be able to oppose its existence, and it is necessary to keep up with the development, but we can volunteer it to serve our society". — KUNA



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## Kuwait pavilion depicts oases at Qatar's EXPO

**DOHA:** The Kuwaiti pavilion at the International Horticultural Exhibition EXPO 2023 sheds light on the national efforts to attain sustainable development, the acting director general of the Kuwait Environment Public Authority, Samira Al-Kandari, said on Tuesday.

In a statement to KUNA, Al-Kandari said the Kuwaiti section is situated within the exhibition's

international zone at Bidda's park, indicating some of its basic themes are derived from the oases in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti pavilion is distinguished by interactive displays about plants that grow in Kuwait, Al-Kandari said. Participants must meet some basic terms, such as manifesting much of their pavilion in green, she added, affirming that the event aims at exploring countries' efforts against desertification, agricultural expertise and technologies.

The 179-day exhibition that addresses gardening and is basically aimed at promoting solutions for desertification is the first of its kind to be held in the Middle East. The exhibition kicked off on Monday under the theme "a green desert and a better environment, with sponsorship by Qatari Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. It will proceed until March 2024. — KUNA

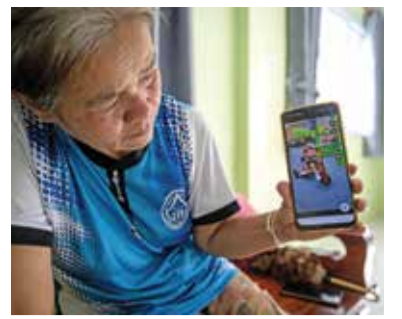
## Kuwait, Czech hold political consultations

**KUWAIT:** The fourth round of political consultations between Kuwait and the friendly Czech Republic was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday. The Kuwaiti side was chaired by Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and the Czech side was chaired by state secretary of the Czech Foreign Ministry Radek Ruysch.

The Foreign Ministry said in a statement that they

discussed the topics on the agenda, bilateral relations and ways to consolidate them in all fields, as well as the latest situations in the regional and international arenas. The statement pointed out that the consultations between the two friendly countries were characterized by the convergence of views, stressing the importance of joint work to improve bilateral relations in order to achieve the aspirations of the leadership of the two countries.

On the Kuwaiti side, the meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Sadiq Marafi, Ambassador of Kuwait to the Czech Republic Rashid Al-Hajri, Assistant Foreign Minister and Minister Plenipotentiary Abdullah Al-Obaidi and a number of officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — KUNA



Grief lingers a year after Thai nursery massacre

## UN approves Haiti security mission

Page 6

Page 7



BANGKOK: An ambulance is seen outside Siam Paragon shopping center. — AFP photos

# Terror strikes Bangkok

## 2 dead, teenage suspect arrested after mall shooting

**BANGKOK:** A 14-year-old boy was arrested Tuesday after a shooting at a packed Bangkok mall that left two people dead and five wounded and sent hundreds of panicked shoppers running in terror into the streets. Witnesses told AFP of chaotic scenes as shots rang out at the upmarket Siam Paragon mall in the heart of the Thai capital around 4:30 pm (0930 GMT).

The shooting comes just days before the first anniversary of the deadliest massacre in modern Thai history, when an ex-policeman armed with a gun and knife attacked a nursery in the country's north, murdering 24 children and 12 adults. National Police Chief Torsak Sukwimol told reporters that two women —

one Chinese, one from Myanmar — were killed in the mall shooting, and five other people wounded.

He said the 14-year-old suspect was in custody but was too confused to undergo questioning. "He is a mental patient at Rajavithi hospital and he has not been taking his medication," Torsak said. "He said it was like there was another him telling him who to shoot." Video footage showed a long-haired boy wearing a black shirt, glasses and a cap with a US flag motif being taken into custody by police. Yuthana Srettanan, director of the Erawan Emergency Centre, told reporters that all but one of those who were shot were women. Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin offered condolences to the victims' families and said he was monitoring the situation closely. "What I care about most right now is the safety of all citizens," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. "I ask all workers to monitor the situation, and may everyone be safe."

A private school called The Essence, just meters from Siam Paragon, confirmed the suspect was one of their students and offered condolences to the victims' families. "We will collaborate with the authorities and investigators for the benefit of those involved," Wiwat Catithammanit, director of the \$4,000-a-term school said in a statement.

### 'Multiple gunshots'

Witnesses described scenes of panic as the attack unfolded at Siam Paragon, one of Bangkok's top shopping destinations, hugely popular with tourists and Thais alike. "At around 4:30 pm, I heard loud gun noises, continuously, about 10 times," Thanpawisit Singthongkham, 31, who works at a Japanese restaurant in the mall, told AFP. "Then the department store announced that there was a shooting. The emergency sign was turned on and everyone ran to get out."

"I have enough Republicans where at this point next week, one of two things will happen: Kevin McCarthy won't be the speaker of the House, or he'll be the speaker of the House working at the pleasure of the Democrats," the Florida lawmaker said. "I'm at peace with either result because the American people deserve to know who governs them."

The tussle comes two days after the House and Senate passed a measure to avert a costly government shutdown — both with big bipartisan majorities — by extending federal funding through mid-November. Conservatives were angered by what they saw as a flip-flop by McCarthy, who had promised an end to hastily prepared stopgap legislation agreed with the support of the opposite party, and a return to the "normal order" of budgeting through the committee process. —AFP



WASHINGTON: US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy speaks to members of the media in Statuary Hall at the US Capitol on Oct 2, 2023. — AFP



BANGKOK: People leave Siam Paragon shopping center on Oct 3, 2023, following a shooting incident in the mall.

In footage shared with AFP, he recorded a scrum of terrified shoppers scurrying under metal security gates blocking shop entrances, before they fled down emergency stairwells as sirens blared. In another video, shared on Facebook and verified by AFP, scores of people can be seen in the mall's basement car park being directed by loudspeakers.

Dozens of police vehicles and a number of ambulances could be seen outside one of the shopping center's main entrances in the wake of the shooting. "I heard multiple gunshots — about three times — and saw people running around towards the exits," Nattanon Dungsunern, who was shopping in a branch of Boots pharmacy, told AFP. "It was very chaotic and seemed like many people didn't know what exactly was going on."

### 'Terrified'

"We didn't know what was happening, then staff from a shop asked us to go inside and said there was a shooter," Chinese tourist Xiong Ying, 41, told AFP. "Everyone was trying to find a place to hide. So many people were terrified, just like a scene in the zombie movies. 'I now feel quite scared. It happened just like two minutes after we left by crossing the bridge. We even took photos there.'"

Almost a year on from the October 6 nursery massacre, the mall shooting will raise fresh questions about gun control in Thailand, which has one of the highest rates of firearm ownership in the region. In 2020, a former army officer went on a rampage in a shopping mall in Korat, murdering 29 people and wounding scores more. — AFP



This handout from the Central Investigation Bureau of the Royal Thai Police shows the arrest of the 14-year-old suspect.

## Top US Republican fights right-wing threat to leadership

**WASHINGTON:** Top US Republican Kevin McCarthy was fighting for his political life ahead of a vote expected Tuesday on whether to remove him as House speaker, forced by far-right critics angered by his work with Democrats. McCarthy sparked fury among the ultra-conservative wing of the party when he passed a bipartisan stopgap funding measure backed by the White House to avert a government shutdown on Saturday.

Leading the criticism is congressman Matt Gaetz, a longtime McCarthy antagonist who on Monday moved to topple the speaker with a "motion to vacate the chair" — forcing a vote that is expected later Tuesday. The move means Democrats will have to determine whether to bail out a speaker who has spent much of his term opposing their agenda, supports scandal-embroiled Donald Trump, and recently opened an impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden.

The entire House of Representatives would vote, and with the slim Republican majority, McCarthy can only lose four Republicans if all members are present and Democrats vote against him. Despite his narrow path, McCarthy has struck a defiant tone, declaring that he has the votes to keep his gavel. "I'm confident I'll hold on," he told reporters on Capitol Hill.

But Gaetz says he is certain he has the four Republican backers he needs to oust McCarthy — as long as Democrats don't intervene to rescue the speaker.

## Indian police raid journalists, activists linked to NewsClick

**NEW DELHI:** Indian police raided the homes of at least eight journalists and activists on Tuesday, local media reported, deepening concerns over a crackdown in a country where media freedom has nosedived. Those raided are reported to be connected to the English-language news website NewsClick, with Indian authorities filing a case in 2021 alleging the organization was receiving foreign funding.

The New York Times in August reported that NewsClick was financed by US millionaire Neville Roy Singham, who it said "sprinkled its coverage with Chinese government talking points" — claims Singham rejected.

NewsClick journalist Arity Das said police "barged into my home" at dawn, questioned her about her reporting and seized her laptop, phone and computer hard disks, she wrote on social media. Das also said the raid was linked to a case against NewsClick under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), a stringent anti-terror law which makes it virtually impossible to get bail.

The Mumbai Press Club expressed its "deep concern" at the raids in a statement, reporting that "multiple journalists affiliated with NewsClick have been subjected to raids". It demanded the police stop "from what is perceived as a targeted harassment campaign against these journalists". Also raided in connection to NewsClick was historian and activist Sohail Hashmi. "From the war-

rant that they reluctantly showed me, the raid at my residence was related to an investigation into NewsClick," Hashmi told AFP.

Hashmi had to hand over his laptop, phone and hard disks containing more than a decade of his writing, calling the raid a "combination of intimidation and a crackdown on freedom of press and speech".

### 'Voices of dissent'

There was no immediate response from the police, with raids carried out in both the capital New Delhi and Mumbai. "I don't need to justify," India's minister for information and broadcasting Anurag Thakur told reporters asking about the raids. "If anyone has committed anything wrong, search agencies are free to carry out investigations," broadcaster NDTV quoted him as saying.

Press freedom in India has plummeted since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power in 2014, rights activists and opposition lawmakers say. Reporters Without Borders warns "press freedom is in crisis" in India. Since 2014, India dropped from 140 to 161 on its rankings of media freedom, including 11 places since last year.

Journalists critical of the government complain of increased harassment, including on social media — where Modi's ruling party has a powerful presence. Critics say Modi's government has sought to pressure rights groups by heavily scrutinising their finances and clamping down on foreign funding.

The Network of Women in Media in India said Tuesday's "shocking" raids had targeted "prominent voices of dissent". Those raided include founding editor Prabir Purkayastha, journalists Anindya Chakravarty, Bhasha Singh and Paranjy Guha Thakurta, as well as satirist Sanjay Rajoura and activist Teesta Setalvad, Indian media reported. — AFP

## International

## UN approves Haiti security mission

## International force to aid country as gang violence kills 2,800 in 9 months

**UNITED NATIONS:** The United Nations Security Council on Monday approved a Kenyan-led mission aiming to bring stability to Haiti, a year after leaders in the violence-ravaged Caribbean nation first pleaded for help. The Western Hemisphere's poorest nation has been in turmoil, with armed gangs taking over parts of the country and unleashing brutal violence, and the economy and public health system also in tatters.

Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres have been calling since late 2022 for international support to back the police force, but much of the global community had been jaded by the failure of earlier interventions in Haiti.

Monday's resolution passed with 13 votes in favor, with China and Russia abstaining. It was hailed by Haitian foreign minister Jean Victor Geneus as bringing a "glimmer of hope for people who have been suffering the consequences of a difficult political, socio-economic, security and humanitarian situation for too long."

A breakthrough in plans for the force came in July, when Kenya volunteered to lead it and send 1,000 personnel. "We must not fail the people of Haiti," Kenyan President William Ruto declared in a statement Tuesday, saying they had "borne the brunt of colonial plunder and repression." "This mandate is not only about peace and security, but also about the rebuilding of Haiti — its politics, its economic development, and social stability," Foreign Minister Alfred Mutua said separately.

The resolution calls for the deployment of a "multinational security support mission" — not officially a UN force — with a "lead country" coordinating with the Haitian government. The mission is initially approved for one year, with a review after nine

months. The force aims to provide "operational support to the Haitian National Police, including building its capacity through the planning and conduct of joint security support operations," the resolution says.

The mission will also aim to create conditions to hold elections, which have not taken place in Haiti since 2016. Guterres in a recent report said that the security situation in Haiti has only grown worse, with gang members both more numerous and better armed than the police. Nearly 2,800 homicides were recorded in Haiti between October 2022 and June 2023, with 80 minors among the dead, the UN report said.

## Addressing concerns of China

The United States has been advocating a multinational force. On Monday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said his department would continue working with Congress to provide \$100 million in foreign assistance, and that the Pentagon is prepared to provide up to \$100 million in enabling support.

But President Joe Biden has made clear he will not put American troops in harm's way. On Monday, the White House voiced its "gratitude" to Kenya for taking on leadership of the force, and to nations such as Jamaica, the Bahamas and Antigua for adding manpower. "It is now crucial that we focus on making progress in mobilizing the international support necessary to deploy this mission," US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said in a statement.

For the resolution to pass, China had to choose not to apply its veto. Haiti is one of a dwindling number of nations that recognizes Taiwan, which Beijing claims and has been seeking to isolate on the international stage. China, in the run-up to the Security Council meeting, voiced



PORT-AU-PRINCE: People displaced by the latest attack of gang violence take refuge in the Vincent gymnasium converted into a shelter on Aug 30, 2023. — AFP

doubts and pointed a finger at the United States, highlighting the role of weapons from Florida in aggravating the violence.

Under pressure from Beijing, the resolution expands an embargo on light weapons and ammunition. Beijing's UN envoy Zhang Jun made it clear that China was still skeptical, stating Monday that "without a legitimate, effective and accountable government in place, any external sup-

port can hardly have any lasting effects." The resolution does not specify the size of the mission, although discussions have revolved around a force of about 2,000 personnel. The resolution also calls for the support mission to "adopt appropriate wastewater management."

A UN peacekeeping force in Haiti that lasted from 2004 to 2017 introduced cholera to the country, setting off an epidemic

that killed more than 10,000 people. The experience fueled even greater pessimism in Haiti on interventions and contributed to resistance against another force under the UN flag. "Human rights, accountability, safety and dignity of the Haitian people must remain at the forefront of this policing mission," Amnesty International Kenya said, calling for robust measures to protect Haitians from any abuses. — AFP

## Nobel-prize winner announces DRC presidency bid

**KINSHASA:** DR Congo's Denis Mukwege, a surgical gynecologist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, announced on Monday that he will stand for president in elections planned for December. Speaking to a packed auditorium in the central African nation's capital Kinshasa, the doctor told reporters he wanted to save a country riven by insecurity and poor leadership. "Our country is doing badly," said Mukwege, 68. "We cannot wait to act. Tomorrow is already too late."

Mukwege was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2018 alongside Yazidi activist Nadia Murad for efforts to end sexual violence as a weapon of war. The pioneering doctor founded the Panzi hospital and foundation in conflict-torn eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) after witnessing the horrific injuries and diseases suffered by rape victims.

Dozens of militias have ravaged eastern DRC for years, a legacy of regional wars that flared during the 1990s and 2000s. One such militia, the M23, has captured swathes of territory since launching an offensive in late 2021. Alongside his medical work, Mukwege has earned a reputation as a strident gov-

ernment critic in his native country and built-up a loyal following among the DRC's intellectual class.

His announcement of a presidential bid follows months of speculation that he harbored political ambitions. On September 16, Mukwege declared that his supporters had donated the \$100,000 deposit needed to launch a run for the presidency. "When the people decides to take power, no system can oppose it," he said at the time, without explicitly declaring a bid.

In the crowd of supporters in Kinshasa on Monday, Francois Risasi, 56, said the doctor was "the cream of our society". "He represents the silent majority that works but sees no results, because of a conglomerate of adventurers that share the riches of the country between themselves," he added. The DRC is riddled with corruption and is one of the poorest countries in the world despite its vast reserves of minerals such as copper, cobalt and gold.

Mukwege's speech in Kinshasa was broadcast live to two halls in Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province, where his announcement drew rapturous applause. Nabintu Aristide, a 57-year-old mother of five, told AFP in the city that Mukwege's candidacy was "the beginning of the end of the suffering we've endured for years". Bukavu is the home of his Panzi hospital, which has specialized in treating survivors of sexual violence since opening in 1999 amid the ravages of the Second Congo War.

Although that conflict is over, militia violence continues, and Mukwege recently said the war on women's bodies has continued apace — and even



KINSHASA: Democratic Republic of Congo's Nobel Peace Prize winner and gynecologist Denis Mukwege addresses supporters in Kinshasa, on Oct 2, 2023. — AFP

extended to children. The doctor, during his many lecture tours abroad, has called for an international tribunal to judge crimes in eastern DRC.

In the election scheduled for December 20, Mukwege will face off against incumbent President Felix Tshisekedi, who came to power after an election in 2018. How Mukwege will fare remains

unclear. Despite his international prominence, he is a political newcomer without a broad base of support. Other declared opposition candidates include Martin Fayulu, who ran unsuccessfully in 2018, and two ex-prime ministers of Tshisekedi's predecessor Joseph Kabila — Augustin Matata and Adolphe Muzito. — AFP

## Qatar launches construction...

Continued from Page 1

"We need more supply. That's clear. Still the market is fragile," Pouyanne said. "This project is a major one and will give some relief to this market," he added.

Total signed a \$1.5 billion deal with QatarEnergy in September last year giving it a 9.3 percent stake in Qatar's North Field South project, the second phase of the field's expansion. In June 2022, the French energy giant became the first partner in the first phase

of the expansion, North Field East, investing more than \$2 billion for a 25 percent share.

In June, Doha announced a 27-year deal to supply four million tons of gas a year to the China National Petroleum Corporation. The agreement matches the terms of a 2022 deal with China's Sinopec that was the longest ever seen in the industry. Britain's Shell, Italy's ENI and US giants ConocoPhillips and ExxonMobil have also signed deals to partner in the expansion. Qatar is one of the world's top LNG producers, alongside the United States, Australia and Russia. Qatar Energy estimates the North Field holds about 10 percent of the world's known natural gas reserves. — AFP

Nobel Foundation in an interview. Speaking at a press conference a few hours later, he said: "There are signs that it could be reality".

The physics award is the second Nobel of the season after the Medicine Prize on Monday, awarded to messenger RNA researchers Katalin Kariko, a Hungarian like Krausz, and Drew Weissman for their groundbreaking technology that paved the way for mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. Krausz said he had actually been listening to an interview with his compatriot when he received the call, adding he was especially impressed with Kariko's determination as she toiled away at her research despite struggling to achieve recognition and even secure funding for it.

"That's the most important lesson for me, that's what I would like to convey to future generations, that if you believe in something and are convinced it's the right thing to do ... the important thing is to keep believing in it," Krausz said. The Physics Prize will be followed by the Chemistry Prize on Wednesday, with the highly watched Literature and Peace Prizes to be announced on Thursday and Friday. The Economics Prize — created in 1968 and the only Nobel not included in the 1895 will of Swedish inventor and philanthropist Alfred Nobel, which founded the awards — closes out the 2023 Nobel season on Monday. — AFP

## Armenia ratifies key ICC treaty...

Continued from Page 1

"We still believe that it is the wrong decision," he added. Tensions have also been rising between Yerevan and Moscow over the role of Russian peacekeepers in the self-proclaimed republic of Nagorno-Karabakh, which announced its dissolution last week following the lightning military operation by Baku. The territory lies within the internationally recognized border of Azerbaijan.

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan last week sought to assuage Kremlin fears, saying the initiative was not "directed against" Russia. "It comes from the interests of the country's external security, and taking such a decision is our sovereign right," he said. Pashinyan has been critical of Russia's refusal to intervene during Azerbaijan's offensive, and previously said his country's foreign security alliance with Moscow was "ineffective".

The Kremlin struck back again on Tuesday. "The Armenian side has nothing better than these mechanisms," spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. On Tuesday, Armenia's representative on international legal matters, told parlia-

ment that the decision was focused on the country's security concerns. "We are creating additional guarantees for Armenia" in the face of the threat to the country's territorial integrity from arch-foe Azerbaijan, said Eghishe Kirakosyan.

It was an apparent reference to May 2021, when Azerbaijani forces occupied a small pocket of land inside Armenia, near the countries' shared border. The arch foes have been locked in a decades-long rivalry. Kirakosyan said that Yerevan had proposed signing a bilateral agreement with Moscow to alleviate Russia's concerns over the ratification of the Rome Statute. Armenia signed the Rome Statute in 1999, but did not ratify it, citing contradictions with the country's constitution. The constitutional court said in March those obstacles had been removed after Armenia's adoption of a new constitution in 2015. After the offensive in September, most of the Armenian population fled the self-proclaimed republic of Karabakh, whose authorities announced that it would be dissolved by Jan 1, 2024. After the fall of the Russian Empire, the mountainous region, populated mainly by Armenians who regard it as part of their ancestral land, has been part of Azerbaijan. It unilaterally proclaimed its independence with the support of Armenia when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. — AFP

## Physics Nobel goes to electron...

Continued from Page 1

many women that get this prize so it's very, very special," she said. Before L'Huillier, Marie Curie (1903), Maria Goeppert Mayer (1963), Donna Strickland (2018) and Andrea Ghez (2020) are the only women to have won the award. Speaking later at a press conference, she encouraged young women interested in a career in science to "go for it". The laureate, who is married and has two sons, stressed it was possible to combine a research career with an "ordinary life, with a family and children".

French President Emmanuel Macron congratulated the trio, noting that "two of our brilliant French researchers" had been honored. "What a source of pride for our nation!" Macron said in a post to X, formerly known as Twitter. L'Huillier and Krausz had been seen as contenders for the honor, having been awarded the prestigious Wolf Prize last year together with Canadian physicist Paul Corkum. However, Krausz said he had not been expecting a call. "I was not sure whether I was dreaming or whether it was reality," he told the

## Libya flood relief hampered by 'turf...

Continued from Page 1

figure of how many people remain missing — a number international aid groups put at around 10,000 in the first days after the disaster.

The scale of the destruction was blamed on the sheer volume of the rains brought by hurricane-strength Storm Daniel, and on the impact Libya's years of chaos have had on critical infrastructure, early-warning systems and emergency response. The oil-rich North African nation has been in turmoil ever since a 2011 NATO-backed popular uprising led to the overthrow and killing of longtime dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

Years of fighting followed involving myriad tribal militia, jihadists and foreign mercenaries as the country also became a gateway for Europe-bound irreg-

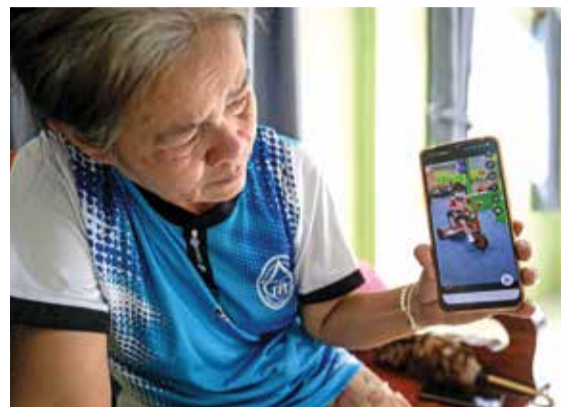
ular migrants, many of whom have suffered severe human rights abuses in Libya. Libya now remains split between two former battlefield enemies: a UN-backed government based in the capital Tripoli in the west, and the disaster-hit east, backed by military strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Haftar is close to Russia and its Wagner mercenary group and to the oil-rich United Arab Emirates, which led the early disaster relief effort. After the flood, the eastern government was quick to invite the "international community" for a donor conference scheduled for Oct 10, an announcement met with skepticism abroad. It has since postponed the meeting until Nov 1.

Eastern officials have also distributed cheques for aid and compensation to mayors of flood-hit municipalities, an effort documented in photos published online. The Libyan parliament, based in the major eastern city of Benghazi, meanwhile announced it had allocated €1.9 billion for reconstruction, without specifying how it would be spent. — AFP

# Grief lingers a year after Thai nursery massacre

## Families grapple with trauma, 'open wound' of loss



**NONG BUA LAMPHU:** Banyen Srichanil shows a video clip of her three-year-old grandson Nannaphat "Stamp" Songsermin, who was killed in a nursery mass shooting on Oct 6, 2022. — AFP photos

**NA KLANG, Thailand:** Clutching a well-worn teddy named "Little Bear", Paweenuch Supulwong fiddles with Buddhist amulets hanging heavy on her neck as her grandmother tells of the trauma still afflicting the four-year-old. Paweenuch, known by the nickname Ammy, was one of only two children to survive a massacre at a Thai nursery a year ago that killed 36 people and devastated the close-knit rural village of Uthai Sawan. Now when she plays she is watched via CCTV — both at home and at nursery — to reassure her family. "I'm still terrified," Paweenuch's grandmother Yupin Srithong told AFP, saying she did not want to send her back to school. "I don't want to let her out of my sight."

During the children's nap time on Oct 6, 2022, ex-police officer Panya Khamrab forced his way into the nursery. With a knife and a gun he slaughtered 12 adults and 24 children, all but one aged five or under, before killing himself to end one of the deadliest massacres in the kingdom's history. Asleep under a blanket, Ammy miraculously survived, but the attack still haunts her. Loud bangs frighten her, Yupin said. "She'll say 'there's shooting again' and she'll then ask me to hug her."

Uthai Sawan — which translates roughly as "heaven" — is about 500 kilometers (300 miles) north of Bangkok in Nong Bua Lam Phu province, one of Thailand's poorest regions. Like many families in the area, Ammy's parents have moved for better-paid work in Bangkok, leaving her grandparents to look after her. At Yupin's home, a shiny white camera stands out starkly on the old wooden ceiling. Her mother installed it after the attack so she could keep watch from afar.

### Drug battle

Outside the single-story nursery with peach-colored walls, toys and slides litter the cropped grass but the doors remain taped shut. It is not clear what will happen to the building, though ground has been staked out for a new nursery barely 250 meters (820 feet) away. A permanent memorial was "in discussion", local official Danaichok Boonsom told AFP.

For now, Ammy and her friends play at a temporary nursery — overlooked by a giant TV screen showing images from cameras monitoring every entrance to the compound. "They feel safe and at peace," said Nanticha Punchom, the head of Uthai Sawan Child Development Centre, who was at the



**Head of the Uthai Sawan Child Development Centre Nanticha Punchom** watches children nap at the daycare which has temporarily replaced the old center, the site of a nursery mass shooting.

nursery when the attack happened. "I have to tell myself that it's already over and try not to think more about it," she told AFP. "The CCTV cameras make me feel safer."

While Panya's motive for the slaughter has never been established, the case evoked a host of demons that haunt Thailand — drugs, abundant firearms and wealth inequalities. Panya was known as a regular user of methamphetamine — the highly addictive stimulant that is a scourge throughout Southeast Asia — and was sacked from the police for drug abuse. Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, due to visit the village in November, has vowed to end methamphetamine abuse, but with street prices at record lows in 2022 he faces a tough battle.

### 'Open wound'

After the attack, financial aid flooded into the district, much of it directed to bereaved families, and psychological help was offered as people tried to rebuild their lives. Banyen Srichanil, whose three-year-old grandson Nannaphat was among the dead, used some of the payout to renovate their home.

Gone are their home's wooden walls, scuffed floors, and children's toys. Banyen's sobs echo against new white tiles and freshly painted walls. "I miss him every day. I dream about him every day," said the 58-year-old.

"I see his face all the time. To think or talk about him makes me tear up," Banyen said as her husband Kham Pornnikhom passed her tissues. Behind them a dark wood cabinet with toys and framed photographs of Nannaphat — known by his nickname Stamp — dominates the empty room. "It's like there's an open wound," she said. Virtually everyone in the village has a connection to one of the bereaved families, with the whole community blanketed by grief.

### 'I miss you'

Stamp's grandfather Kham said they talk about him every day, but that some families wanted to leave the massacre in the past. "If you talk about the incident then they will say it's hurtful and it's better not to mention it," he said. Their neighbors had urged the couple to move on. "But they're not the one who lost someone so they can talk like that," said Banyen, scrolling through photos and videos of her grandson.

Just for a minute, the empty house is filled with noise from the videos. "Beep beep!" Stamp yells as he rides a small bike around the home. Everyday moments — him brushing his teeth, slapping his bare belly after a bath, or showing the camera a grubby garden find — are replayed again and again on Banyen's phone. "Where are you right now?" Banyen asked as silence crashed back into the room. "I miss you, Stamp." — AFP



**This photo taken on Aug 31, 2023 shows Paweenuch "Ammy" Supulwong, 4, who survived a nursery mass shooting on Oct 6, 2022, with her grandfather Somsak Srithong at their family home.**

## Pakistan orders 'illegal' Afghan migrants to leave

**ISLAMABAD:** Hundreds of thousands of Afghans living illegally in Pakistan have been given until November 1 to leave voluntarily or face deportation, the interior minister said Tuesday, a crackdown Kabul's embassy in Islamabad called "harassment".

The order comes as Pakistan grapples with a rise in attacks the government blames on militants operating from Afghanistan, a charge Kabul routinely denies. Around 1.3 million Afghans are registered refugees in Pakistan and 880,000 more have legal status to remain, according to the latest United Nations figures. But caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti said a further 1.7 million Afghans were in Pakistan illegally. All will have to return home in the coming months, according to a report by the state-run news agency APP.

"The illegal immigrants and illegal foreign nationals who are living in Pakistan are given a deadline of November 1," Bugti told reporters in Islamabad. "If they do not go... then all the law enforcement agencies in the provinces or federal government will be utilized to deport them." APP went further, citing government sources as saying the government wanted all Afghans to leave. "In the first phase, illegal residents, in the second phase, those with Afghan citizenship, and in the third phase those with proof of residence cards will be expelled," it said.

### Waiting lists

In a statement posted on X Tuesday, Afghanistan's embassy said more than 1,000 Afghans have been detained in the past two weeks — half of them despite having a legal right to be in Pakistan. "Despite the repeated promises of the Pakistan authorities, the arrest and harassment of Afghan refugees by the police in Pakistan continues," it said. Bugti also said that from November 1, Pakistan would only allow entry to Afghans with valid passports and visas.



**KARACHI:** An Afghan woman and a girl are seen at an Afghan refugee camp on Sept 21, 2023. — AFP photos

For years, Afghans entering Pakistan through land borders have been allowed to use their national identity cards as a travel document. There is a huge waiting list in Afghanistan for nationals seeking to get passports, and obtaining a Pakistan visa can take months. Bugti also warned of a crackdown on property and businesses owned by Afghans in Pakistan.

"A task force has been formed for that purpose at the interior ministry. All the properties and businesses of those living here illegally are out of our tax net," he said. "Our intelligence agencies will search them out and their business will be confiscated by the government."

Afghans have poured into Pakistan in their millions during decades of successive wars, many living in refugee camps with restricted access to education, health-care and employment. An estimated 600,000 have arrived since the Taliban seized power in Kabul in August 2021 and imposed their austere version of Islamic law. Many are seeking asylum in third countries.

Relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have soured since the Taliban's return, with a sharp rise in militant attacks along Pakistan's border. "There have been 24 suicide attacks since January, 14 of these 24 were carried by Afghan nationals," Bugti told reporters. Pakistan has launched crackdowns on Afghans in the past and threatened to deport them all, but the campaigns have fizzled out after a few months, or following talks between the respective capitals. — AFP



**This photo shows a general view of an Afghan refugee camp in Karachi.**

## 'Left to die': Report exposes horrors at Syria army hospital

**BEIRUT:** Syrian authorities abused and left detainees to die at a Damascus military hospital, using the facility to cover up the torture of prisoners, a rights group and former detainees said. Sick prisoners sent from detention facilities to the capital's Tishreen Military Hospital for treatment rarely received any medical attention, according to a report released Tuesday by the Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison (ADMSP), a Turkey-based watchdog.

Instead, security forces at the hospital jail and even medical and administrative staff inflicted "brutal torture" on detainees, including physical and psychological violence, according to the report titled "Buried in Silence". It covers abuses from the start of Syria's civil war in 2011 to 2020, but the authors said they believe many of the practices persist today. Abu Hamza, 43, said he was taken to the jail at the Tishreen hospital three times during his incarceration, but only saw a doctor once. "Prisoners were afraid to go to the hospital, because many did not return," said Abu Hamza, who was jailed for seven years, including at the notorious Sednaya prison on the Damascus outskirts.

"Those who were very sick would be left to die in the hospital lockup," said Abu Hamza, who like others AFP spoke to used first names or pseudonyms for fear of reprisals. "If we could walk, we'd be sent back to prison," he added. ADMSP was founded by former detainees held in Sednaya, Syria's largest jail which has become a by-word for torture and the darkest abuses of the regime. In a report last year the group described Sednaya's "salt rooms," primitive mortuaries designed to preserve bodies.

The latest ADMSP report is based on interviews with 32 people including former detainees, security personnel and medical staff, as well as leaked documents. Rights groups have long accused President Bashar al-Assad's government of torturing detainees and executing prisoners without fair trials.

In 2011, Syrian government forces cracked down on peaceful protesters, triggering a complex war that has left more than 500,000 dead and forced millions to flee. Up to one-fifth of that toll died in government-run prisons, according to Britain-based monitoring group

the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Some of the horrific images of dead Syrians smuggled out by "Caesar", a defector who had worked as a photographer for the military police, were shot inside Tishreen hospital, according to human rights groups.

### Left for dead

Abu Hamza said guards at the hospital prison "once barged in and ordered us to lie on the ground", beating them for 15 minutes before leaving. According to the ADMSP report, inmates who died in custody from torture or poor conditions, particularly at Sednaya, were taken to the Tishreen hospital and then to "mass graves" near the capital. Inmates arriving at the hospital were first held "in the same room where bodies of detainees were collected", and sick detainees were forced to help transport prisoners' corpses, the report said.

Abu Hamza said he was made to toil for hours, barefoot and in the bitter cold, loading bodies into a vehicle at Sednaya prison and then offloading them at Tishreen hospital near his jail. There, security forces wrote a number on the corpse or on a piece of paper. A photographer would then take pictures of the dead. The ADMSP report said no autopsies were conducted and the hospital issued "death certificates with false information", often citing heart attack, kidney failure or stroke as the cause of death. Sometimes inmates "between life and death" were placed among the corpses and left to die or even killed, according to the report. Abu Hamza recalled a detainee who was "fighting for his life" in the hospital jail. "They did not bring a doctor. Instead, they put him aside, among the corpses. They left him to die," he said. The report said a jail officer would sometimes kill very sick detainees, or prisoners would be ordered to take part in doing so.

### Awake 'among corpses'

Tishreen hospital plays a "central role in enforced disappearances, covering up torture, falsifying the causes of death" and other abuses amounting to "crimes against humanity" said ADMSP co-founder Diab Serriya. "What happens inside Tishreen hospital and other military hospitals is a systematic policy" adopted by the authorities, he added.

A Syrian doctor is currently on trial in Germany accused of torture, murder and crimes against humanity while working in military hospitals in his homeland. Lawsuits have been filed elsewhere in Europe, as well as the United States and at the International Court of Justice, against the Syrian government and officials on accusations of torture. — AFP

## India arrests 1,000 people in child marriage crackdown

**GUWAHATI:** More than 1,000 people were arrested Tuesday in India's remote northeast during the second government crackdown on illegal child marriages in the region this year, authorities said. India is home to more than 220 million child brides, according to UN figures, but the number of child weddings has fallen dramatically this century.

Assam state had already arrested 4,000 people in an earlier abolition drive in February, including parents of married couples and registrars who signed off on underage betrothals. The state's chief

minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that police had launched a second phase of the campaign "in a special operation which began in the early hours of dawn". "The number of arrests is likely to rise," he wrote in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "The number now stands at 1,039."

Sarma has campaigned on a platform of stamping out child marriages completely in his state by 2026. The legal marriage age in India is 18 but millions of children are forced to tie the knot when they are younger, particularly in poorer rural areas. Many parents marry off their children in the hope of improving their financial security.

The results can be devastating, with girls dropping out of school to cook and clean for their husbands and suffering health problems from giving birth at a young age. In a landmark 2017 judgment, India's top court said that sex with an underage wife constituted rape, a ruling cheered by activists. — AFP

# Business

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2023

## IMF: Energy transition at risk from commodity market fragmentation

### Low-income countries bearing the brunt of the costs: Report

WASHINGTON: Growing geopolitical fragmentation since the invasion of Ukraine has hit commodity markets, threatening to slow the transition to renewable energy as the world looks to combat climate change, the International Monetary Fund said Tuesday. The fractures have led to a doubling in new trade restrictions on commodities since 2021, with low-income countries bearing the brunt of the costs, the IMF announced Tuesday.

"To achieve net-zero-carbon emission targets, demand for minerals is set to rise several-fold in the coming years," IMF economists Jorge Alvarez, Mehdi Benatiya Andaloussi and Martin Stuermer wrote in a blog post accompanying a chapter from the fund's upcoming World Economic Outlook (WEO) report.

But they warned that economically viable deposits are concentrated in just a few countries, and that "fragmented markets could complicate matters." "Commodities, particularly minerals critical for the green transition and some highly traded agricultural goods, are especially vulnerable in the event of more severe geo-economic fragmentation," they said.

The IMF's flagship report on the world's economy will be published in full next week at the fund and the World Bank's annual meetings, which take place this year in the Moroccan city of Marrakesh.

#### Commodity market 'turmoil'

The IMF said further geopolitical fragmentation could lead to "turmoil" in the commodity markets, causing long-term economic losses of around 0.3 percent of global economic outlook. Losses in low-income and vulnerable countries would be even

higher, reaching around 1.2 percent of gross domestic product, on average.

The impact largely stems "from disruptions in agricultural imports," IMF economists said. "This would exacerbate food security concerns, as low-income countries are particularly reliant on food imports to feed their population," they wrote. The IMF economists estimated that severe trade disruptions could lower investment in renewable energy and electric vehicles by as much as 30 percent by the year 2030, leading to "slower mitigation of climate change." The IMF called for greater cooperation to negate the risks of commodity market fragmentation on the energy transition.

"If full cooperation remains elusive, pragmatic solutions must be explored to tackle the most pressing challenges: mitigating the risk of food insecurity and supporting the green energy transition," they said. They called for "urgent efforts" to be made to ensure "the unhindered flow of food and minimize the threat of food insecurity in low-income countries."

They also called for multilateral efforts to establish a "green corridor," to maintain the flow of critical minerals. "This would help avert climate change," they added.

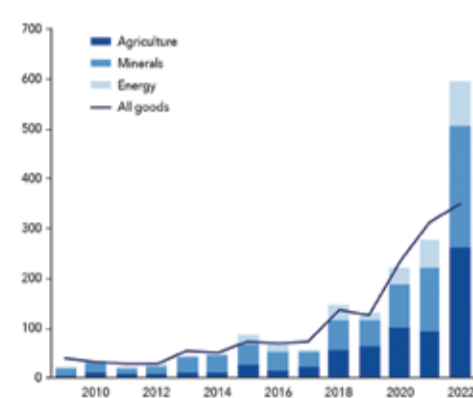
These adverse effects are partly due to highly concentrated commodity production, largely a consequence of regional advantages in natural resource endowments. The three largest suppliers of minerals, for example, account for about 70 percent of global mined production on average. Scaling up mining and processing capacity can take years, resulting in slow responses to price signals.

At the same time, some commodities like food and

#### Market fragmentation

Trade restrictions on commodities surged in 2022.

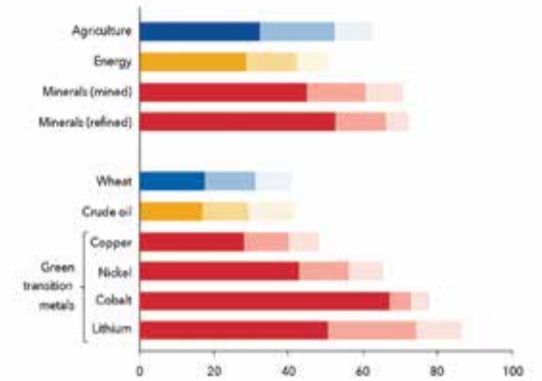
Number of trade interventions by sector (Index, 2016-19 = 100)



Source: Global Trade Alert Database (adjusted for reporting lags) and IMF staff calculations. Note: Calculations exclude trade-liberalizing interventions. IMF

#### Concentrated production

A few countries supply most of each of the world's commodities. (top 3 producing countries as percent of global production)



Source: British Geological Survey, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Energy Agency, US Geological Survey and IMF staff calculations. Note: Energy refers to coal, natural gas, and crude oil. The figure uses 2019 data to avoid distortions caused by the pandemic. The figure shows averages across commodity types. IMF

energy play a pivotal role in household consumption, while many minerals are key inputs for vital technologies and manufacturing. This combination of concentrated supply and widespread demand leads to extensive commodity trading, with many countries relying heavily on imports from only a handful of suppliers. This makes commodities more vulnerable in the event of trade restrictions, the report said.

Our research indicates that fragmentation of global commodity markets into two hypothetical geopolitical blocs, based on the March 2022 United Nations General Assembly vote demanding

Russia end its war on Ukraine, could lead to significant price swings. It could also cause wide price differentials across blocs, particularly of minerals critical to the green transition and highly traded agricultural goods.

Prices would also be more volatile in a fragmented world. Fragmented markets would offer fewer buffers to absorb future commodity shocks, such as poor harvests or extreme weather. Moreover, even a single commodity producer switching its geopolitical allegiance could trigger significant price fluctuations. — AFP

## Ford, GM lay off 500 more workers due to strike

NEW YORK: Ford and General Motors said around 500 more workers have been temporarily laid off due to "knock-on effects" from the ongoing strike at Detroit's "Big Three" automakers. The two companies sent home the employees who were left without work following United Auto Workers strikes on assembly plants, Ford and GM said Monday.

The UAW launched a targeted strike on September 15 on GM, Ford and Stellantis, calling stoppages at a handful of plants, while leaving most of the union's 146,000 US hourly auto workers on the job.

On Friday, the UAW expanded the strike for the second time, ordering additional stoppages at GM and Ford plants but sparing Stellantis due to progress in the talks. GM said the UAW's strike on Wentzville, Missouri and Lansing, Michigan plants "continues to have negative ripple effects."

The company is sending home 130 workers at Parma, Ohio and 34 in Marion, Indiana who "have no work available," a company spokesman said in an email. Ford said it directed about 330 employees in Chicago, Illinois and Lima, Ohio not to report to work. "Our production system is highly interconnected, which means the UAW's targeted strike strategy has knock-on effects for facilities that are not directly targeted for a



CHICAGO: UAW members and workers hold signs outside the Ford's Chicago Assembly Plant after walking off their jobs in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

work stoppage," Ford said in a statement Monday.

The two companies, along with Stellantis—which was formed by the merger of Fiat Chrysler and the French PSA Group—had previously sent home nearly 3,000 workers who were unable to perform work due to the strike. With Monday's action, the to-

tal in this pool of workers is near 3,500. Initially, the UAW called on some 13,000 members at the three automakers to stop work, then added another 5,600 a week later due to lack of progress in negotiations. A further 7,000 were added the following week to bring the total to some 25,000. — AFP

## Turkey's inflation hovers near 60% after policy U-turn

ISTANBUL: Turkey's annual inflation rate held steady near 60 percent last month, official data showed Tuesday, offering the first evidence that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's economic policy U-turn was working.

The TUIK state statistics agency said consumer prices rose 61.5 percent over the 12-month period ending in September. The annual rate stood at 58.9 percent in August and 47.8 percent in July.

The month-on-month increase in prices also slowed to 4.8 percent in September from 9.1 percent in August and 9.5 percent in July. Inflation was spearheaded by a 30.3 percent monthly jump in the cost of education in the new school year. But the price of items such as clothing only rose by 2.6 percent on the month.

The data suggest that Turkey's inflation rate is starting to peak after Erdogan signed off on a series of interest rate hikes that have taken the policy rate to 30 percent from 8.5 percent in four months.

"The small (by Turkey's recent standards) rise in inflation to 61.5 percent last month, from 58.9 percent in August, provides the first signs that the inflation spike is close to leveling off," Capital Economics analyst William Jackson said.

#### 'A vicious mix'

Erdogan had been a lifelong supporter of the unorthodox economic theory that high interest rates

cause—rather than cure—inflation. But he reversed his approach after surviving a difficult May election that coincided with the worst economic crisis of his two-decade rule.

He handed Turkey's economic reins to a group of technocrats with experience on Wall Street and broad support among foreign investors. Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek is credited with convincing Erdogan that Turkey would enter a systemic crisis unless he radically changed course.

The annual inflation rate touched 85 percent last October, the highest level since Turkey began its transformation to full-fledged market economics in the 1990s. The rate began to slow once the so-called "base effect" kicked in—high levels of inflation began to look small compared to even higher ones recorded 12 months earlier. The annual rate dropped to an 18-month low of 38.2 percent in June. Simsek's economic overhaul included a series of steps that contributed to a short-term spike in prices.

Policy makers have allowed the lira to lose 27 percent of its value against the dollar since the election and raised taxes to help pay for Erdogan's election campaign pledges. "Inflation in Turkey is being fuelled by a vicious mix of deeply negative real interest rates, hefty wage hikes, an overhaul of the tax system and persistent lira weakness," said Bartosz Sawicki, an analyst at the Conotxia investment group. The monthly jump in prices "is further exacerbated by soaring food prices and skyrocketing oil prices," Sawicki said.

#### 'Difficult choices'

Emerging markets economist Timothy Ash said policy makers might also be under pressure to slow down the course correction heading into March municipal elections. Very high interest rates threaten to



The Turkish lira has lost 27 percent of its value against the dollar since May elections. — AFP

tamp down economic growth and ultimately contribute to unemployment.

But Erdogan and his Islamic-rooted party are keen to seize back control of prized cities such as Istanbul and Ankara from the secular opposition. "Policy rates need to be jacked up to 40-50 percent, at least," Ash said. "But difficult choices/compromises could ultimately delay recovery and impose higher longer term costs on the economy." The Standard and Poor's rating agency was impressed enough by Simsek's approach to lift its long-term outlook for Turkey from negative to stable.

"We believe that by 2026, absent renewed political uncertainty, the new team can rebalance (Turkey's) economy... toward more balanced external and fiscal accounts, as well as more acceptable levels of inflation," the agency said last week. The agency identified "unabated currency depreciation" and "political interference with the monetary authority's independence" by Erdogan as two of its main worries. — AFP

## ADNOC eyes major project to capture CO2 from air

DUBAI: Emirati oil company ADNOC said Tuesday it would partner with a US firm to study the feasibility of a major project to extract carbon dioxide from the air.

The "preliminary engineering study" by the state-owned firm and Occidental Petroleum is the product of a deal signed earlier this year to explore carbon capture and storage (CCS) and direct air capture (DAC) projects in the United Arab Emirates and the United States, a statement said.

The proposed project would capture one million tons of carbon dioxide per year and store it in "saline reservoirs not used for oil and gas production", the statement said. That would make it "the first megaton-scale direct air capture (DAC) facility outside the United States," the statement said. The UN's International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) considers capturing carbon dioxide directly from the atmosphere one of the methods necessary to combat global warming.

But the sector is still marginal—there are just 27 existing carbon capture sites commissioned worldwide, according to the International Energy Agency, though at least 130 projects are under development. And some experts worry that use of the technology will be a pre-text for continuing to emit greenhouse gases, rather than switching more quickly to clean energy. — AFP

## India must rapidly scale solar to hit targets: Study

BANGKOK: India needs to increase its solar energy capacity by 36 percent a year for at least the next half-decade to meet its energy mix goals, an analysis said Tuesday. It also urgently needs grid upgrades and more storage capacity to deal with the intermittent nature of renewable energy sources, according to the report from UK-based energy think tank Ember.

But there are signs of progress in the world's most populous country, which is heavily reliant on polluting coal for energy generation. Investments in the renewable sector are growing, and India commissioned a record amount of solar capacity this year, Ember said.

The report takes India's National Electricity Plan (NEP), unveiled earlier this year, as a starting point.

The document, covering the decade to 2032, projects India will continue to rely on coal, but with renewables making up an ever-greater share of its power generation mix. While solar accounted for just five percent of India's total electricity generation in financial year 2022, the NEP projects it will make up 25 percent within a decade. But achieving that will require a massive ramp-up of capacity every year for at least the next half-decade.

And India needs better storage solutions to address the variable supply of sources like solar and wind. Failure to do so could cause power cuts, and "put pressure on state and national planners to hastily plan for increasing the coal capacity, which could result in future lock-ins," the report warned. India, this year's G20 host, has seen its per capita coal emissions rise 29 percent in the last seven years and has shied away from any policy to phase down coal. — AFP



Business

# Indian economy robust despite global headwinds: World Bank

## Growth could taper slightly to 6.3% for current fiscal year

**NEW DELHI:** India will stay one of the world's fastest-growing economies thanks to strong domestic demand and investment helping it weather inflation and challenging global conditions, the World Bank said Tuesday.

Like other countries, India has been buffeted by global headwinds including tightening financial conditions and the effects of the war in Ukraine on global food and oil markets.

Its economy nonetheless grew 7.2 percent in the last financial year, the second-highest among G20 countries. The World Bank said in a regular report that growth would taper slightly to 6.3 percent for the current fiscal year because of "challenging external conditions and waning pent-up demand".

Inflation spiked to 7.8 percent in July after a surge in prices for food staples, including wheat and rice, caused in part by bad weather and pest attacks in production belts. India's central bank warned the following month that higher food costs were expected to get worse, and the government put curbs on some rice exports to put downward pressure on prices.

The World Bank forecast the government's fiscal deficit to decline from 6.4 percent to 5.9 percent of GDP in the current financial year, with debt stabilizing at 83 percent of GDP.

India overtook Britain last year to become the world's fifth-largest economy and recently surpassed China to become the most populous country. It recorded

7.8 percent growth for the June quarter, the most recent figures available.

Adverse weather conditions contributed to a spike in inflation in recent months. Headline inflation rose to 7.8 percent in July due to a surge in prices of food items like wheat and rice. Inflation is expected to decrease gradually as food prices normalize and government measures increase the supply of key commodities.

"While the spike in headline inflation may temporarily constrain consumption, we project a moderation. Overall conditions will remain conducive for private investment," said Dhruv Sharma, senior economist, World Bank, and lead author of the report. "The volume of foreign direct investment is also likely to grow in India as rebalancing of the global value chain continues."

The World Bank expects fiscal consolidation to continue in FY23/24 with the central government fiscal deficit projected to continue to decline from 6.4 percent to 5.9 percent of GDP. Public debt is expected to stabilize at 83 percent of GDP. On the external front, the current account deficit is expected to narrow to 1.4 percent of GDP, and it will be adequately financed by foreign investment flows and supported by large foreign reserves.

The India Development Update is a companion piece to the South Asia Development Update, a twice-a-year



HYDERABAD: Labourers pack raw mangoes into boxes after an auction at the Gaddiannaram fruit market on the outskirts of Hyderabad. — AFP

World Bank report that examines economic developments and prospects in the South Asia region and analyzes policy challenges faced by countries. The October 2023 edition titled *Toward Faster, Cleaner Growth* shows

growth in South Asia is higher than any other developing country region in the world, but slower than its pre-pandemic pace and not fast enough to meet its development goals. The report also includes short and long-term

policy recommendations for countries in the region to manage fiscal risks and accelerate growth, including by boosting private sector investment and seizing opportunities created by the global energy transition. — AFP

## Trial of crypto star Bankman-Fried begins

**NEW YORK:** The trial of Sam Bankman-Fried, the former CEO of one of the cryptocurrency industry's biggest exchanges, begins on Tuesday to determine whether he committed massive fraud against more than a million clients.

The 31-year-old—once one of the most respected figures in crypto—now faces decades in prison and could see his name alongside Bernie Madoff and Elizabeth Holmes as one of the era's most prominent fraudsters. The first day of the trial will be devoted to jury selection for a case that is set to last about six weeks.

In just a few years, the curly-haired Massachusetts In-

stitute of Technology graduate turned his FTX platform into the world's second biggest crypto exchange, making him the tech world's latest billionaire wunderkind feted from Wall Street to Silicon Valley. FTX had become a near-household name through a frenzied marketing campaign that included celebrity partnerships with stars such as supermodel Gisele Bündchen and basketball star Stephen Curry, and buying the naming rights for the Miami Heat's home arena.

Bankman-Fried also stepped in as a kind of savior of the industry when other crypto companies started facing difficulties, with FTX swooping in to offer them a financial lifeline. At the height of his career, Bankman-Fried was thought to be worth \$26 billion. But his steep rise was only matched by his ignominious downfall, which saw him escorted last year by police from his luxury apartment in the Bahamas and extradited to face charges in the United States.

His empire began to crumble last November when a news report pointed to unhealthy ties between the FTX platform and Alameda Research, the company's crypto-focused investment arm.

The revelations kept growing and major investors pulled their money out of FTX, sinking it swiftly into bankruptcy and casting Bankman-Fried as a financial pariah. Once the dust had settled, some \$8.7 billion was still unaccounted for, according to the receiver appointed to manage the liquidation. Federal prosecutor Damian Williams has accused Bankman-Fried and his associates of systematically diverting funds from FTX clients to prop up Alameda Research, but also wire fraud, securities and commodities fraud, and money laundering. Danielle Sassoon, an assistant US attorney in Williams' office, told a hearing that the number of victims of Bankman-Fried's alleged actions could be "in excess of a million." — AFP



FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried

## TikTok to stop sales in Indonesia

**JAKARTA:** Short video app TikTok said it will stop transactions on its app in Indonesia from Wednesday after Southeast Asia's biggest economy banned direct sales on social media platforms last week to protect millions of small businesses.

The new regulation is yet another setback for TikTok, which has faced intense scrutiny in the United States and other nations in recent months over users' data security and the company's alleged ties to Beijing.

Indonesia is one of the world's biggest markets for TikTok Shop and was the first to pilot the app's e-commerce arm, but the Chinese-owned app said it would comply with the new regulation from Wednesday evening. "Our priority is to remain compliant with local laws and regulations," TikTok Indonesia said in a statement on Tuesday. "As such, we will no longer facilitate e-commerce transactions in TikTok Shop Indonesia," it said.

Calls have grown in recent months for a regulation governing social media and e-commerce, with

offline sellers seeing their livelihoods threatened by the sale of cheaper products on TikTok Shop and other platforms. Indonesian Trade Minister Zulkifli Hasan said firms who did not comply with the ban on goods transactions would first be warned and then lose their license to operate in Indonesia. "E-commerce cannot become social media. It is separated," he told reporters last week.

Hasan said social media companies could advertise products but not facilitate transactions for them on their platforms, saying the decision was taken to protect small- and medium-sized businesses. While stressing it would respect local laws, TikTok Indonesia also criticized the ban by saying it would harm millions of Indonesian sellers who used the app. Indonesia's e-commerce market is dominated by platforms such as Tokopedia, Shopee and Lazada but TikTok Shop gained a significant market share since launching in 2021.

Indonesia, with 125 million users, is TikTok's second-largest global market after the United States, according to company figures. TikTok's chief executive Shou Zi Chew visited Jakarta in June, pledging to pour billions of dollars into Southeast Asia in the years ahead. — AFP

## Ruble plunges again as Russia woes mount

**MOSCOW:** The ruble crossed the psychological threshold of 100 to the dollar on the Moscow financial exchange—having already done so briefly in August—raising the prospect of weaker spending power for Russians forced to pay more for imported goods.

The currency had plunged to 150 against the dollar at the beginning of Moscow's assault on Ukraine in February 2022, before recovering on government efforts to limit the impact of Western sanctions and put the economy on a war footing. But the value has again been sliding in recent months as the country imports more and exports less, with central bank governor Elvira Nabiullina warning in September of slowing growth this year and next.

On Tuesday, the ruble stood at 100.11 against the dollar and 104.65 against the euro.

The government downplayed concerns, saying the authorities were taking measures to ensure the soundness of the country's financial system. "There is still no reason to worry," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "There are certain fluctuations. But we live in the ruble zone, so excessive attention to the dollar exchange rate is a vestige of the past," he said.

The central bank has hiked its benchmark interest rate to 13 percent in a bid to shore up the currency and fight inflation, which is still above its target of four percent. Prices were up 5.15 percent in August.

Plans announced last week for a massive increase in defense spending have also heightened worries over government finances, as oil and gas revenues continue to be impacted by sanctions. President Vladimir Putin recently ordered the government and the central bank to take measures to stabilize the currency, saying its weakness was the main cause of rising consumer prices. — AFP

## Yemen economy tanks as truce talks fail: NGOs

**DUBAI:** Food shortages, power cuts and a collapsing currency are upending daily life in Yemen as peace talks make no headway in restoring a ceasefire that lapsed one year ago, around 50 NGOs said late Monday. "While economic challenges are rife across the country, rising inflation and the deterioration of public services are making life unbearable," said a statement signed by 35 Yemeni groups and 13 international aid organizations including the Danish


Refugee Council and Save the Children.

That is especially true "for hundreds of thousands of families" in territory controlled by the internationally recognized government based in the main southern city of Aden, the statement said. Power cuts in Aden can last 17 hours a day and more than 50 percent of households in government-held areas cannot meet basic food requirements because of skyrocketing prices, the statement said.


Iran-backed Houthi rebels overran the Yemeni capital Sanaa in 2014, prompting neighboring Saudi Arabia to spearhead a military intervention the following year to shore up the government. The ensuing war has left hundreds of thousands dead through direct and indirect causes and displaced millions in what the United Nations has called one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. —AFP

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BANK FOR LIFE

## Business

# NBK, PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional sign strategic MoU at ADIPEC 2023

## Al-Sager: Agreement exemplifies our dedication to supporting global energy initiatives



A group photo with PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional officials.



Zaid Al-Sager and Mishari Bin Salama during the signing of the agreement.

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), the leading regional bank with presence spanning numerous leading financial center around the world, and PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional (KPI), the refinery arm of PT Pertamina (Persero), Indonesia's state energy firm and a Fortune Global 500 company, have announced a significant milestone in their collaboration by signing a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for bilateral and syndicated bank financing facilities.

This agreement was unveiled at the prestigious Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition Conference (ADIPEC), the world's most influential gathering for advancing global energy, held in Abu Dhabi from 2-5 October 2023.

The non-binding MoU was signed by Zaid Al-Sager, Deputy Head of the International Banking Group at NBK, in the presence of Meshari Bin Salamah, Deputy General Manager and Head of International Corporate & Commercial Real Estate, International Banking Group at NBK, and Andrew Tan, General Manager of NBK Singapore Branch. Meanwhile, Taufik Adityawarm, CEO and president Director of KPI, acted as the signatory on behalf of KPI in formalizing the agreement.

The MoU which shall be based on good corporate governance principles reflects a deepening of the strategic partnership between NBK and KPI, marking a significant step towards achieving mutually beneficial financial objectives within the energy and petrochemical sectors. Both organizations are committed to advancing sustainable energy solutions and driving economic growth across the Middle East region and beyond. Their commitment to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and integrating Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles into their operational strategies underscore their shared vision for a more sustainable future.

Zaid Al-Sager commented on the significance of this MoU, stating, "This partnership exemplifies our dedication to supporting global energy initiatives while fostering sustainable economic growth. Our engagement with the group traces its roots back to 2016 when NBK Singapore initiated an uncommitted trade financing facilities. In 2022, a significant meeting was arranged in Jakarta,

- NBK and KPI are committed to advancing sustainable energy solutions and driving economic growth across the world
- Our participation in ADIPEC 2023 is set to strengthen our worldwide position in oil and gas project financing
- **Adityawarm:** Joining forces with NBK opens new horizons for cooperation that serve common purposes and interests

facilitated by NBK Singapore. We take immense pride in our ongoing collaboration with PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional and our role in contributing to the success of their numerous global projects."

NBK's extensive global reach, financial expertise, and commitment to sustainability align seamlessly with KPI's strategic vision and mission. The MOU outlines pivotal collaboration areas as NBK and KPI join forces to deliver bilateral and syndicated financing solutions. These solutions are designed to bolster KPI's projects and stimulate the expansion of its international operations. They encompass syndicated / Club Deal Corporate Loans, structured Commodity Finance, and project financing tailored to KPI's investment ventures.

"This strategic agreement places a significant focus on sustainable finance, knowledge exchange, and capacity enhancement within both the energy and financial sectors, with the overarching goal of promoting economic development," Al-Sager added.

"As we persist in harnessing local and regional prospects, further reinforcing NBK's prominent position in funding substantial strategic projects across diverse sectors, including oil and gas, our engagement in ADIPEC 2023 is positioned to enhance our worldwide standing in oil and gas project financing. This extends far beyond the confines of the Middle East, transcending geographical boundaries," Al-Sager confirmed.

Meanwhile, Taufik Adityawarm, CEO and president Director of KPI, conveyed his optimistic outlook for fu-

ture collaboration, stating, "We believe that joining forces with NBK opens new horizons for cooperation that serve common purposes and interests. It will not only strengthen our financial capabilities but also enable us to accelerate our mission to provide efficient, reliable, and sustainable energy solutions. We are excited about the possibilities that lie ahead."

"This is a significant milestone in the strategic partnership between NBK and KPI, setting the stage for innovative financial solutions that will drive economic growth and sustainability in the energy sector," Adityawarm highlighted.

With the execution of the non-binding MOU, NBK secures the coveted position of being one of two banks in the Middle East having first access to PT Kilang Pertamina Internasional's upcoming financing opportunities. This strategic arrangement underscores NBK's commitment to developing long-term partnerships and furthering its role as a key financial facilitator for significant energy projects.

By securing this position, NBK has set the stage for forging broader relationships with Indonesia's key state-owned entities, reinforcing its reputation as a reliable partner for global economic development endeavors. This significant milestone is a testament to NBK's strategy to develop global strategic relationships through its international branch locations. The collaboration between these two industry giants not only points to a promising future in energy financing but also exemplifies



Zaid Al-Sager on the sidelines of signing of the agreement.

the significance of global partnerships in propelling sustainable economic growth and development.

National Bank of Kuwait is the largest financial institution in Kuwait and predominates in the commercial banking sector. Internationally, NBK's network includes branches, and subsidiaries, in countries such as London, New York, Paris, Geneva and Singapore, as well as China (Shanghai). Meanwhile, regional coverage extends to Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. The bank enjoys one of the highest credit ratings among all banks in the region, collectively from global rating agencies: Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch. As a leading international financial institution, NBK is known for its commitment to delivering innovative financial solutions and services to clients worldwide. With a strong emphasis on sustainability and responsible banking, NBK is pivotal in supporting economic growth and development across various sectors.

## China's Evergrande up 28% in Hong Kong after trade resumes

HONG KONG: Shares in heavily indebted Chinese property giant Evergrande ended higher Tuesday, resuming trade following last week's suspension and the firm's announcement its boss was under criminal investigation. The company has become a symbol of China's ballooning property crisis, which has seen several high-profile firms engulfed in a sea of debt, fuelling fears about the country's wider economy and a possible global spillover.

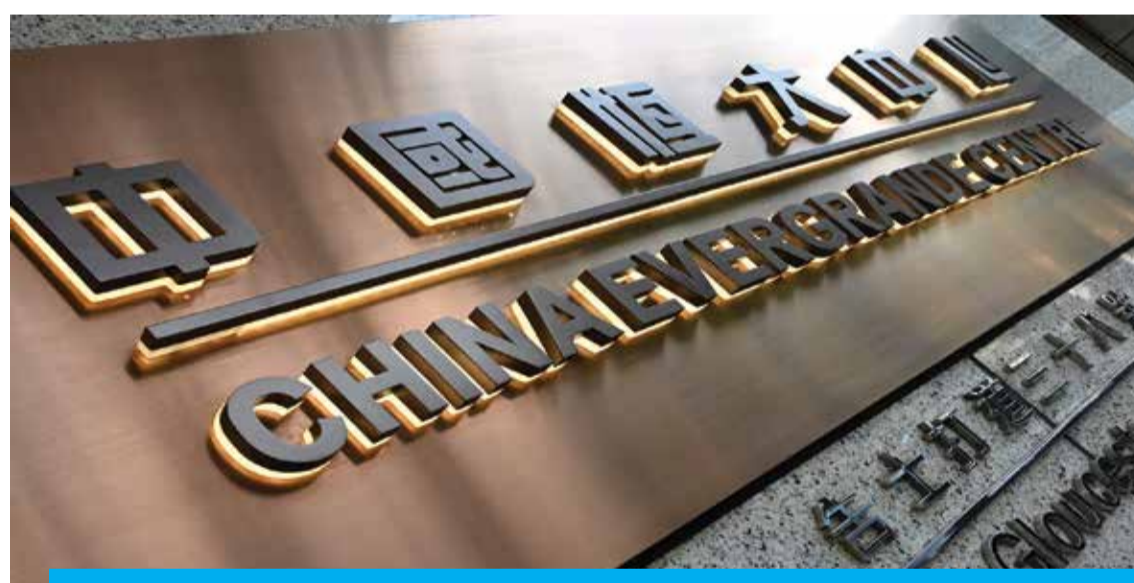
Last Thursday Evergrande said its founder and chairman Xu Jiayin was suspected of "illegal crimes" after reports he was being held by police. The same day, the firm's stocks were suspended in Hong Kong.

When trading resumed Tuesday, its shares initially jumped more than 60 percent before paring much of their gains to close up 28 percent at HK\$0.41. In July 2020 the stock had traded at more than HK\$25.

"Looks like the gains are driven by speculative money," Willer Chen, a senior research analyst at Forsyth Barr Asia, told Bloomberg. "With this volatility, I really don't know if there's any chance for any proper investor to make money on this name."

Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management added: "The extent to which the rally sticks and even moves out of penny stock territory will significantly depend on whether a government policy is put in the offing." Evergrande estimated it had debts of \$328 billion at the end of June. And the company warned last month it was unable to issue new debt because its subsidiary, Hengda Real Estate Group, was being investigated. Key meetings planned for debt restructuring were shelved. The firm said it was "necessary to reassess the terms" of the plan in order to suit the "objective situation and the demand of the creditors".

Its property arm missed a key bond payment last week, and Chinese financial website Caixin reported that former executives had been detained.



HONG KONG: This photo shows signage on the China Evergrande Centre in Hong Kong on Sept 15, 2021. — AFP

Given the changing status of the Evergrande crisis, and the property market contributing to one-third of the country's economic activity, Innes said he could not "see China sitting back and watching the real estate market crumble".

"Any disruptions or downturns in the property market can have far-reaching consequences for" related industries, ranging from construction materials and other consumer goods, he told AFP.

China's property sector has long been a pillar of growth—along with construction it accounts for about a quarter of GDP—and it experienced a dazzling boom in recent decades. But the massive debt accrued by its biggest players has been seen by Beijing as an unacceptable risk for China's financial system and overall economic health. Authorities have gradually tightened developers' access to credit since 2020, and a wave of defaults has followed—notably that of Evergrande.

The latest measure against the firm's boss is "a sign that Xu's protectors both in the party and in the financial sector are no longer willing or able to pro-

millions of passengers, as it coincided with similar stoppages on the rail network.

But the Rail Maritime and Transport (RMT) union said the strike by 3,000 of its members had been suspended after "significant progress" in negotiations with bosses. Talks to resolve the long-running dispute have been taking place between the two sides with the help of the conciliation service ACAS.

"RMT has managed to save key jobs, prevent detrimental changes to rosters and secure protection of earnings around grading changes," the union said. "The significant progress means that key elements have been settled although there re-

main wider negotiations to be had in the job, pensions and working agreements dispute."

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch hailed the development as vindication of "the unity and industrial power" of members. Unions across the UK economy have held strike action since last year to push for better pay and conditions, due to the soaring cost of living.

On Tuesday, there were strikes by bus drivers, hospital doctors and radiographers, train drivers and refuse collectors. The Conservative government, which is holding its annual conference this week, has insisted that union demands are unaffordable, as it tries to drive down inflation. — AFP

## Nigeria unions call off strike over living costs

ABUJA: Nigeria's labor unions have agreed to call off a planned strike in protest over rising living costs, after the government offered a package of measures to cushion the impact of its economic reforms.

Since he came to office in May, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has ended a fuel subsidy and liberalized the naira currency in reforms officials say are painful but necessary to help revive Africa's largest economy. The measures have seen fuel costs triple and inflation is now at 25 percent, prompting the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to call for an indefinite strike from Tuesday.

But after several rounds of talks, unions and the government agreed late Monday to a last-minute accord to suspend the labor action. "The NLC and TUC accept to suspend for 30 days the planned indefinite nationwide strike," the unions and government said in a joint statement.

On Sunday, Tinubu had appealed to Nigerians to be patient, as his reforms are designed to create long-term benefits. Investors generally applauded his decisions. As part of its package, the government offered a 35,000 naira (\$45) a month pay increase for six months for federal employees, a temporary suspension of VAT on diesel and social security cash transfers to the poorest Nigerians.

The agreement also encourages similar benefits to be awarded to state and local government employees and private sector workers. "We believe the government will act in utmost good faith," TUC leader Festus Osifo told reporters. "We believe when it is cascaded down it will alleviate the pains that Nigerians are feeling." The government proposals also included the introduction of gas-powered buses for public transport as a way to bring down transport costs, one of the main complaints for Nigerians.

The Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress represent labor movements for industries from aviation workers and nurses to teachers and bankers. Tinubu—a former Lagos governor elected in February in a tightly fought ballot—has vowed to bring in more investment and revive the economy. He has named a new central bank chief who analysts expect will take a more orthodox approach.

The fuel subsidy had been in place for decades and kept petrol prices artificially low in what was seen by many Nigerians as one of their benefits from the government. But the measure cost the state billions annually because although Nigeria is a major petroleum producer, it imports most of its fuel needs due to its lack of refineries. — AFP

## London Tube workers suspend planned strikes

LONDON: Workers on the London Underground on Tuesday suspended their latest round of strike action over pay and conditions after a breakthrough in talks.

Tube staff had been due to walk out on Wednesday and Friday, threatening to disrupt travel for

## Lifestyle

**M**arooned mercenaries, gun-toting guards and sword-waving crowds; historians say the little-known tale of how cricket came to India three centuries ago shows how the game can bring people together. When the Cricket World Cup opens on October 5 at a 130,000-seat mega-stadium in Ahmedabad, hundreds of millions of fans in the world's most populous country will unite in a national sporting obsession underpinning identity and pride.

Among those glued to the television will be residents of Tankari Bandar, a hard-scrabble fishing village some 120 km to the south in Gujarat, which researchers say is the site of the first recorded game in India. "I heard stories as a child from my father and grandfather that in 1721, a game of cricket was played by the Britishers near the river," said community leader Ranjit Singh, 56. "I'm proud that the first game of cricket was played in my village."

In the early 18th century — a time of rival powers and rapacious European forces with pirates prowling the coast — a ragtag bunch of foreign mercenaries and Indian marines sailed up the creek. Among them was English sailor Clement Downing, who described how after becoming trapped by the tides, they rowed ashore and set up camp for two weeks underneath mango and tamarind trees.

### 'Flourishing their swords'

The sailors were fearful. The last British sailor who stopped there had shot at villagers who "soon cut him to pieces and the few men he had with him", Downing wrote in his "History of the Indian Wars". "We every day divert-



## Maiden match: Three centuries of India's cricket obsession

ed ourselves with playing at Cricket and other Exercises," he added. Soldiers guarded the boundary and sailors buying supplies went bristling with guns. Villagers welcomed them by "flourishing their swords and making motions as if cutting off heads", he added.

But this time the strange foreigners thwacking balls seemingly defused tensions, and the visit passed off peacefully. "Several times, four or five of the heads of the town came down on horseback with great attendance," Downing

wrote, describing leaders flanked by bodyguards carrying bamboo lances and swords. "They would come and be spectators".

John Drew, a British academic, pinpointed the pitch location using ship records and historical charts. "The sailors were expecting attack," he said. "What they got was people coming again and again to watch." The 84-year-old believes there is a "very good chance" that Indians also took part. There are claims by other locations — including

early 18th-century beach cricket by British soldiers in Kerala — but Downing's account is the earliest recorded.

### 'Unites everyone'

On the sweeping floodplains at Tankari, children with a homemade bat run on a pitch turned to mud by monsoon rains. "Every day we play cricket," said Kaushik Ashok, 20, wearing his village team top. "We work, we fish, then we play cricket." While few non-specialists know the story, some believe the ac-

count should be told more widely.

"In India, you have various sects, communities and languages, but this is one game that unites everyone," said theatre director P S Chari, 60, who is rehearsing a play about the match in the nearby city of Vadodara. Of the sport's billion fans worldwide, more than 90 percent are in the Indian subcontinent, according to a 2018 International Cricket Council (ICC) study. "Cricket has become so much a part of India, it's a national obsession," said art critic, cultural commentator, and Vadodara cricket association member Sandhya Gajjar, 66. "That is why this story is important."

### 'Made it their own'

In popular culture, the origin of Indian cricket is the story told in the 2001 Bollywood smash-hit "Lagaan", a fictional drama of villagers facing brutal British colonialists in a high-stakes match in 1893. By then, England had codified rigid "Laws" of cricket. But Chari notes the real game came when cricket was still played with makeshift balls and bats, meaning the "not so well refined" English sport melded easily with existing Indian games.

Those included pastimes still played today, including "gilly danda", where players use a stick to smack a smaller one, or "seven stones", where teams knock down towers of rocks. "It was popular because it was similar to games already played," Chari said, praising India's "knack of adaptation" for cricket's rapid spread. "They took this game of cricket and made it their own". - AFP



Women do chores at their house in Tankari Bandar village.

## Axed: Rampant logging hits India's batmakers for six

**W**hen the Cricket World Cup opens in India next month several players will carry Kashmiri willow wood bats, but manufacturers say over-exploitation of trees means their craft faces ruin. Unchecked logging without replanting has reduced swathes of woodland to scrub in the disputed Indian-administered Himalayan territory, and bat manufacturers face a bleak future. "It's a case of culling all the time and no sowing," said Irfan Ali Shah, a senior official in the government's forest service.

Willow grows far more slowly than the more commercially viable poplar, and bat-makers warn the entire industry—a major employer—is at risk. "We have started searching far-off corners of the valley, but there is not much good willow to be found anywhere for making the best quality bats," said Fawzul Kabiir, whose GR8 bats are International Cricket Council-approved and sold worldwide.

"If the government doesn't help plant again soon on a large scale... we will run out of raw material in three to five years," he told AFP. Found from Europe to central Asia, water-loving white willows—scientific name *Salix alba*—are deciduous trees growing up to 30 meters (100 feet) tall.

Numbers expanded enormously during the 19th century under British colonial rule, when plantations were laid for firewood during the freezing mountain winter. The ready supply of willow—the wood favored by cricketers—also sparked a craft in bats.

### Tendulkar, Kohli and Waugh

Willow has criss-crossing fibres that give it strength and tiny air pockets that reduce vibrations, making the wood light but powerful enough to smash a ball for six. International big hitters have traditionally preferred willow from

England, but the same tree grows in Kashmir and every year the region now produces three million "clefts"—the rough-cut blocks of wood ready for shaping. It is the bulk of global supply and bat-maker Kabiir, 31, insists: "The best Kashmir willow bat is at least as good as English willow."

GR8 says its customers include cricketing greats from Indian heroes Sachin Tendulkar and Virat Kohli to Australia's Steve Waugh and South Africa's Graeme Smith and AB de Villiers. Kashmir's bat-makers prospered over the decades as cricket's popularity grew—demand surged after India's 1983 World Cup win and the sport now has more than a billion fans globally.



Owner of GR8 Sports Fawzul Kabiir speaks during an interview with AFP as he inspects a Kashmiri willow cricket bat at his factory in Kashmir's Sangam village.

Today, the industry employs some 120,000 people across 400 workshops, according to manufacturers. It is a key contributor to the economy of Kashmir, a Muslim-majority region claimed in full by both India and Pakistan but split between them, with the portion controlled by New Delhi roiled by a long-running insurgency.

### 'Near extermination'

But supplies are vanishing fast. Agricultural scientists at Sher-e-Kashmir University have warned female willow trees—the most suitable for bat-making—are facing "near extermination"

in Kashmir. Nearly a million trees were logged in the past decade as the government removed plantations sucking up water from the shrinking Wular lake, protected under the United Nations Ramsar convention.

Elsewhere, willows have been hacked down to make space for farmland and rice paddies. Demand for timber from other industries, including plywood and pencils, has meant some have replaced willow with swifter-growing poplar. "A willow tree matures in 30 years and poplar in half the time, and it fetches the same price," said Feroz Ahmed Reshi, whose family has supplied willow wood to bat-makers for generations. "This year, we planted 300 poplars and about five willows."

### 'Our SOS'

The government banned cleft exports to the rest of India or overseas 25 years ago in a bid to control logging and boost industry in Kashmir. But the law is repeatedly flouted with some 100,000 clefts illegally sent elsewhere annually, a bat-makers association official said. "Smuggling of our precious raw material has not stopped," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the topic.

Authorities used to plant willow on state land to maintain firewood supplies but stopped decades ago as electricity and gas became available for heating. Shah, the forestry official, believes bat-makers must "plant their own willow on their own land" to replace each tree felled. But private land is scarce in Kashmir, and prices have surged since New Delhi suspended the region's semi-autonomous status and imposed direct rule in 2019.

That allowed Indians from elsewhere to buy land in Kashmir for the first time, a policy denounced by critics as "settler colonialism". GR8's factory and showroom are in the small town of Sangam, the centre of the bat industry, where tourists snap up bats from lines of stores, spending anything from \$12 to \$180. "This is our SOS to the government," owner Kabiir said. "We cannot do it alone."—AFP



Workers craft Kashmiri willow wood cricket bats at a factory in Kashmir's Sangam village. — AFP photos

## AI Vincent Van Gogh says you're wrong about his ear

**A**I Vincent Van Gogh is patient but unimpressed by yet another question about his chopped-off ear. "I apologize for any confusion but it seems you are mistaken," says the great painter's avatar, in the sort of testy tone familiar to anyone who has toyed with AI language models. "I only cut off a small part of my ear lobe," he insists (in fact, there are multiple accounts of how the artist mutilated his ear).

The artificial intelligence Van Gogh appears on a video screen at the end of a blockbuster exhibition at the Musee d'Orsay in Paris. The exhibition, running until February, is dedicated to the final weeks of his life in the village of Auvers-sur-Oise, just north of the French capital. Van Gogh shot himself with a rusty pistol in 1890 aged 37. It took him two days to die. But the AI Vincent is surprisingly well-versed in 21st century therapy-speak.

"While I did face mental health struggles, my move to Auvers-sur-Oise was not motivated by a desire to end my life," he says. As the 40 or so paintings at the Orsay exhibition make clear, his final weeks were extraordinarily prolific, full of masterpieces including "The Church at Auvers", "Wheatfield with Crows" and his very last, "Tree Roots". All the more surprising is that this period has never been given a dedicated showcase, said Christophe Leribault, Musee d'Orsay president.

### Virtual Vincent

Among the highlights is a room dedicated to his "double-square" panoramas, a technical revolution in which he used very long and thin canvases, prefiguring the wide-screen landscapes of cinema. It is perhaps fitting, then, that the show ends with modern technologies, which have become increasingly common as exhibitions try to pull in young audiences.

As well as the Van Gogh chatbot, visitors can also don a virtual reality headset to enter the kitchen of Dr Gachet, where Van Gogh spent time in his final weeks, take a surreal trip around an enormous version of his paint palette and plunge into the tree roots of his final painting. The state-of-the-art helmet from Taiwanese firm Vive Arts can track the hands of users—without the need for handheld controllers—allowing them to pick up items in the virtual world and play with globules of paint.

The AI, by contrast, displays some of the teething problems of the nascent tech. Asked about his favorite color, AI Vincent is very certain (yellow). But he struggles to recognize people in his life,



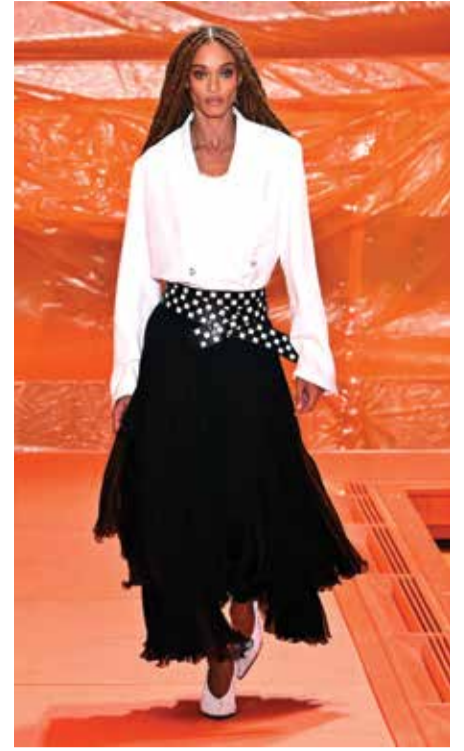
A visitor takes a video of an autoportrait by Vincent Van Gogh during the press preview of the exhibition "Van Gogh in Auvers-sur-Oise, last months" at Orsay Museum in Paris.—AFP photos

failing to pick up the name of Dr Gachet when asked by a French journalist. "It recognizes words in the French language but we still need to fine-tune the AI so that it understands proper nouns better," said Christophe Renaudineau, head of Jumbo Mana, the Strasbourg start-up which designed the machine. "This experiment will allow us to improve the model," he added.—AFP



A visitor looks at paintings during the press preview of the exhibition "Van Gogh in Auvers-sur-Oise, last months" at Orsay Museum.

Lifestyle



# GREEN ISSUES DOMINATE PARIS FASHION FOR LV, STELLA MCCARTNEY

Environmental activists tried to disrupt Louis Vuitton's event at Paris Fashion Week on Monday, while Britain's Stella McCartney made green technologies central to her own show as climate issues increasingly dominate the industry. One of France's biggest YouTube stars, Jeremstar, was briefly arrested after dressing like a "disembodied snake" to protest Louis Vuitton's use of animal skins, outside the brand's show on the Champs-Elysees. Activists also spray-painted the brand's nearby boutique, saying in a statement: "The deaths from climate precariousness are on their conscience."

Inside the venue, stars including Cate Blanchett and Zendaya seemed unconcerned and joined a standing ovation for artistic director Nicolas Ghesquiere's breezy spring-summer collection. The bohemian-chic collection was full of airy skirts, loose shirts and pastel tones. There were elaborate, though informal, suits of mini skirts and loose jackets, with white tights and arty heeled shoes.

Meanwhile, across town, Stella McCartney tried to give a more positive example, setting up a showcase for "cruelty-free and conscious material innovations". The market stalls included several types of vegan leather, organic cotton and a seaweed-based yarn grown from regenerative kelp. Getting these new technologies off the ground has proved difficult, however.

McCartney backed a US start-up, Bolt Threads, that was considered a leader in mushroom-based leather, but it announced in July that it was halting production after failing to gather enough investment. As for the clothes, some were inspired by her parents—Paul and Linda McCartney—during their time on tour with Wings in the 1970s, including ruffled shirts and crystal-encrusted waistcoats.

It was a highly varied collection, with a relaxed but high-end take on jeans and crottops, a sumptuous cape over

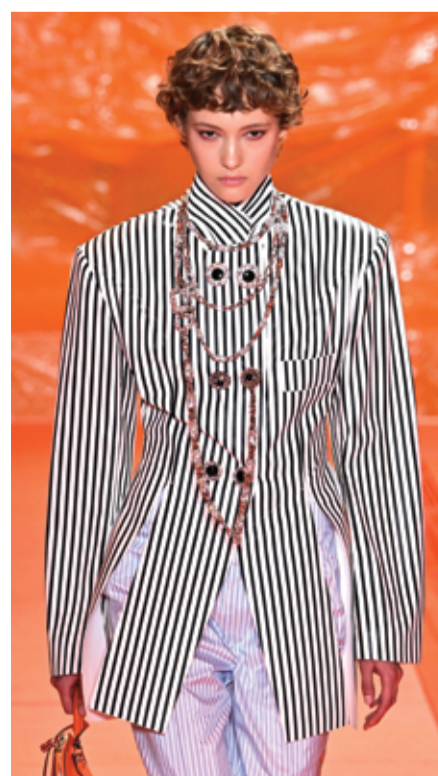
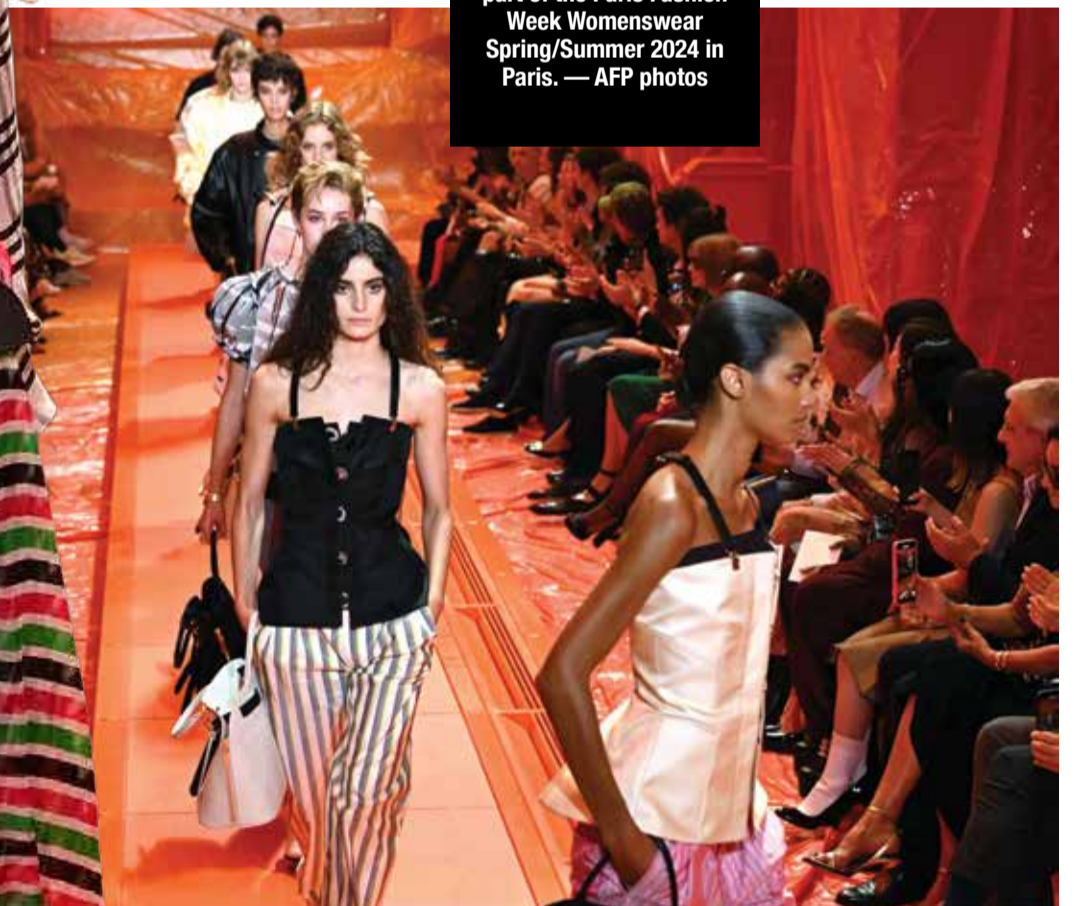
a casual white tank top, and a silk gown gathered in two billowing balloon shapes around the shoulders. McCartney said 95 percent of the outfits were made from "responsible materials".

Blanchett was also present for that show, along with fellow Hollywood stars Robert Downey Jr and Chris Rock. "The eclectic, ageless collection blurs the lines between genders and generations—reinterpreting pieces from Stella's archive as well as those she borrowed from her parents, and (that) her daughters now borrow from her," the press release said. Activists also targeted the Hermes

show on Sunday. The French brand had one of the prettiest stage designs, with guests nestled in a prairie of wildflowers and tall grasses. But animal rights group PETA did not like its style and briefly interrupted the show, objecting to its use of crocodile skin. Louis Vuitton has been targeted before. An Extinction Rebellion protester gatecrashed its Paris catwalk two years ago, and members of the group spray painted slogans including "Tax the Rich" on the Louis Vuitton Foundation art museum in May.—AFP



Models present creations for the Louis Vuitton fashion show as part of the Paris Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2024 in Paris. — AFP photos

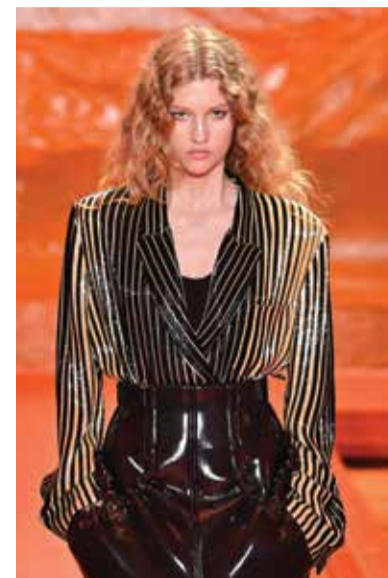


Stella McCartney



Models present creation by British designer Stella McCartney during her show as part of the Womenswear Spring/Summer 2024 Paris Fashion Week.

Louis Vuitton



## Pakistani biryani:

### A spicy recipe for delectable debate

Fying each other across a stream of traffic, rival Pakistani biryani joints vie for customers, serving a fiery medley of meat, rice and spice that unites and divides South Asian appetites. Both sell a niche version of the dish, steeped in the same vats, with matching prices and trophies commending their quality. But in Karachi, where a biryani craze boomed after the creation of Pakistan, it is the subtle differences that inspire devotion.

"Our biryani is not only different from theirs but unique in the world," says restaurateur Muhammad Saqib, who layers his "bone marrow biryani" with herbs. "When a person bites into it he drowns in a world of flavors," the 36-year-old claims. Across the road, Muhammad Zain sees it differently.

"We were the ones who started the biryani business here first," the 27-year-old claims, as staff scoop out sharing platters with a gut-punch of masala. "It's our own personal and secret recipe." Both agree on one thing. "You can't find biryani like Pakistan's anywhere in the world," says Saqib. "Whether it's a celebration or any other occasion, biryani always comes first," according to Zain.

#### International cuisine

British colonial rule in South Asia



A plate of biryani is kept for customers at a restaurant in Karachi.— AFP photos

ended in 1947 with a violent rupture of the region along religious lines. Hindus and Sikhs in newly created Pakistan fled to India while Muslim "Mohajirs"—refugees—went the other way. India and Pakistan have been arch-rivals since, fighting wars and locked in endless diplomatic strife. Trade and travel have been largely choked off. Many Mohajirs settled in Karachi, home to just 400,000 people in 1947 but one of the world's largest cities today with a population of 20 million.

For Indian food historian Pushpesh Pant, biryani served in South Asia's melting-pot cities such as Karachi is a reminder of shared heritage. "Hindu

ate differently, Nanakpanthis (Sikhs) ate differently, and Muslims ate differently, but it was not as if their food did not influence each other," he told AFP from the city of Gurugram outside Delhi.

"In certain parts of Pakistan and certain parts of India, the differences in flavors and foods are not as great as man-made borders would make us think." Every Karachi neighborhood has its own canteens fronted by vendors clanking a spatula against the inside of biryani pots. The recipe has endless variations. The one with beef is a favorite in Islamic Pakistan, while vegetarian variants are more popular in largely Hindu India. Chicken is universal. Along coastlines, seafood is in the mix.

And purists debate if adding potatoes is heresy. "Other than that, there is Pulao Biryani which is purely from Delhi," says 27-year-old pharmacist Muhammad Al Aaqib, describing a broth-stewed variation. "My roots lead back to Delhi too so it's like the mother of biryanis for us." "Perhaps every person has a different way of cooking it, and their way is better," says 36-year-old landlord Mehran Khoso.

#### 'No secret ingredient'

The origins of biryani are hotly contested. However, it is generally accepted the word has Persian roots and it is



A staff carries plates of biryani at a restaurant in Karachi.

argued the dish was popularized in the elite kitchens of the Mughal Empire, which spanned South Asia between the 16th and 19th centuries. In spite of that pedigree, its defining quality is permutation. Quratul Ain Asad, 40, spends Sunday morning cooking for her husband and son, Mohajir descendants of a family that arrived in Karachi from the Indian town of Tonk in 1948.

But at the dinner table, they feast not on an heirloom recipe but a TV chef's version with a cooling yoghurt sauce and a simple shredded salad. Asad insists on Karachi's biryani supremacy. "You will not like biryani from anywhere else once you've tasted Karachi's biryani," she says. "There is no

secret ingredient. I just cook with a lot of passion and joy," she adds. "Perhaps that's why the taste comes out good."

Cooked in bulk, biryani is also a staple of charity donations. At Ghazi Foods, 28-year-old Ali Nawaz paddles out dozens of portions of biryani into plastic pouches, which are delivered to poor neighborhoods on motorbikes. A minute after one of those bikes stops, the biryani is gone, seized by kids and young adults. "People pray for us when they eat it," says Nawaz. "It feels good that our biryani reaches the people."—AFP



Staff of an eatery prepare packets of biryani for the poor people in Karachi.



A staff cooks biryani at a restaurant in Karachi.



Quratul ain Asad (left), a homemaker serves biryani for her family members at her house in Karachi.



Staff cook biryani at a restaurant in Karachi.



A staff serves plates of biryani at a restaurant in Karachi.



People eat biryani at a restaurant in Karachi.

## Sports

# Death or glory? World Cup anchors changing game of one-day cricket

## ODI remains a key plank of the International Cricket Council's schedule

LONDON: The World Cup which gets underway on Thursday will provide a sharp focus for one-day international cricket and a chance to show how the 50-over game has evolved since India last staged the tournament in 2011. One of the criticisms of ODIs, once the economic driving force of the global game, is that they are too often reduced to 'meaningless' bilateral series.

The format is also viewed as too pedestrian in the slipstream of the high velocity, smash-and-grab Twenty20 format. "The ODI has been reduced to virtually depending on a World Cup year for its importance," wrote former Australia captain Ian Chappell in a recent ESPNcricinfo column.

Meanwhile, India great Sachin Tendulkar, a 2011 World Cup winner, believes the format is now too formulaic. "The game is becoming too predictable," he said. "From the 15th to the 40 over, it's losing its momentum. It's getting boring." And yet the ODI remains a key plank of the International Cricket Council's schedule, with the 50-over format still capable of providing an entertaining spectacle. Perhaps the biggest on-field development since 2011 has been the change in what constitutes a big total.

There have been 24 occasions on which 400 has been passed in ODI cricket and 15 of those have come since the 2011 World Cup. The 2011 final saw India reach a target of 275 with just 10 balls to spare.

But in an age where World Cup-holders England have lifted the world record for an ODI total to 444 in 2016, 481 in 2018 and 498, against the Netherlands, last year, 275 rarely represents a challenging target.

### 'Not filling grounds'

Yet for all the prevalence of shorter boundaries and the impact of the wider range of shot-making developed by T20 cricket on all other formats, ODIs are not always run-fests. The very length of a 50-over game allows for the possibilities of both bowlers getting on top and teams recovering from a top-order collapse.

England were 55-5 in an ODI against New Zealand at Southampton last month but still managed to post a total of 226-7 in a match reduced by rain to 34 overs per side. And they won by the large margin of 79 runs after dismissing New Zealand for 147, with left-arm quicks David Willey and Reece Topley taking three wickets apiece.

Even so the days when 300 was considered a significant ODI total do seem to belong to an earlier age, although the sheer pressure of a World Cup gives ODIs an edge lacking in bilateral series. Indeed the greatest off-field change since 2011 is the number of people questioning whether the ODI has much of a future outside of a World Cup.

Incoming MCC president Mark Nicholas believes all other ODIs ought to be on the way out. "We believe strongly that ODIs should be World Cups only," Nicholas told ESPNcricinfo. "We think it's difficult bilaterally now to justify them. They're not filling grounds in a lot of countries. And there is a power at the moment to T20 cricket that is almost supernatural."

He added: "In a free market, the most money wins. And that's just the end-game. "The players



GUWAHATI: Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan Miraz is bowled out by England's David Willey during a warm-up match between Bangladesh and England ahead of the ICC men's cricket World Cup, at the Assam Cricket Association Stadium in Guwahati. — AFP

can see that bubbling away and they want to be a part of it. So, it is an extraordinary power that T20 has, and I think scheduling 50-over cricket alongside it just continues the story of the death knell of the ODI game."

ODIs, which date back to 1971, are not going

anywhere anytime soon, however. And the World Cup will feature at least one match between India and Pakistan—a fixture which is effectively being kept going by ICC tournaments while political interference prevents bilateral matches between the arch-rivals. — AFP

## Jaiswal ton leads India into Asian Games semis

HANGZHOU: Explosive opener Yashasvi Jaiswal smashed seven sixes in a sublime maiden T20 century as India's men opened their first Asian Games campaign with a 23-run defeat of gutsy Nepal on Tuesday. Pakistan also reached the semi-finals, crushing Hong Kong by 68 runs with experienced all-rounder Khushdil Shah taking 3-13.

With superstars such as Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli at home for the one-day World Cup beginning on Thursday, India, the world's top-ranked Twenty20 team, have a second-string squad in Hangzhou. But it is still formidable, packed with promising youngsters who have excelled in the Indian Premier League and a host of players with international experience.

After winning the toss and opting to bat, Jaiswal's masterful 100, from 49 balls, plus late fireworks from Rinku Singh (37 not out) and Shivam Dube (25 not out) helped them to 202-4. Nepal had bludgeoned a record 314-3 against Mongolia in the qualifying rounds, but they could only manage 179-9 in reply, with Avesh Khan and Ravi Bishnoi taking three wickets each.

"They are a good side so we're not surprised at how they came at us," said India skipper Rituraj Gaikwad. "It wasn't our best day but we still managed to get a win." Cricket has been played at the Asian Games twice before, at Guangzhou 2010 and Incheon 2014, but India did not take part.

Bangladesh won the men's title in 2010 while Sri Lanka are defending champions, with Afghanistan runners-up both times. Along with Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, India entered the Hangzhou Games at the quarter-final stage.

Pakistan swept through at an overcast Zhejiang University of Technology Pingfeng Cricket Field, despite some early wobbles. They struggled on an uneven pitch and slumped to 54-5 after being sent in, but a brilliant 41 from 16 balls by Aamer Jamal ensured they made a respectable 160 all out.

Hong Kong similarly collapsed, to 55-5, but they had no-one of Jamal's class to bail them out and were bowled for 92. "It was a combined job by all of us," said Pakistan opener Omair Yousuf.

### 'Proud moment'

Jaiswal got India off to a scorching start and they were cruising at 103 without loss. But when Gaikwad fell slogging to deep mid-wicket on 25 it sparked a mini-collapse with Tilak Varma (two) and Jitesh Sharma (five) soon following.

At the other end, Jaiswal, who played in the Test and T20 series against the West Indies in July, smacked seven sixes and eight fours in his ton. The 21-year-old's luck ran out soon after, caught on the ropes by Abinash Bohara.

That brought Kolkata Knight Riders star Rinku to the crease and he slammed 37 off 15 balls in a late flurry. "Wherever you go and score a century, especially when you are representing your country, it's a proud moment and you get goose bumps," said Jaiswal.

In reply, Nepal were motoring at 62-1 in the eighth over, but the introduction of leg-spinner Bishnoi put the brakes on. He snared captain Rohit Paudel and crucially Kushal Malla—who slammed the fastest-ever T20 international century, off 34 balls, in a record-breaking win at the Games over Mongolia—for 29.

It left Nepal in trouble at 77-4 and while Dipendra Airee (32) and Sundeeep Jora (29) did their best, it was not enough. Sri Lanka face Afghanistan and Bangladesh take on Malaysia in the other quarter-finals on Wednesday. — AFP

## World Bowling Championship kicks off today

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: World Bowling Championship will start today at Kuwait Bowling Club Complex and will continue until October 15th with 400 players representing 24 teams for men and 12 for women.

The men's competition includes teams from Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Macau, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, UAE, Oman, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, Czechoslovak, Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Colombia, Canada, Egypt in addition to Kuwait. The women's teams include Korea, Singa-

pore, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, China, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Denmark, Germany, Colombia, Canada in addition to host Kuwait.

President of International and Asian Bowling Federations Sheikh Talal Al-Sabah said the organizing committee is ready for this world event and the complex is at its best to receive the world champions.

He said participating teams arrived in Kuwait and already began training, getting ready for competitions that are expected to be highly competitive in the presence of the world's best players.

He said the organization of this sports gathering in Kuwait will place Kuwait bowling sport on the world's map, in addition to its role in reflecting the civilized image of Kuwait as international media organizations will be available to broadcast competitions.

He said Kuwait's players are ready for competitions, as they completed their preparations to present the best level, and their participation in this event will give them highly important experience.



AHMEDABAD: A vendor exhibits t-shirts to customers outside the Narendra Modi Stadium, ahead of the 2023 ICC men's cricket World Cup, in Ahmedabad. — AFP

## Kohli stardom supreme as stage set for World Cup opener

AHMEDABAD: If you can judge a tournament by the number of replica tops sold, the Cricket World Cup in India opening this week already has a winner—home superstar batsman Virat Kohli. On the crowded streets outside the world's biggest cricket arena—the 130,000-capacity Narendra Modi Stadium, which will host the opening match between defending champions England and New Zealand on Thursday—hawkers report a brisk trade.

Some customers are snapping up the blue top with the name of England captain Jos Buttler, and others the black shirt of Kiwi skipper Kane Williamson. But Kohli's Number 18 is the outright winner, sellers said. "There is a huge demand for T-shirts and caps with Kohli's name," said Saurabh, who goes by one name, selling jerseys outside the stadium in Ahmedabad in Gujarat state. "He is the star along with (India captain) Rohit Sharma—and we make lot of money because of them."

Known as "King Kohli" for his prolific run-scoring, the star batsman has amassed 13,083 ODI runs including 47 centuries in 281 matches. Kohli, 34, remains hugely popular on social media with millions of followers. He is a crowd favorite, and fans have previously crashed through security to touch his feet or take a selfie.

### 'Crazy about cricket'

Broadcasters are busy setting up their studios—with millions in India alone expected to watch live—while groundstaff labor in blazing 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) heat to get the pitch ready for

play. "People all over Ahmedabad are eagerly awaiting this World Cup," said Ayushi Chain, a local organizer at the stadium, adding that Kohli's presence will attract big crowds including a large "female audience".

The epic tournament features 10 nations playing 48 matches over 46 days at 10 different venues. The Ahmedabad arena—nearly a third bigger than the Melbourne Cricket Ground—will be host to five matches, including the final on November 19.

Organisers and officials say the tournament's blockbuster clash between arch-rivals India and Pakistan on October 14 at the venue remains the most eagerly awaited match, but that demand is strong for other games too. "The biggest rush is for the India-Pakistan match, and a lot of people will be coming from overseas," chief executive of the Gujarat Cricket Association Dhiraj Jogani told AFP. For the opener, England versus New Zealand, Jogani expects "around 70,000 fans", meaning the stadium will be just over half full, although tickets are still on sale.

"There is huge demand for tickets in every match," he added. "Maybe the match involving Afghanistan (against South Africa) would be a bit weak, but for the rest there would be a sizeable number." Chain said demand for the International Cricket Council's official mascots—cricketing superheroes "Blaze" and "Tonk"—had been high. "There was a craze when they made their appearance at a city mall," she said. "There is excitement among the people, we Gujaratis are crazy about cricket."

Many shops around the stadium are readying for the huge crowds. T-shirt seller Saurabh, currently offering the Kohli jerseys for 300 rupees (\$3.60), said prices will surge. "The price will double as the India-Pakistan match approaches," he said. "These streets will be packed." Tea-seller Vijay, who uses only one name, has just finished refurbishing his stall opposite the stadium's main gate, where he swiftly pours cup after cup of super-sweet and milky tea. —AFP

## Twins try to end record drought as MLB playoffs begin

WASHINGTON: The Minnesota Twins will try to snap the longest post-season losing streak by games in major American sports history on Tuesday when they entertain Toronto in the Major League Baseball playoffs. The Twins have lost 18 consecutive playoff contests since beating the New York Yankees in the first game of the 2004 American League division series. That futility run includes dropping three games to the Yankees to lose in 2004 and being swept 3-0 in the first round in 2006, 2009, 2010 and 2019 as well as falling in a 2017 wildcard playoff game and being swept 2-0 in a 2020 wildcard series.

"I've heard about the 0-18 thing a lot," Twins starting pitcher Pablo Lopez said. "I feel like, just like anything in life, nothing lasts forever. "If there's a group that can lean into this opportunity and embrace it, I feel it's this group. The majority of us have not been part of that unfortunate streak, but I know our fans have. "We're going to use it as motivation and fuel." Other best-of-three wildcard series matchups starting Tuesday find Texas at Tampa Bay in the AL and Arizona at Milwaukee and Miami at Philadelphia in the National League.

Defending champion Houston and Baltimore received first-round byes in the AL while Atlanta and the Los Angeles Dodgers have first-round byes in the NL. Toronto and Minnesota split six games in the regular season. The Blue Jays went 89-73, two games better than the Twins, but Minnesota will host the series by virtue of winning the AL Central division title while Toronto only grabbed the last wildcard playoff berth.

Jesus Luzardo, who grew up as a Marlins fan, will pitch in Miami's opener at Philadelphia. Since winning the 2003 World series, the Marlins have made the playoffs only once until now. "It really hasn't hit me," Luzardo said. "I'm just trying to enjoy the ride and make it last as long as possible." The Marlins went 33-14 in one-run games this season and took the season series against the Phillies 7-6. "Our bullpen was really good, kept us in those games or let us fight back to win some of those," Marlins manager Skip Schumaker said. "Guys started believing they could do it more and more once they felt it in the season." Miami batters are led by Luis Arraez, who won his second consecutive league batting title with a .354 average.

Texas missed its chance at a division title and first-round bye with a season-ending loss at Seattle, dropping the Rangers into a three-game series at Tampa Bay. The host Rays boast AL batting average leader Yandy Diaz, who batted .330 and edged Texas' Corey Seager, who went 0-for-4 at the plate in the final loss to miss out. Tampa Bay also has Zach Eflin, who shared the AL wins lead with 16 from a career-high 31 starts. The Milwaukee Brewers received bad news on the eve of their opener against Arizona as pitcher Brandon Woodruff was ruled out for the wildcard series with a right shoulder injury. —AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: Brandon Crawford #35 of the San Francisco Giants speaks to his fans after a baseball game against the Los Angeles Dodgers at Oracle Park on October 1, 2023 in San Francisco, California. — AFP

Sports

ASIAN GAMES



Thailand's Pichet Pansan (L) kicks the ball as Malaysia's Muhammad Noraizat Mohd Nordin (R) defends in the final match of the men's team sepak takraw during the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games.



Iran's Saeideh Jafari (C) and Roya Davoudiankhan (L) compete with Nepal's team at the kabaddi women's group B qualification event.



Saudi Arabia's Essa Ali Kzwani (C) crosses the finish line to win the men's 800m final athletics event.



(L-R) Silver medalist Sri Lanka's Dilhani Lekamge, gold medalist India's Annu Rani and bronze medalist China's Liu Shiyang celebrate after the women's javelin throw final athletics event.



Bronze medalist sprinters of team Bahrain celebrate after the women's 4 x 100m relay final athletics event during the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou.



India's Esow Alben (R) and Thailand's Jaturong Niwanti (C) crash while competing in the men's keirin first round heat of the cycling track event.

# Chelsea stun Fulham with quickfire double

## Win lifts Chelsea to mid-table and eases pressure on Pochettino

LONDON: Goal-shy Chelsea finally found their cutting edge on Monday, striking twice in 82 seconds to earn a morale-boosting 2-0 win against Fulham as Mykhailo Mudryk finally got off the mark. Mauricio Pochettino's injury-ravaged team travelled to the home of their near-neighbours just two points above the relegation zone and with only five goals to their name.

Wasted early opportunities hinted at familiar failings but Ukrainian winger Mudryk scored his first goal in a Chelsea shirt in the 18th minute and Armando Broja doubled the lead in the blink of an eye. The win lifts Chelsea to mid-table and eases the pressure on beleaguered new manager Pochettino, whose team had failed to score in their previous three Premier League games.

The former Tottenham and Paris Saint-Germain boss had pleaded for ruthlessness in front of goal and his nerves were settled by his team's quickfire first-half double. "It's important for us to build our confidence and trust in ourselves," Pochettino told Sky Sports. "The performance was very good, I'm so happy for the players and in the end we got what we deserved."

### Bright start

Chelsea started brightly at Craven Cottage but failed to take advantage. Albania forward Broja, making his first start since November 2022, blazed over from an offside position shortly after kick-off and the lively Mudryk also wasted a chance.

But the visitors got their reward in the 18th minute when a long ball from the back found Levi Colwill on the left. Colwill passed to Mudryk, who controlled the ball on his chest before producing a composed finish for his first goal for the club since his big-money move from Shakhtar Donetsk in January.

Chelsea doubled their lead when Broja capitalised on a defensive mistake from Fulham centre-half Tim Ream, who gifted the ball to new signing Cole



LONDON: Chelsea's Spanish goalkeeper #01 Robert Sanchez (R) dives to save a crossed ball during the English Premier League football match between Fulham and Chelsea at Craven Cottage in London. — AFP

Palmer. The ex-Manchester City man played the ball forward only for Ream to kick it against Broja and watch in horror as it rebounded into the net.

Chelsea, playing with zest, could have extended their lead further but Enzo Fernandez's strike flew narrowly wide. The home side failed to muster a single shot on target in the first half, though Raul Jimenez went close with a header from Andreas Pereira's outswinging corner as half-time approached.

Mudryk did not appear for the second half, replaced by defender Ian Maatsen. Fulham looked more threatening after the break and manager Marco Silva threw on forwards Alex Iwobi and Carlos Vinicius within the first 10 minutes.

Vinicius headed over before a heart-in-mouth moment for Chelsea goalkeeper Robert Sanchez, who was able to reclaim the ball after his goal kick was intercepted by Pereira. Chelsea went agonisingly close to extending their lead when Maatsen thundered a strike against the left upright, with Fulham goalkeeper Bernd Leno saving smartly from Fernandez's follow-up.

Fulham had a wonderful chance to pull a goal back when Tom Cairney found fellow substitute Sasa Lukic in the six-yard box but he could only blast straight at Sanchez. Chelsea held on relatively comfortably to climb to 11th place, above Fulham on goal difference. — AFP

## Porto chance for Barca to prove progress in Xavi's 100th game

BARCELONA: After consecutive premature and humiliating Champions League exits, Barcelona visit Porto on Wednesday aiming to make a statement in their trickiest group stage fixture. Xavi Hernandez's side, five-time winners of the competition, have set their sights on returning to Europe's elite, with that goal informing their transfer strategy last summer.

President Joan Laporta sold off various parts of the club and a percentage of future television rights to fund a spending spree but the Catalans were left with egg on their faces after failing to make it past the group stage.

This summer the spending was far more restrained by necessity but Barcelona still managed to bring in Portuguese duo Joao Cancelo and Joao Felix on loan, as well as Manchester City midfielder Ilkay Gundogan to round out an impressive squad.

Xavi has a group of players which should be strong enough to battle with the continent's top sides, at least on paper. The coach said Barcelona were concentrating on making it into the knockout rounds for the first time in three years, before setting any loftier goals.

After two consecutive tough group stage draws, this season Barcelona had more fortune. They waltzed past Belgian champions Royal Antwerp with a 5-0 triumph in their opener but Xavi was quick to acknowledge it means little in terms of their overall chances, given they also thrashed Viktoria Plzen 5-1 in their first match last year.

"It's too soon (to say we can win it), last year we were in the same situation and it didn't go well, we have to be cautious," Xavi told reporters. "We have to continue like this, we're on a good path... next up we have the most complicated match of the group, in Porto. "We have the capacity, the confidence, but in the next game we have what I would say is the hardest game." The clash at the Estadio Do Dragao against Porto, who did make it through the group in both of the last two



VILA NOVA DE GAIA: FC Porto players attend a training session at the Olival training ground, in Vila Nova de Gaia. — AFP

seasons, will be a useful barometer of whether Barcelona are close to the level they want to be.

Veteran Porto defender Pepe, an old enemy of Barcelona with plenty of Clasico battle scars from his years at Real Madrid, is racing against time to be fit for the clash. The clash in the north of Portugal will be Xavi's 100th game as Barcelona's coach, during which time he has won La Liga and the Spanish Super Cup, but come up short in Europe.

Even dropping down to the Europa League did not prove fruitful in either of the last two seasons, with defeats by Frankfurt and Manchester United adding insult to injury. "I have more experience and more peace of mind, I approach matches with more calm," he told Spanish newspaper Sport, discussing the milestone.

The Catalans are without injured trio Pedri, Frenkie de Jong and Raphinha, but 20-year-old midfielder Fermin Lopez has quickly established himself as a viable selection in midfield. After last season's transfer splurge on Robert Lewandowski, Jules Kounde, Raphinha and others, Barcelona now have to lean on their youth academy talents to supplement Xavi's options. — AFP

## Rebuilt Leipzig ready for Man City Champions League test

BERLIN: RB Leipzig face Champions League title holders Manchester City on Wednesday, having emerged strongly from a summer rebuild which could have derailed the young club. Champions League regulars who had just won their second German Cup in succession, Leipzig lost four first-team players to big money deals in the summer, underlining their place in the European football hierarchy—still viewed as a small-club outsider.

Centre-back Josko Gvardiol moved to Wednesday's opponents City, midfielder Dominik Szoboszlai to Liverpool and top scorer Christopher Nkunku to Chelsea all for large transfer fees, while Konrad Laimer went to domestic rivals Bayern Munich on a free. But continuing their remarkable ability to identify and develop young talent, RB brought in several new players from across Europe, many of whom have already shone in a Leipzig uniform.

Leipzig's record so far this season—seven wins and just one loss from nine matches in all competitions while having faced Bayern twice—shows Marco Rose's rebuild side is ahead of schedule and likely to be a real challenge for Man City.

Leipzig took in more than 240 million euros (\$250 million) in the summer, much of which was promptly re-invested in new arrivals. Lois Openda, who scored 21 goals to help Lens finish just one point behind champions Paris Saint-Germain in Ligue 1 last season, joined the club, as did 20-year-old PSG loanee Xavi Simons.

Leipzig brought in Castello Lukeba, 20, from Lyon to replace Gvardiol at centre-back, while Slovenian striking prodigy Benjamin Sesko, also 20, joined from sister club Red Bull Salzburg. The additions, particularly those up front, have quickly taken to life in Leipzig.

Of particular concern was replacing Nkunku's output, with the France forward scoring 47 and assisting 43 in 119 matches during his time in Saxony. Simons has three goals and four assists after six league fixtures, while Openda already has four strikes and has laid on two more across the same period. — AFP

# Classifieds

### Clinics & Hospitals

#### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

#### Hospitals

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

### Change of Name

I, **ALIASGAR HUSEN NALAWALA**, holder of Indian Passport No. V7774084 having permanent address Gujarat, India - 389151 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name ALIASGAR HUSENI and surname NALAWALA. (C#4239) - 04-10-2023.

I, **YUNUS**, holder of Passport No. M5455095 do hereby change my name to YUNUS (as given name) CALCUTTAWALA (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name YUNUS CALCUTTAWALA and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#4237) 03-10-2023

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## Adekoya bounces back from doping ban to win Asian Games hurdles gold

Qatar's Asian record holder Abderrahman Alsaleck win men's 400m hurdles



HANGZHOU: Bahrain's Kemi Adekoya competes in the women's 400m hurdles final athletics event during the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou in China's eastern Zhejiang province on Oct 3, 2023. — AFP photos



India's Aarathy Kasturi Raj competes in the women's final of the speed skating 3000m relay race. — AFP

### China's Wu sets sights on Olympics, Dusmatov rails at boxing schedule

HANGZHOU: China's Wu Yu enjoyed an afternoon stroll to the first boxing gold of the Asian Games on Tuesday, then set her sights on winning an Olympic title in Paris. In a pulsating day of action at Hangzhou Gymnasium, world champion Hasanboy Dusmatov stepped up his quest for a first Asian Games gold by reaching the men's flyweight (51kg) semi-finals.

But the Uzbek 2016 Olympic champion told AFP that he was unhappy with a schedule that will force him to fight three days in a row to win gold. Wu barely broke sweat and her face was completely unmarked after her women's flyweight (50kg) final against Thailand's Chuthamat Raksat thrilled a large crowd who created a raucous atmosphere.

All five judges scored it 30-27 in favour of the Chinese, who won the world championship in the non-Olympic 52kg weight class in Delhi earlier this year. "It was as comfortable as it looked," a smiling Wu told AFP.

"But I am still not satisfied with my performance." Mongolia's Yesugen Oyuntsetseg and Zareen Nikhat of India won the bronzes as beaten semi-finalists. Wu's gold was the first of 13 in a boxing competition where not only medals are available, but also Olympic qualification for Paris next year.

There are 20 women's berths available in six weight divisions and 14 places in seven divisions

tasting victory, including Chinese Olympic silver medalist Zhu Yaming in the men's triple jump.

But veteran Svetlana Radzivil was dethroned in the women's high jump, with her Uzbek teammate Safina Sadullayeva denying her a fourth straight title. Adekoya thrust herself back into the spotlight by crossing first in a Games-record 54.45sec to consolidate her strong showing at the Budapest World championships, where she finished fourth.

China's Mo Jiadie (55.01) took silver and India's Vithya Ramraj (55.68) bronze. The 30-year-old Adekoya won at the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon after switching allegiance from Nigeria, and again came first at Jakarta four years later.

But she was stripped of her 2018 hurdles and mixed 4x400m relay golds after testing positive for the prohibited steroid stanozolol. She was banned for four years. A former world indoor champion, she claimed at the time her food was spiked. "I just wanted to fight and get the gold medal, and fight for a new record," she

said on Tuesday. "Last Asian Games I broke it (the record), but what happened, happened," she added, alluding to her ban. "I just focus on my mental health and keep it very strong. I believe in myself and work very hard."

Adekoya only recently returned to action and pipped fellow Nigerian-born Bahraini Salwa Eid Naser—who is also on the comeback from a doping ban—to claim the 400m title on Saturday.

**Really special**

Qatar's defending champion and Asian record holder Abderrahman Alsaleck won the men's 400m hurdles in 48.04, ahead of teammate Bassem Hemeida and China's Xie Zhiyu. "That makes it really special," he said of Hemeida taking silver. "Now we have two medals in 400m hurdles, that is really difficult at a world level." China's javelin star Liu was the hot favourite to defend her title, particularly in the absence of Japanese world champion Haruka Kitaguchi.

Liu threw 66.34m to win Tokyo Olympic gold, but she could only manage 57.62m and retired before her final throw. It allowed India's Annu Rani to take the title with a 62.92 effort, ahead of Sri Lanka's Dilhani Lekamge and China's Lyu Huihui. Liu came fifth.

In other action, Tokyo Olympic runner-up Zhu soared to 17.13m in claiming the triple jump honours, making up for narrowly missing the medals in Budapest. Teammate Fang Yaoqing won silver and India's Praveen Chitravel bronze. "To win Asian Games gold is



HANGZHOU: Kuwait is set to compete for the bronze medal in men's handball against Japan at the 19th Asian Games after losing against Qatar, gold medal winners of the previous two Asian Games tournaments, 29-24 in a hard-fought battle in the semifinals on Tuesday.

a milestone for me," said Zhu. "I hope to work with my teammates and do greater things at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games."

Radzivil, at her fifth Asian Games, couldn't repeat her exploits at the last three Asiad in the high jump, settling for silver behind Sadullayeva, who cleared

1.86m. Parul Chaudhary took home the women's 5,000m gold in 15:14.75, catching Japan's fast-fading Ririka Hironaka in the last 10 metres, adding to the silver she won in the 3,000m steeplechase on Monday behind world champion Winfred Yavi. —AFP

for the men. "My focus now is on winning gold at Paris 2024," said Wu. "I was very proud today on the podium that I could live up to my country's expectations."

#### 'A bit upset'

Amateur boxing great Dusmatov underlined his status as flyweight favourite with an easy quarter-final win. The 30-year-old will have less than 24 hours to recover before a semi-final against the slippery Japanese former world champion Tomoya Tsuboi, then faces a potential gold medal bout a day later on Thursday.

"It will be difficult because we have to lose weight for each bout, but generally I feel very good," he told AFP after cruising past Pakistan's Zohaib Rasheed on a unanimous points decision. Asked if he was unhappy with the tight schedule, he said: "Of course, because we can get injuries and it is difficult to be fully healthy for all these fights every day."

"We should have some time to recover and we don't. I am a little bit upset about this." A showboating Tsuboi came through an entertaining last-eight bout against Nurzhigit Dushebaev with a 5-0 unanimous points decision, having floored the Kazakh with a big right hand.

"I'm sure I will beat the Japanese because I prepare differently for every opponent," Dusmatov said of the fleet-footed orthodox Tsuboi, who will present a distinctly different challenge to the lanky southpaw Rasheed.

"For the Japanese opponent I have a strategy so it will not be too difficult because I have prepared well." Tsuboi won the bantamweight (54kg) world title in 2021. Dusmatov is yet to win an Asian Games gold after being shocked by India's Amit Panghal in the 2018 final in Jakarta. — AFP

### Medvedev eases into China Open final, Sabalenka goes through

BEIJING: Daniil Medvedev hailed his "perfect" serve as he eased into the men's final of the China Open with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Alexander Zverev in Beijing on Tuesday. The world number three faces a showdown on Wednesday with either Italy's Jannik Sinner or second-ranked Carlos Alcaraz—the tournament favourite in the absence of tennis legend Novak Djokovic.

The semi-final got off to a close-fought start but Medvedev then notched a crucial break of serve and managed to see out the first set. It was a similar story in the second set, with the Russian breaking for 5-3 and serving out the match with a pair of fierce aces.

"Today was a perfect service match. I don't think there was one bad thing I can say about my serve," Medvedev said at a post-match news conference. "I think the fact that the play was faster—the faster the court is, the easier you can hit aces... (and) the easier you feel when stepping into the serve," the 27-year-old said. "Today I was going faster and I was really not thinking much about anything, just serving."

#### Scare for Sabalenka

The top-ranked women's player Aryna Sabalenka said her performances in "key moments" were crucial to surviving a major scare in the second round, after she defeated unseeded Katie Boulter 7-5, 7-6 (7/2) in Beijing.

Sabalenka saved seven break points at 5-5 and then forced the stubborn Briton, ranked 56th in the world, into a rare backhand error to clinch the opening

set. The Belarusian notched another must-win break in the second set to again draw level at 5-5 before triumphing in a tie-break by slamming down an unreturned serve. She will battle Italy's Jasmine Paolini in the next round for a place in the quarter-finals. "I think what made the difference was that in the key moments I played a little bit better than her," Sabalenka said at a post-match news conference.

"I think it was all about those last games in each set. She had the opportunity and I'm super glad that I didn't give her those sets easily." "I kept fighting, kept trying, and that's what made the difference," she said.

#### Gauff hails 'mental victory'

US Open champion Coco Gauff also had to dig deep to get the better of Croatia's Petra Martic in a rollercoaster tie that lasted three hours. Martic was serving for the match against Gauff but the world number three fought back to take the game and went on to dominate the ensuing tie-break, winning 7-5, 5-7, 7-6 (7/2).

"Today was a mental victory. I was happy I was able to get through it," said Gauff, who will face Russia's Veronika Kudermetova in her next match. "I was just telling myself to keep suffering, it will be over in a couple of seconds," the 19-year-old said.

"I knew I could outlast her. I just had to be consistent, but also aggressive." World number two Iga Swiatek shook off a rain delay to glide past France's Varvara Gracheva 6-4, 6-1 to set up a date with fellow Pole Magda Linette.

"I didn't want to rush. I just wanted to be patient and really consistent with my tactics. I'm happy that I did that," Swiatek said. Fourth-ranked Jessica Pegula bounced back from a set down to beat Russia's Anna Blinkova 6-7 (2/7), 6-2, 6-1. The China Open is taking place for the first time since 2019 after Beijing ditched its isolationist zero-COVID policy.—AFP