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**4** Kuwait reaffirms firm support to Palestinian issue, slams Zionists



**7** Bangladesh accepts first uranium for nuclear plant



**13** World Bowling Championship opens with Kuwaiti flavor



**16** New Zealand rout champions England in World Cup opener



## Handballers, karateka win bronze

Kuwait congratulates 2030 World Cup cohost Morocco, supports Saudi 2034 bid



HANGZHOU: Bronze medalist team Kuwait handball players (left) and bronze medalist Kuwaiti karateka Salman Al-Mousawi (right) pose during medal ceremonies during the 2022 Asian Games on Oct 5, 2023. — AFP/KUNA

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti national handball team won a bronze medal on Thursday by defeating Japan with a score of 31-30 in the third-place match at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou. The national team played the third-place match after losing to Qatar in the semifinals, while Japan lost to Bahrain. Kuwait's national handball team had not reached the semifinals of the Asian Games since 2006, when they grabbed the gold medal after winning the final match against the host country Qatar.

Also on Thursday, Kuwaiti karateka Salman Al-Mousawi won the bronze medal in the individual kata competition of the 2022 Asian Games. Mousawi defeated Iraqi karateka Pinar Mustafa to

raise Kuwait's tally to eight medals — two gold, three silver and three bronze. In a statement to KUNA, President of the Kuwait Karate Federation Fayeze Al-Daihani expressed his pride in Mousawi's distinguished victory, adding he expects more medals by Kuwaiti players in the upcoming competitions, considering their distinguished performance. He stressed the federation is working continuously to achieve the best results in all major tournaments, noting the efforts of Mousawi, his teammates and the technical and administrative staff in achieving this victory.

Member of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Olympic Committee and director of the Kuwaiti

delegation participating in the Asian Games, Fatima Hayat, said a great amount of effort between the authorities responsible for Kuwaiti sports and the high directives of HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah have helped Kuwaiti players win at the games. She expressed happiness with the achievements made by the Kuwaiti champions as they obtained two new bronze medals. Both Daihani and Hayat dedicated these achievements to Kuwait and its political leadership.

Meanwhile, Kuwait on Thursday congratulated Morocco after FIFA's approval of a bid by Morocco, Spain and Portugal to jointly host the 2030 World Cup. The Kuwaiti foreign ministry said in

a press release that Kuwait completely trusts the kingdom's ability to host a successful edition of the key world championship, regarding this as an international recognition of its special status. The ministry wished the three countries best of luck in hosting this significant sports event.

Kuwait also voiced its welcome and support for Saudi Arabia's bid to host the 2034 World Cup. The foreign ministry said in a press release that Kuwait completely backs Saudi efforts to host this championship, which reflect the comprehensive development of the kingdom and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, enabling them to organize various international sports activities. — KUNA

### More than 100 killed in Syria drone attack

**QAMISHLI, Syria:** A drone attack Thursday on a Syrian military academy in government-held Homs killed more than 100 people including at least 14 civilians, a war monitor said, revising up a previous toll. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based group with a vast network of sources in the war-torn country, reported "more than 100 dead, around half of them military graduates, and including 14 civilians", with more than 125 others wounded.

In Homs, "armed terrorist organizations" targeted "the graduation ceremony for officers of the military academy", an army statement carried by official news agency SANA said, reporting casualties. The attack was carried out with "explosive-laden drones", according to the military statement. The general command of the army and the armed forces decried the "cowardly... unprecedented" attack and said it would "respond with full force", the statement added. The Syrian government retook full control of Homs, Syria's third-largest city, in 2017.

In the rebel-held Idlib region, residents reported wide and heavy regime bombardment. The Idlib rebel bastion in Syria's northwest is controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

Continued on Page 6

### September was hottest month yet on record

**PARIS:** Last month was the hottest September on record by an "extraordinary" margin as the world flirts dangerously with breaching a key warming limit, the EU climate monitor said on Thursday. Much of the world sweltered through unseasonably warm weather in September, in a year expected to be the hottest in human history and after the warmest-ever global temperatures during the Northern Hemisphere summer.

September's average surface air temperature of 16.38 degrees Celsius was 0.93C above the 1991-2020 average for the month and 0.5C above the previous 2020 record, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said in a report.

### Iraqis marvel at ancient Iraq in 'Assassin's Creed'

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi gamers celebrated the release Thursday of the latest instalment of the "Assassin's Creed" action-adventure saga, set in ninth century Baghdad during the Abbasid Caliphate. In the game, the hooded and stealthy hero fights his way through an ancient maze of alleyways, souks and rooftops, rendered in loving detail with what its creators say is the help of historical sources. The central character, pickpocket turned master assassin Basim, speaks classical Arabic in "Assassin's Creed Mirage", the 13th edition of the wildly popular franchise published by France-based Ubisoft.

"We were waiting for a game that shows Arab and Islamic culture, the culture and history of Iraq and this region, which does not just consist of wars and terrorism," said one instant fan, Mohammed Bashir. Sitting in a Baghdad Internet cafe, surrounded by fellow

gamers, the 30-year-old graphic designer marveled at the 3D depictions of ancient Iraq and Baghdad.

As the story unfolds and Basim bloodily dispatches a long lineup of foes, the real star is the setting, resplendent with turquoise mosaic domes, carpet sellers and lush oasis towns. "There's Iraqi music!" exclaimed one young man in the room, lit dimly

Continued on Page 6



BAGHDAD: A man plays the newly released video game 'Assassin's Creed Mirage' in a cybercafe on Oct 4, 2023. — AFP

Continued on Page 6

### Norway playwright Jon Fosse wins literature Nobel



Jon Fosse

**STOCKHOLM:** Norway's Jon Fosse, whose plays are among the most widely staged of any contemporary playwright in the world, won the Nobel prize in literature on Thursday. Sometimes compared to Samuel Beckett — another Nobel-winning playwright — his work is minimalistic, relying on simple language which delivers its message through rhythm, melody and silence. The Swedish Academy said the 64-year-old was honored "for his innovative plays and prose which give voice to the unsayable".

Fosse's writing is defined more by form than content, where what is not said is often more revealing than what is. "I am overwhelmed and grateful. I see this as an award to the literature that first and foremost aims to be literature, without other considerations," Fosse said in a statement. Speaking to Norwegian public broadcaster NRK, he said he was "surprised but also not", after his name had been mentioned in Nobel speculation for several years.

The chairman of the Nobel committee, Anders Olsson, told reporters Fosse had come to be regarded as an innovator through his "ability to evoke... loss of orientation, and how this paradoxically can provide access to a deeper experience, close to

Continued on Page 6



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# Lycée Français de Koweït students visit Kuwait Times, Kuwait News



Group picture of Lycée Français de Koweït students and Kuwait Times and Kuwait News' team. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Times and Kuwait News welcomed high school press club students from Lycée Français de Koweït on Thursday. Public Relations and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeb took the students on a tour around the building and its departments, where the students were informed about the work in each section.

Starting with the editorial section, the students met Sahar Moussa and Ahmed Jabr from the social media

team and reporter Ghadeer Ghloom, who distributed copies of Kuwait Times' first edition and explained to them that all the content they see on social media or read in Kuwait Times comes from the work that takes place in the editorial section. The students had multiple interesting questions with regards to journalism for their press club at school that were answered by the Kuwait Times' team.

Content creator Dhoha Alessa prepared a project at the studio for the students to share their thoughts about anxiety, which is an important topic that reso-

nates the most with their age group. The Internet and comparison on social media makes young individuals suffer panic attacks at a young age. During their time in the studio, eight students shared their thoughts and personal experiences with anxiety and panic attacks.

The students then traveled back to the past as they toured Kuwait Times' archives to take a look at the old versions of the newspaper. They later went to the printing press, where the team explained to them the newspaper's printing process. The students also got a chance to meet Kuwait Times' kittens!



Kuwait Times' reporting team explaining the students about the editorial section.



Kuwait Times' team displaying the archives to students.



Lycée Français de Koweït students discussing the meaning of anxiety at Kuwait Times' Studio.



Students show the copies of Kuwait Times' first publication.



Students visit the printing section.



Students play with Kuwait Times' kittens.



Minister of Education Dr Adel Al-Mane talking to students during World Teachers' Day celebration. — KUNA



Minister of Education Dr Adel Al-Mane and ministry's official take a group photo during World Teachers' Day celebration.

## Education Minister commends teachers

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwaiti Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Dr Adel Al-Mane, commended teachers on Thursday for their dedication and efforts to prepare and educate future generations. "It is our collective duty to hold our teachers in high esteem," said Dr Al-Mane during the ministry's celebration of World Teachers Day, affirming the importance of this annual commemoration to show

appreciation and gratitude for their hard work. The Expo 965 team for heritage and craft exhibitions and Kuwaiti innovators, as well as a number of boy and girl scouts, participated in the celebration.

World Teachers' Day is held annually on October 5 to celebrate all teachers around the globe. It commemorates the anniversary of the adoption of the 1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers, which sets benchmarks regarding the rights and responsibilities of teachers and standards for their initial preparation and further education, recruitment, employment, and teaching and learning conditions. — KUNA

## EU's Di Maio visits Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** The EU Special Representative for the Gulf Region Luigi Di Maio arrived in Kuwait this evening in an official visit. During the visit, he will meet the National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He will also meet the Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Khaled Mahdi and the Deputy Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah.

This is Di Maio's first trip to Kuwait since he was appointed as the first EU Special Representative for the Gulf Region. Upon arrival, he said: "I look forward to discussing a wide range of subjects with the Kuwaiti officials including regional security, energy, climate change, green and digital transition, trade and investment, research, education in addition to women and youth empowerment. I am pleased that my visit to Kuwait comes few days before the 27th EU-GCC Ministerial Meeting in Oman, which is a key milestone for implementing our strategic partnership. The EU and its Member States are keen to have a real partnership with the Gulf based on dialogue, respect and results."



Commenting on the visit, Anne Koistinen, EU Ambassador-Designate to Kuwait said: "The visit of the EU Special Representative for the Gulf to Kuwait shows the European Union's growing relations with Kuwait and our sincere wish to build on this strong partnership. EU will remain a close and reliable friend to Kuwait. The fact that EU appointed a dedicated Special Representative for the Gulf Region shows that the EU is keen on boosting its relations with Gulf countries includ-

ing Kuwait. It is worth noting that the recent easing of travel requirements for Kuwaitis wishing to visit Schengen countries will strengthen contacts and mutual understanding between the peoples in both Kuwait and the EU." The visit of the EU Special Representative to Kuwait shows that the EU wants to become Kuwait's partner of choice as the EU has a lot to offer Kuwait on many subjects, in particular that of climate change and just transition to a greener economy.





Permanent representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hain

## Kuwait reiterates unwavering support for Palestinian issues

GENEVA: Kuwait on Thursday reiterated its unwavering support for the Palestinian people to achieve their legitimate rights. This came during Kuwait's speech, delivered by its permanent representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hain, to the Human Rights Council, which discussed the situation in Palestine and other Arab territories occupied by Zionists.

Al-Hain said, "While the world celebrates the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 75 years have passed since the Nakba of the Palestinian people." He added, "Kuwait condemns in the strongest terms the repetitive violations targeting the Palestinian people by the occupying forces." Al-Hain urged the international community to take responsibility for ending these violations, hold those responsible accountable, and find a solution to the Palestinian issue.

Occupation forces shot dead two Palestinians on Thursday in the city of Tulikarm and injured four others in Nablus, said Palestine's Ministry of Health. In a press release, the ministry said that the General Authority of Civil Affairs reported that Hudhayfah Fares, 27, and Abdalrahman Atta, 23, were killed after their vehicle was targeted near the village of Shufa, south of Tulikarm.

Witnesses told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the occupation forces prevented ambulances from reaching the casualties. Four Palestinians were injured and others suffocated during clashes with the occupation forces after raiding the city of Nablus to secure the settlers' storming of Joseph's Tomb. The Palestinian news agency reported earlier that hundreds of settlers stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of Zionist forces, which denied Palestinians access to the mosque. — KUNA

# Marking 47th anniversary, KUNA commits to professional and responsible media message

## Kuwait News Agency keeps abreast of cutting-edge technology

KUWAIT: Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) marks the 47th anniversary of its establishment on Friday by re-stating its commitment to delivering its professional and responsible media message, maintaining credibility and objectivity, and keeping abreast of cutting-edge technology. Since it was founded on October 6, 1976, Kuwait's official news agency has been striving to revamp its media services, boosting its national staff's capabilities, establishing its regional and world status, and highlighting Kuwaiti issues and activities at home and abroad.

KUNA was established under an Amiri decree with the goal of gathering and generating news for distribution to individuals and media institutions, providing them with news reports in an objective and unbiased manner. In March 1978, KUNA started local transmission for six hours per day and doubled it in June to 12 hours and then 16 in October, while Arabic transmission was launched in November 1978 for three hours before increasing broadcasting time to 12 hours a day. In November 1979, the agency launched a special bulletin for Kuwaiti embassies abroad, providing news services to 38 embassies and consulates.

In January 1980, KUNA began local transmission in English for four hours a day, increasing it to eight hours a day in February 1981. It then boosted English local and foreign broadcasting hours to nine and four a day in January 1982. During the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990, Iraqi army forces seized the agency's equipment and archives and sent them to Baghdad. However, thanks to its national staff, the agency managed to re-operate and transmit its news reports in October 1990 through its of-

fice in the British capital, London. The agency had reported a total of 16,110 news stories until November 1991.

Following the liberation of Kuwait in February 1991, the agency returned to its main headquarters in Kuwait on November 15 of the same year. It was honored to broadcast the liberation news, with its cameramen having documented the country's devastation caused by the Iraqi occupation forces. In 1992, it began to depend on a network of its correspondents in Arab and foreign capitals, covering Kuwaiti main events and activities abroad.

The agency invented a new trend in 1992 for choosing the year's personality, whether an individual or institution, as a model for others to follow in view of serving humanity, spreading peace, and achieving a better life for humanity. The agency then launched its SMS news service in 1994 in a bid to deliver local, Arab, and world news stories to subscribers through its phone number, 120, round the clock. Out of its belief in the significance of staff training, KUNA launched a media training center in 1995 with a view to upgrading the capabilities of media staff in both the public and private sectors, along with Gulf media figures.

On March 31, 1997, the late Kuwaiti Minister of Information, Sheikh Saud Nasser Al-Sabah, inaugurated the new building of the agency in Kuwait City's Shuwaikh area to commence a fresh shift in its developed services. Having launched its website to cope with media technology, the site came second on the list of the best government sites in Kuwait in 2006. In 2011, KUNA announced a new service giving people access to its news stories in both Arabic and English through social media, and in 2012, a new website



Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) building

covering news and informative services as well as photographic archives was launched.

The agency, further, began in 2014 to publish a quarterly magazine highlighting Kuwait's major events, ancient and modern facilities, development plans, and future projects. In the same year, KUNA Al-Sagheer, a children's periodical, was published at the advent of the new school year in a bid to boost children's media knowledge.

Furthermore, a French bulletin was launched in 2018 as part of KUNA's plan to develop its news services, while its Arabic and English sites were updated in order to keep abreast of internet technological advancement. In 2016, the agency won the best Arab news agency award from a Lebanese newspaper thanks to its credible and objective coverage of local, regional, and international events. In 2018, it was also given the Sharjah Government Communication Award.

Since its inception, the Kuwaiti agency has committed itself to promoting and developing its relations with media organizations from different world countries. In 2000, KUNA joined the Organization of Asia-Pacific News Agencies (OANA) and effectively participated in a summit of world news agencies in Moscow in 2004. Last May, Kuwait News Agency launched its space on the Spatial Metaverse platform, the first step of its kind amongst news agencies in the region.

On May 4, it launched its first virtual news anchor. Barjas Al-Barjas was the agency's board chairman and director general from 1976 to 1992. Youssef Al-Sumait held the post between 1992 and 1998. Mohammad Al-Ujairi took over from 1998 to 2006. Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Sabah was appointed chairman and director general between 2006 and 2018, while Dr Fatma Al-Salem has taken the helm since November 9, 2022. — KUNA



Kuwait's Health Minister Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi opens the exhibition. — KUNA photos



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## Research 'key to stave off child skin disorders'

KUWAIT: Scientific research is essential to fighting skin disorders in children, Kuwait's Health Minister Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi said on Wednesday, citing the matter as among his ministry's perennial concerns. As part of efforts to provide quality healthcare services to nationals, the health ministry is eager to collaborate with regional and global healthcare bodies, the minister told the inaugural regional conference on child dermatological disorders. At the gathering, he expressed hope it would provide a platform for participating dermatologists to share their know-how with one another, which would subsequently lead to further "breakthroughs" in the field, the min-

ister underlined.

Discussing some of the most prevalent skin ailments in children, the conference's chief organizer and head of the ministry's dermatology department, Dr. Atfal Al-Lafi, pinpointed eczema as the most common, saying most children who develop skin diseases have been found to be genetically susceptible. On the common objectives for the gathering, she said the use of the most cutting-edge treatment methods in the field of dermatology will be discussed, in addition to the potential psychological effects skin disorders could have on children. — KUNA



Dr. Atfal Al-Lafi



ABU DHABI: A delegation from Kuwait Business Council (KBC) meets with the Chairman of Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ADCCI) Abdullah Al-Mazouei to discuss ways of enhancing cooperation. - KUNA

## KBC, ADCCI discuss joint investment

ABU DHABI: A delegation from the Kuwait Business Council (KBC) met on Wednesday with the Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ADCCI), Abdullah Al-Mazouei, to discuss ways of enhancing cooperation in various fields and facilitating Kuwaiti investments in the United Arab Emirates. The discussions also dealt with cooperation with UAE private sector investors in ways that could serve the common interests of both sister countries, KBC Chairman Feras Al-Salem told KUNA following the meeting. "KBC seeks

to expand Kuwaiti investments in the UAE, particularly in the area of technology, and open new horizons of cooperation between the private sectors of both countries," he noted.

Al-Salem praised as constructive the cooperation shown by the UAE side with the Kuwait Business Council in Dubai and the Kuwaiti private sector investors, citing the provision of a suitable environment for investment in all fields in the UAE. "The UAE helps Kuwaiti investors and entrepreneurs tap into the promising opportunities for expanding their businesses regionally," he added. The meeting gathered KBC treasurer Mishal Al-Fors and Chairman of the UAE Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FCCI), Humaid Ben Salem. — KUNA



Biden to build more Mexico wall as migrants set up camp on border

## Turkey, Azerbaijan snub European summit over Karabakh tensions

Page 6

Page 7



GROZA: Ukrainian rescuers work amongst rubbles of a destroyed shop and cafe after a Russian strike. — AFP

# Russian strike kills 51 in Ukraine

## Moscow to build naval base in breakaway Georgian region

**GROZA:** A Russian strike on Thursday killed at least 51 people gathered for a wake in an eastern Ukrainian village in what a UN official called a “horrific” attack. Footage published by the Ukrainian police showed a large area of smoking rubble and several bodies being taken away by emergency workers in the village of Groza.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky posted an image of a woman kneeling over the body of someone apparently killed in the strike, with other corpses around her. The mourners were in a cafe and there were also victims in a shop in the same building in the village, which has a population of 330 people, in the northeastern region of Kharkiv. “A memorial service for a deceased fellow villager was being held,” Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said on TV. He said a six-year-old child was among the victims, adding that a total of 60 people had been attending the wake.

Groza is located more than 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the frontline town of Kupiansk in an area where Russian forces have been pushing to recapture territory they lost to Ukrainian troops last year. Klymenko said initial evidence showed an Iskander missile had been used. “The search and rescue operation is ongoing,” Klymenko said. “There may still be people under the rubble”.

Zelensky, who was attending a European summit in Spain, condemned the attack on social media. He called the strike “completely deliberate” and said it was a “brutal Russian crime”. Defense Minister Rustem Umerov said Ukraine needed more air defense “to protect our country from terror”. “We are discussing this with partners,” he wrote on social media,

repeating Ukrainian calls for more protection against the daily barrages of drone and missile strikes.

### “True evil”

Denise Brown, Ukraine coordinator for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), also condemned the alleged Russian strike. Brown said she was “appalled”, adding that the images from the scene of the strike were “absolutely horrifying”. “Intentionally directing an attack against civilians or civilian objects is a war crime,” she said in a statement.

A spokeswoman for the regional assembly quoted by Ukrainian media said it was the single most deadly attack since the start of Russia’s invasion on February 24, 2022. The head of the Kharkiv region Oleg Sinegubov said the strike took place around 1:15 pm (10:15 GMT). Regional authorities had recently ordered mandatory evacuations in the area after an uptick in Russian strikes.

Large swathes of the Kharkiv region were captured by Russian forces in the early days of their invasion launched in February last year. Ukrainian forces recaptured much of the border territory during a lightning offensive late last year, but the regional capital, also called Kharkiv, still comes to regular shelling. Zelensky’s advisor Mykhailo Podolyak said the attack had “no military logic”. “This is a reminder to anyone who is willing to smile and shake hands with war criminal Putin at international conferences,” he said, referring to Russian leader Vladimir Putin. “A reminder to all those who want to sell something to Russia and return to bloody business as usual,” he said, adding: “Putin’s Russia is a true evil”.

## Russian fleet to install base in Abkhazia, a separatist region of Georgia



### New naval base

The attack comes as tensions escalate on the Black Sea, embarrassing the Kremlin. Russia is now set to build a naval base on the Black Sea coast of Abkhazia, a separatist region in Georgia, its leader said in an interview Thursday, with the aim of increasing the “defence capability both of Russia and Abkhazia”.

“We have signed an agreement, and in the near future there will be a permanent point of deployment for the Russian navy in the Ochamchire district,” Abkhazia’s separatist leader Aslan Bzhania

told pro-Kremlin newspaper Izvestia in an interview published Thursday. He added that “this kind of cooperation will continue, because this safeguards the fundamental interests of both Abkhazia and Russia. And security is above all”. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he was unable to comment. “Questions related to the deployment of our troops and our ships — these are for the defense ministry,” he told reporters. Russia and Georgia fought a war in 2008, after which Moscow recognized the independence of Abkhazia and another Moscow-backed separatist region, South Ossetia. Russia has stationed permanent military bases in both regions.

### “Flagrant violation”

Georgian authorities said the plan was “a flagrant violation of Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.” “We express concern over the statement of Russia’s occupation regime in Sukhumi regarding the establishment of an additional Russian military base on Georgia’s occupied territory,” the foreign ministry added in a statement.

Georgia, an ex-Soviet country in the South Caucasus, has for years pushed for integration into the European Union, a process that accelerated after a brief war with Russia in 2008. But Georgian authorities have been accused by the opposition of flirting with the Kremlin. Bzhania visited Russia this week to meet with President Vladimir Putin. During a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, the separatist leader voiced support for Russia’s offensive in Ukraine. “You can be sure that we are with you to the end,” he told Lavrov, according to Russian news agencies. — AFP



CHAMONIX: A view of the Massif du Mont-Blanc and L’Aiguille du Midi in the French Alps, on Jan 30, 2023. — AFP

## Mont Blanc has shrunk, but don’t jump to conclusions

**CHAMONIX:** France’s highest mountain, Mont Blanc, has shrunk by over two meters in height over the past two years, researchers said on Thursday, measuring the Alpine peak at 4,805.59 meters (15,766.4 feet). The 2.22-metre (7.28-foot) decline could be down to lower precipitation during summer, said Jean des Garets, chief geometer in the Haute-Savoie department of southeastern France.

“Mont Blanc could well be much taller in two years” when it is next measured, he added, saying this was not the first time such a large change had been seen. The mountain’s rocky peak measures 4,792 meters above sea level, but its thick covering of ice and snow varies in height from year to year depending on wind and weather.

Researchers have been measuring it every two years since 2001, hoping to garner information about the impact of climate change on the Alps. “We’re gathering the data for future generations. We’re not here to interpret them,” des Garets said. People shouldn’t use the height measurement “to say any old thing”, he urged. Instead, “it’s now up to the climatologists, glaciologists and other scientists to make use of all the data we’ve collected and come up with theories to explain” the shrinkage. Mont Blanc’s highest recorded summit was in 2007, at 4,810.90 meters. A one-meter fall was measured in 2021 compared to 2017 — after 2019’s unusually low result was kept secret as experts judged it not representative.

“Mont Blanc’s height has been fluctuating since time immemorial,” the geometers say. Within the year, strong winter winds usually scour away more snow than in summer, meaning the peak is higher as autumn begins than in early spring. “We’ve learned a lot from these measurement campaigns. We know that the summit is constantly changing in altitude and position, with changes of up to five meters,” des Garets said. — AFP

## Overpass in Venice bus crash ‘was under renovation’

**VENICE:** The Venice overpass from which a bus plunged this week, killing 21 people, had been earmarked for renovation for years and had a hole in the barrier which was due to be closed, it emerged Thursday. A repair project was launched in 2016 but works only began in September and had yet to reach the section of the bridge where Tuesday evening’s tragedy occurred, the city’s transport councillor said in various newspaper interviews.

The electric city bus, carrying tourists back from Venice’s historic center, is believed to have scraped along the edge of the barrier on the side of the road for several meters before reaching a 1.5-metre (four foot) gap. A second metal fence on the edge of the bridge provided little resistance, and the bus fell 10 meters to the ground, landing upside down next to train tracks, crushing the passengers inside. An investigation is underway into what exactly happened, with speculation focusing on a possible illness of the driver, an Italian national who died in the crash. But Italy’s national newspapers Thursday highlighted the potentially deadly role of the gap in the road barrier, with La Stampa calling it a “scandal”.

Venice councillor Renato Boraso said the gap was put into the barrier when it was built half a century ago to give maintenance crews access. “The barriers are not compliant with current laws,” he acknowledged, adding that the gaps were due to have been closed next year as part of the repair works.

The crash has reignited debate over Italy’s crumbling infrastructure, but Boraso denied the Venice authority was to blame. He said that since 2016, renovating the overpass had been a priority but the process of contracting out the seven-million-euro proj-

ect was “long and complex”. “Let us ask ourselves why such a procedure for works has to be so long in Italy,” he added.

### Saving Ukrainian children

Venice authorities declared three days of mourning for the tragedy, which killed 20 foreign tourists in addition to the driver. Among them were nine Ukrainians, four Romanians, three Germans, two Portuguese, one South African and a Croatian, according to the Venice mayor’s office. Fifteen people remain in hospital, including six Ukrainians, and of those, 10 are in intensive care, including a child, the region said. The crash occurred at around 7:30 pm on Tuesday evening, on an overpass straddling a railway line and linking the mainland Mestre and Marghera districts. Locals lined up Thursday at Mestre town hall to sign a book of condolences, with one writing that there were “no words to describe something that should never have happened”. “It could have been me there, with my tourists,” said Pia Karttunen, a 56-year-old originally from Finland, who previously worked as a tour guide.

Several passers-by had rushed to help when the bus crashed, including Bujar Bacaj, 43, a Kosovo national who has been living in Italy for 25 years. He was in his restaurant nearby when he heard the noise and thought the bridge itself had come down. He described to AFP seeing “dust, a lot of dust — I heard people crying, screaming, calling for help in their different languages”. “I saw a little girl whose head was through a window ... I managed to get the girl and a boy and take them away from the site.”

The two children were Ukrainian, a brother and sister, “full of blood and asking me for their mother”, he said, still emotional two days later. He said people around him could have done more to help, with many taking photos and videos on their telephones. Bacaj said he went to a nearby hospital to look for the two children but couldn’t find them. “I learned yesterday that their mother had died,” he said, although her partner survived. — AFP









Business

# Philippine government pledges action on high food prices

## Farming subsidies, food stamps for poor are among efforts to rein in price increases

MANILA: High food prices in the Philippines have pushed inflation to a five-month peak, officials said Thursday, increasing pressure on the government to stop the country's neediest going hungry. Farming subsidies and food stamps for the poor are among government efforts to rein in or mitigate price increases, which have dented the popularity of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

"The government is committed to providing targeted assistance to affected vulnerable segments of the population while food prices remain elevated," Economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said in a statement announcing last month's consumer prices data. The inflation rate of 6.1 percent was up from 5.3 percent a month earlier.

Last month Marcos put a controversial price cap on rice, a national staple, to support poor households. He lifted the price controls on Wednesday, saying the ongoing harvest was easing pressure on supply. In early September, Marcos set the maximum retail price of regular milled rice at 41 pesos (\$0.72) per kilogram (2.2 pounds) and 45 pesos for the higher-quality "well-milled" rice.

The measure was criticized by some economists, who warned it could distort the market and lead to shortages. A member of Marcos's economic team was sacked after she appeared to mock the plan on social media. "As of today, we are lifting the price caps on rice, both for the regular milled rice and for the well-milled rice," Marcos said, at an event in Manila where a thousand sacks of "smuggled"

rice seized in a raid were distributed to poor families. Marcos, who is also the agriculture minister, said it was the "appropriate time" to remove the cap since the government was "giving away rice". Government assistance for farmers and the poor would continue, he said, noting "we still need to fix our agriculture sector". Rice is a staple in the country of 110 million people, but the nation cannot produce enough and is one of the world's top importers of the grain.

Balisacan cited a food stamps program launched last week, the country's first, that provides 3,000 pesos (\$53) a month for select "food poor" households, as well as families with pregnant women or nursing mothers. He said the government was also giving a 10,000-peso cash subsidy to 78,000 farmers, a separate 5,000-peso financial aid to rice farmers and fuel subsidies to more than 74,000 public utility vehicles. Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort said increasing inflation was particularly linked to rice prices, crop damage from typhoons earlier this year and a weakening peso that hiked import prices.

Rice is a staple in the country of 110 million people, but the nation cannot produce enough and is one of the world's top importers of the grain. Marcos suffered a 15-point drop, to 65 percent, in his popularity rating in a nationwide poll by the Manila-based independent outfit Pulse Asia last month, compared with June. The survey was made after the president imposed rice price controls. A separate poll showed inflation was the top concern among those surveyed. — AFP



MANILA: Customers buy goods at a market stall in Manila on October 5, 2023. — AFP

## China's Sunac wins court approval for debt restructuring

HONG KONG: Chinese property giant Sunac became on Thursday one of the rare firms to obtain approval for a debt restructuring plan at a time when many of its competitors are fighting for survival. The developer said in a filing to the Hong Kong stock exchange that its proposal to restructure \$9 billion of offshore debt had been sanctioned by Judge Jonathan Harris at the city's High Court.

The ruling will pave the way for creditors to get their money back after Sunac defaulted on several US dollar-denominated bonds and other

liabilities. Once the third-largest property developer in China, Sunac asked last month to be placed under bankruptcy proceedings in the United States as the debt crisis gradually took over the industry.

The approval in Hong Kong came weeks after creditors, who own 98.3 percent of the total value of the bonds, voted to approve Sunac's plan. Under the plan, a part of Sunac's debt would be exchanged into convertible bonds backed by its Hong Kong-listed shares along with new notes with maturities of between two and nine years.

Sunac's share price jumped by as much as 12 percent to HK\$2.31 in Hong Kong before closing at HK\$2.19. The setbacks in the

once-favored property industry in China have fuelled distrust for two years in a sector that had long been lucrative but is now shunned.

In recent months, this crisis of confidence has overtaken groups previously considered financially solid in recent months, including Evergrande and Country Garden. Sunac's progress came before a crucial hearing at the end of the month for the Evergrande Group, which has become a symbol of China's ballooning property crisis.

Evergrande estimated it had debts of \$328 billion at the end of June. Its founder and chairman Xu Jiayin was suspected of "illegal crimes" after reports he was being held by police. — AFP

## French rail giant Alstom shares dive on cash flow warning

PARIS: Shares in French train maker Alstom sank on Thursday after a key metric of its financial health turned negative due to higher inventories and delays in completing a UK deal. The group's stock price was down 36.2 percent at 13.38 euros (\$14.38) per share near midday in Paris.

Alstom released preliminary financial information on Wednesday showing negative free cash flow of 1.15 billion euros for the first half of the 2023-2024 fiscal year. As a result, it now expects the full-year figure

to reach as much as negative 750 million euros after previously forecasting it to be "significantly positive". The revision will "immediately trigger questions about the financial health" of the company, according to analysts at Stifel investment bank. The delay in the 443-train Avenra deal in the UK represents around a third of the impact on free cash flow, Alstom said, adding that the programme should now be completed at the beginning of the 2024-2025 fiscal year. — AFP



شركة الصفاء للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 5 OCTOBER 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	905	875	909	875	34	23,140,763	-31	-3.42%	-14.77%	860	895	13.4	1.70	3.8%	1.03
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	262	259	268	258	10	28,317,842	-4	-1.52%	-13.39%	256	261	13.0	1.21	3.6%	1.30
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	152	152	156	151	5	18,427,809	0	0.00%	-15.15%	151	160	15.9	0.58	2.4%	1.13
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	182	180	184	180	4	1,922,091	-2	-1.10%	-13.70%	179	185	18.5	0.70	4.2%	1.34
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	733	722	738	722	16	32,815,560	-11	-1.50%	-3.50%	715	725	19.0	1.86	2.3%	1.17
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	608	606	612	605	7	5,225,594	2	0.33%	-19.50%	593	618	40.5	2.51	0.9%	1.21
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	130	129	132	127	5	1,984,209	0	0.00%	-15.13%	129	133	9.1	0.59	3.9%	1.83
204	National Investments	Financial Services	230	223	230	219	11	2,890,745	-5	-2.19%	-5.91%	220	227	174.2	1.01	12.6%	1.99
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	117	113	120	113	7	12,167,652	-4	-3.42%	0.89%	110	116	29.3	0.68	0.0%	0.99
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	182	177	184	176	8	28,109,133	-4	-2.21%	56.99%	172	186	33.8	1.33	2.2%	1.13
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	161	166	167	160	7	22,064,667	6	3.75%	24.81%	163	166	9.7	1.18	4.5%	1.65
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	65	63	66	63	4	3,329,034	-1	-1.86%	-15.49%	62.0	63.4	-	0.40	14.2%	1.30
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	165	169	170	163	7	60,004,356	4	2.42%	61.18%	166	170	15.3	1.18	1.8%	1.08
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	830	870	879	825	54	4,533,362	45	5.45%	8.75%	863	872	17.9	1.92	1.5%	1.07
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	99	100	102	99	4	16,436,937	1	1.42%	4.46%	99	102	18.3	0.62	2.9%	0.62
501	National Industries	Financial Services	200	201	204	195	9	19,893,459	1	0.50%	-2.74%	200	206	139.0	0.93	2.4%	1.61
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,163	1,160	1,208	1,160	48	3,620,170	-14	-1.19%	-4.53%	1,149	1,171	13.2	1.10	5.1%	1.06
506	HEISCO	Industrials	734	739	750	721	29	512,760	3	0.41%	20.55%	720	753	21.6	1.90	2.7%	0.93
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	689	683	704	679	25	3,038,372	-10	-1.44%	-14.63%	677	687	10.4	1.33	8.6%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	561	539	578	539	39	15,594,428	-19	-3.41%	-25.14%	533	566	20.2	0.73	0.0%	1.54
605	Zain	Telecommunications	491	473	499	473	26	10,562,070	-14	-2.87%	-15.99%	473	480	9.8	1.66	7.4%	0.64
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,118	3,060	3,198	3,060	138	576,860	-65	-2.08%	-8.72%	3,060	3,100	9.1	3.77	12.3%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	169	168	171	168	3	1,098,072	-2	-1.18%	-17.24%	167	171	-	0.74	0.0%	1.18
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,480	1,489	1,500	1,450	50	789,765	15	1.02%	-21.63%	1,485	1,571	17.2	10.31	5.3%	1.49
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	80	82	82	80	2	15,201,841	2	2.64%	7.24%	81.1	82.1	9.1	0.97	5.9%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	186	187	190	185	5	12,542,588	2	1.08%	-18.04%	182	188	26.3	1.01	1.6%	1.13
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	513	501	514	496	18	3,320,926	-7	-1.38%	27.48%	490	519	74.5	1.49	2.4%	0.45
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	432	459	459	427	32	5,350,358	27	6.25%	24.05%	445	464	36.1	1.86	3.4%	0.70
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	187	183	188	180	8	1,875,949	-3	-1.61%	-2.66%	181	185	14.8	1.65	6.6%	0.41
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,836	1,798	1,850	1,780	70	896,311	-47	-2.55%	-12.38%	1,785	1,820	22.9	6.32	4.7%	0.95
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,169	1,115	1,170	1,103	67	2,044,867	-45	-3.88%	38.51%	1,069	1,123	13.1	4.07	6.0%	0.18

\* As of end of week closing

## Business

# Macau bets on China's 'Golden Week' holiday to stage comeback

## Chinese travellers are expected to make more than 100 million daily trips

**MACAU:** Macau's baccarat and poker tables were teeming once again as millions of Chinese tourists marked "Golden Week" in October, with post-pandemic travel surging despite the country's economic slowdown.

Chinese travellers are expected to make more than 100 million daily trips during the annual national holiday—making it the "hottest" Golden Week ever, a state-backed tourism think tank predicted. And hundreds of thousands have set their sights on Macau—a semi-autonomous city of 680,000 that is the only place in China where casinos operate legally.

"I would say Macau is back," said bartender Aubrey, 32, who works at a five-star hotel in the former Portuguese colony. "Not to (its) best, but at least we're way past the pandemic times." Golden Week for him has been a heady mix of 10-hour shifts and good money, a seasonal bonanza for Macau's hospitality industry.

Chinese tourists "are prepared, they have money," he told AFP. "I think they are spending as much as before the pandemic." Much of the cash is left on the casino floor, as Macau's gaming industry increasingly relies on mass-market players after Beijing drove away high rollers with a years-long regulatory crackdown.

Last year, Macau saw just 25,000 daily visitors during Golden Week, with the government following Beijing's zero-COVID strategy and shuttering businesses as infections peaked. Cratering gaming revenues meant that Las Vegas ranked as the world's largest casino hub in 2022.

But once Beijing reversed course on the pandemic and lifted travel curbs, Macau—which in 2019 generated nearly six times the gaming revenue of its American rival—handily reclaimed the title. "I was never in doubt that Macau would gain that crown

back," said J.P. Morgan analyst DS Kim. "What was surprising was the pace of that recovery." The city's six casino operators, which received 10-year extensions to their licences last year, reported second-quarter profits that were nearly 70 percent of pre-pandemic levels. Visitor arrivals this year were "slightly ahead of expectations" as the holiday neared its end Friday, tracking at around 84 percent of 2019 levels, Kim told AFP.

### VIP revenues gone

With "Westminster" spires looming above and "Big Ben" tolling in the background, university graduate Li Junkai from China's Hebei province tested legalized betting for the first time—and promptly lost around HK\$100 (\$13).

"I was curious about gambling... It's legal in Macau so I came here to give it a go," the 24-year-old told AFP outside The Londoner, a recently rebranded Macau casino. Earlier this year, authorities jailed "junkie king" Alvin Chau, who once led an industry that enticed wealthy gamblers from China's mainland with perks like VIP rooms and easy credit, for running an illegal multi-billion-dollar gambling ring.

While mass-market gaming revenue could reach around 85 percent of pre-pandemic levels, the VIP earnings tell a different story. "Seventy-five percent of the VIP (revenue) is gone. I don't think it's going to change anytime soon," Kim told AFP.

Authorities have also pressed casino operators to invest in non-gaming forays to diversify the city's appeal, as part of an industry-wide shakeup. The firms have collectively pledged \$14.9 billion on projects including theme parks, convention and exhibition centres and performance venues. Some of their early efforts may have borne fruit. This year, Macau boasted sold-out concerts by K-pop



MACAU: Chinese tourists visiting Macau during the country's week-long holiday at the start of October. — AFP

sensation BLACKPINK and Hong Kong singer Jacky Cheung.

### 'High life' experiences

The city's charms also seemed to fit with a younger generation of travellers, who prefer bespoke experiences, observers say. Hotel front desk worker Xyryl Amor said he had noticed more requests for "high life" experiences, like booking a lavishly-priced room just for the view of Macau's Eiffel Tower replica. "Peo-

ple want that sense of adventure, that sense of otherness," Amor told AFP. Casino operators have "put up a good show" of boosting non-gaming ventures, said one industry executive who requested anonymity, offering comped flights and rooms as sweeteners for high-profile events. But whether these costly efforts can be sustained for the nine years left on their licenses remains an open question. "K-pop may be able to draw more people in, but it is the casino floor that determines if there will be profit," he said. — AFP

## IMF, World Bank to tackle climate goals at annual meetings

**WASHINGTON:** The World Bank and International Monetary Fund will tackle the thorny issue of institutional reform at their upcoming annual meetings in Morocco next week. The two international financial institutions are looking to scale up and retool to pursue ambitious global climate goals, while continuing to support emerging market and developing economies struggling to service rising debt levels.

This year's annual meetings will take place in the city of Marrakesh, just weeks after a devastating earthquake in the region left close to 3,000 people dead. It will be the first such event to take place on the African continent for half a century, and will focus on building economic resilience, securing structural reforms and reinvigorating global cooperation, according to the IMF.

### Quota reform

To kick things off, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva will give a speech Thursday in the city of Abidjan in Ivory Coast, outlining her policy priorities for the upcoming meetings. The IMF is locked in negotiations to raise funding levels through an increase in the quotas paid by member countries.

The United States, which has a blocking minority at the Fund, has indicated it would back an across-the-board increase in quotas—a move which would leave the overall voting power of member countries unchanged.

While this is popular in the US, such a move would prevent other countries, including India and China, from increasing their own voting shares at the IMF despite significant economic changes in recent years. The Fund is also looking to replenish popular concessionary lending facilities for low- and middle-income countries which have been exhausted by the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. It may also consider changes to the its management structure to elevate the voices of developing economies, including those from sub-Saharan Africa.

### Climate funding

This year's annual meetings will be the first for new World Bank President Ajay Banga, a former Mastercard chief executive who was elected on a pledge to boost private sector financing for the transition to renewable energy.

Since taking office, Banga has indicated he plans to reform the bank's current twin mandate of poverty alleviation and boosting shared prosperity to include climate change. "I think the twin goals have to change to being elimination of poverty, but on a livable planet, because of the intertwined nature of our crises," he told a conference in New York last month.

He added that proposals to reform the World Bank's balance sheet from countries including the US and Saudi Arabia could add as much as \$125 billion in extra lending capacity if they come to pass. This would mark a significant increase for the development lender, which mobilized just over \$100 billion in financing last year.

But the process is likely to take a long time to bring about, according to Danny Scully, a policy advisor at the climate change think tank E3G. Banga's plans "certainly won't happen next week, as he needs to prove this concept first," he told AFP. — AFP

## Arab merchandise exports increased by 43% to \$1.7tn in 2022

**KUWAIT:** The Arab Investment & Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (Dhaman) unveiled that Arab trade in goods and services grew by 32.4 percent in 2022 to reach \$3.5 trillion, buoyed by the growth of exports by 44 percent to exceed \$2 trillion, along with the increase in imports by 20 percent to about \$1.5 trillion.

The Corporation's Director-General Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabeeh announced in a press release, on the occasion of issuing the second quarterly bulletin "Dhaman Al-Istithmar" for 2023, that Arab merchandise trade increased by 32.6 percent to \$2.9 trillion, as a result of the record growth of the region's merchandise export by 43 percent to \$1.7 trillion, in addition to the rise in imports by 20 percent to \$1.1 trillion, with the merchandise trade balance recording a surplus of \$558 billion in 2022.

Al-Sabeeh added that Arab merchandise trade share rose to 5.7 percent of the global total, and about 13.2 percent of merchandise trade in developing countries. As for the goods distribution, raw materials still represent the largest share of Arab exports by more than 75 percent as fuel exports alone make up around 62 percent of total merchandise trade, while manufactured goods represent 60 percent of Arab merchandise imports during 2022.

## Sri Lanka cuts interest rates, IMF delays loan

**COLOMBO:** Crisis-hit Sri Lanka cut interest rates by 100 basis points Thursday as the second instalment of an IMF bailout was held up after the government missed several loan conditions. The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) said it reduced the benchmark lending rate to 11 percent as year-on-year inflation fell sharply last month to 1.3 percent, compared to a peak of nearly 70 percent a year earlier.

The latest policy rate reduction came as the government failed to secure the second tranche of \$330 million out of the \$2.9 billion four-year bailout agreed with the International Monetary Fund in March. Colombo had hoped to get the second instalment last month after the first review of the IMF program.

However, the international lender noted that Sri Lanka had, among other things, fallen short of the

## US offers no fresh cash to climate fund for developing world

**PARIS:** The United States offered no fresh cash to the world's largest climate fund on Thursday, overshadowing pledges of financial support for nations most vulnerable to global warming and infuriating campaigners. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), seen as a key element of the landmark 2015 Paris Agreement, funnels grants and loans for adaptation and mitigation projects, mostly in Africa, the Asia-Pacific region, Latin America and the Caribbean.

It plays a part in the promise by rich countries to supply \$100 billion of climate finance to poorer nations every year, which has already missed an initial 2020 deadline. Financing is one of the most contentious topics in international climate diplomacy as the world scrambles to limit warming to

1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Developing countries least responsible for climate change are seeking support from richer polluting nations to adapt to the increasingly ferocious and expensive consequences of extreme weather, and for their transitions to cleaner energy.

The issue will play a major role in crunch UN talks, COP28, beginning in Dubai on November 30. More than \$9.3 billion was pledged at the donor conference in Bonn, with the total set to rise as countries prepare to make announcements soon, according to the German government. But the United States refused to announce a new contribution, citing "uncertainty in our budget processes". The US House of Representatives is in limbo after far-right Republicans helped to oust its speaker Kevin McCarthy on Tuesday, weeks ahead of a new funding deadline that could shut down the federal government.

Washington emphasized its "strong and steadfast confidence" in the GCF, according to a statement read out on behalf of Alexia Latortue, Assistant Secretary for International Trade and Development. But "to stay at the vanguard and rise to the moment on



Abdullah Ahmad Al-Sabeeh

agreed revenue targets and needed to increase tax collection. Sri Lanka was also yet to finalize a restructuring plan with its private and bilateral lenders after defaulting on its \$46 billion external debt in April last year.

CBSL said it hoped the latest rate cut, which comes on top of two in June and July, would help revive the economy. "The financial sector is urged to pass on the benefits of the continued easing of monetary conditions to individuals and businesses adequately and swiftly, thereby supporting the envisaged rebound of the economy," the bank said.

The IMF said last week that Sri Lanka's economy had shown early signs of stabilization, but recovery was "not yet assured". Last year, Sri Lanka ran out of cash to pay for even the most essential imports, leading to shortages of food, fuel and medicines.

The nation's worst economic crisis also forced then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down after months of protests over corruption and mismanagement. As the economic crisis worsened, the CBSL began raising rates from early 2022 with a record seven-percentage-point hike in April last year. The lending rates peaked at 16.5 percent in March and have since been reduced gradually. — AFP

export concentration indicator during the same year.

Amid United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) expectations for a slowdown in the growth of global trade in 2023, affected by the global economic weakness, inflationary pressures, high interest rates, financial restrictiveness procedures, and a slowdown in industrial production, in addition to the continuation of the Russia-Ukraine war and the geopolitical tensions, it is expected that the trade in goods and services in Arab countries to decline by 5 percent in 2023, affected by the expectations of a decline in global oil prices by 24.1 percent in 2023, while it is predicted to grow by 2.7 percent in 2024, according to IMF's estimates.

In this context, "Dhaman" confirms that the benefits for Arab countries from foreign trade depends on available opportunities at the level of intra-Arab trade, as well as their ability to diversify their exports and reduce their sectoral concentration in primary goods, especially fuel products, and reduce their geographical concentration in a limited number of trade partners, and their ability to open new markets, especially amid the world's current major political and economic repercussions, not to mention climate change and its impact on production capabilities in the region and the world.

Dhaman also reiterated that it would carry on its policy of enhancing and supporting the efforts that aim to increase Arab merchandise exports, and the region's imports of strategic and capital goods, through its varied insurance services provided to the region's exporters and the financiers of Arab trade to protect them from potential commercial and political risks.

## Government debt

As this percent of GDP



Source: IMF

AFP

climate, the GCF must evolve," the statement added.

The United States pledged around \$3 billion for the fund's first resource mobilization in 2014 under former president Barack Obama, but his successor Donald Trump gave nothing five years later.

### 'Inexcusable'

Australia—one of the world's biggest polluters—said it was rejoining the fund after withdrawing under former conservative leader Scott Morrison. Zionist entity said it would make its first contribution, while countries including Belgium, Finland and Ireland committed to stumping up fresh cash.

But campaigners were left disappointed by what they saw as a lack of action by countries who reiterated previously announced pledges or made no new efforts. "With COP28 on the horizon, the GCF replenishment conference has fallen short of expectations," said Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy at Climate Action Network International. "The silence of the United States, even as it participates on the GCF board and shapes policies without meeting its financial obligations, is glaring and inexcusable." — AFP

Lifestyle



A portrait of the late poet Dr Gasi Al-Gosaibi in the lobby.



The house-museum reflects the Saudi poet's contributions.



A ballroom assigned for exhibitions and other cultural events.

# MANAMAT AL-GOSAIBI: A MUSEUM PAYING TRIBUTE TO LATE SAUDI POET



Some of the most prominent books of the Saudi poet.

Located in the heart of the Bahraini capital Manama is the house-turned museum, which paid tribute to late Saudi poet Dr Gasi Al-Gosaibi, known for his supportive stance in regards to the GCC and Kuwait in particular.

The house reflects the Saudi poet's contributions throughout his life with a myriad of digital and audio displays telling the story of the prolific figure. The house's library, overlooking a cafe and garden, is filled to the brim with Al-Gosaibi works notably books reflecting his honorable stance with Kuwait during the horrific Iraq invasion of 1990. — KUNA



An interior garden linking the old and the modern parts of the house-turned-museum.



Personal belongings of the late poet displayed in the museum.



The museum displays poet's books reflecting his honorable stance with Kuwait during the horrific Iraq invasion.



Personal belongings of the late poet displayed in the museum.



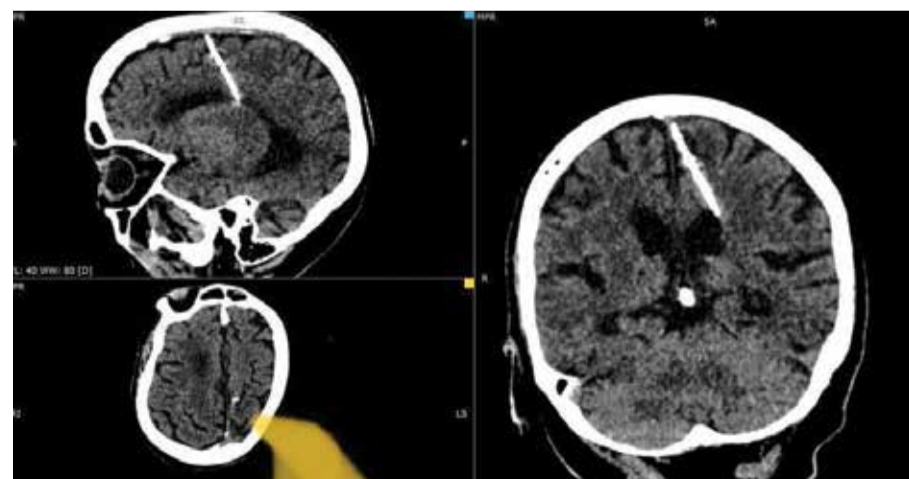
The ceiling of the museum reflects in a way the late poet's personality.

## Houellebecq novel's English version delayed more than 2 yrs

The English version of the latest novel by France's popular and controversial writer Michel Houellebecq has been delayed and will now be released in September 2024, his French publisher said Wednesday. Houellebecq is arguably France's most famous writer internationally, but has grown increasingly controversial as his pessimistic views on the decline of Western civilization are seen as aligning with the far-right. His novel "Annihilation" will appear in English two-and-a-half years after its original French version, which was released in January 2022 and was soon after avail-

able in Italian, German, Spanish and other languages.

The delay was caused by publisher Picador buying the rights from Houellebecq's previous publisher, Vintage. The novel will also be released in North America in September 2024, by Farrar, Straus and Giroux. Picador called "Annihilation" a "deeply thought-provoking and moving new novel". It is being translated by Northern Ireland's Shaun Whiteside, who also worked on Houellebecq's previous book, "Serotonin". —AFP



## Russian doctors find needle in 80-year-old woman's brain

An elderly woman in Russia's Far East was revealed on Wednesday to have lived for 80 years with an inch-long needle in her brain, after doctors made the unexpected discovery during a CT scan. Doctors believe the woman was the victim of a failed infanticide carried out by her parents, and said they would not attempt to remove the needle for fear of worsening her condition. "Such cases during years of famine were not uncommon," the local health department in the remote Russian region of Sakhalin said. It said her parents likely decided to put their child to death during World

War II, as she had been living with the three-centimeter-long needle "since birth". This method was often used to hide evidence of the crime, it said. Food shortages were prevalent across the Soviet Union during the war, and many people lived in dire poverty.

"The needle penetrated her left parietal lobe, but it did not have the intended effect—the girl survived," the local health department said. It said the patient had never complained of headaches due to the injury, and was not in any danger. "Her condition is being monitored by the attending physician," it said. —AFP

## ACTORS AND HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS HOLD STRIKE TALKS

Striking Hollywood actors were due to meet with studio bosses in Los Angeles on Wednesday, raising hopes that hundreds of films and television shows could finally resume production soon. The scheduled meeting between Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) negotiators and heads of studios such as Disney and Netflix is the second this week. It comes one week after Hollywood writers went back to work after resolving their own lengthy and largely concurrent strike.

Given the flurry of talks, and overlaps between SAG-AFTRA's demands and those of the writers, many actors on the picket lines this week expressed optimism that a deal could be struck soon. "I'm so happy that the writers have a deal because I really feel like that gives us positive momentum," said union member and "Silicon Valley" actress Elyssa Phillips.

"There's a lot that's going to be similar. There's a lot that's different. But I feel like it puts a lot of positive energy ... moving forward with the negotiations." Many Hollywood productions shuttered when the writers' strike began in May. Even with writers now back to work, most productions cannot restart until the demands of SAG-AFTRA—who walked out in July—are resolved. SAG-AFTRA and the studios had held no formal talks until this week, when a "full day bargaining session" took place.

Following those negotiations, both sides immediately agreed to come back to the table on Wednesday. Like the writers, actors have called for improved pay, greater transparency over profits from hit streaming shows, and better protections against artificial intelligence. In theory, analysts say the resolution of the writers' strike should help the actors to settle a deal. But SAG-AFTRA pay demands go further than those of the writers. And their concerns about the threat of AI arguably run deeper.

Actors fear that the technology could be used to clone their voices and likenesses, and reuse them in perpetuity without compensation or consent.



Duncan Crabtree-Ireland (center), executive director and chief negotiator for SAG AFTRA, and the members of the negotiating committee address the SAG AFTRA members at the picket line outside of Warner Brothers in Burbank, California. — AFP photos

"That's going to be a hurdle that our negotiators have to go in and contend with and make sure that we get provisions and protections against," said actress Michelle C. Bonilla, on a picket line outside Disney offices Tuesday.

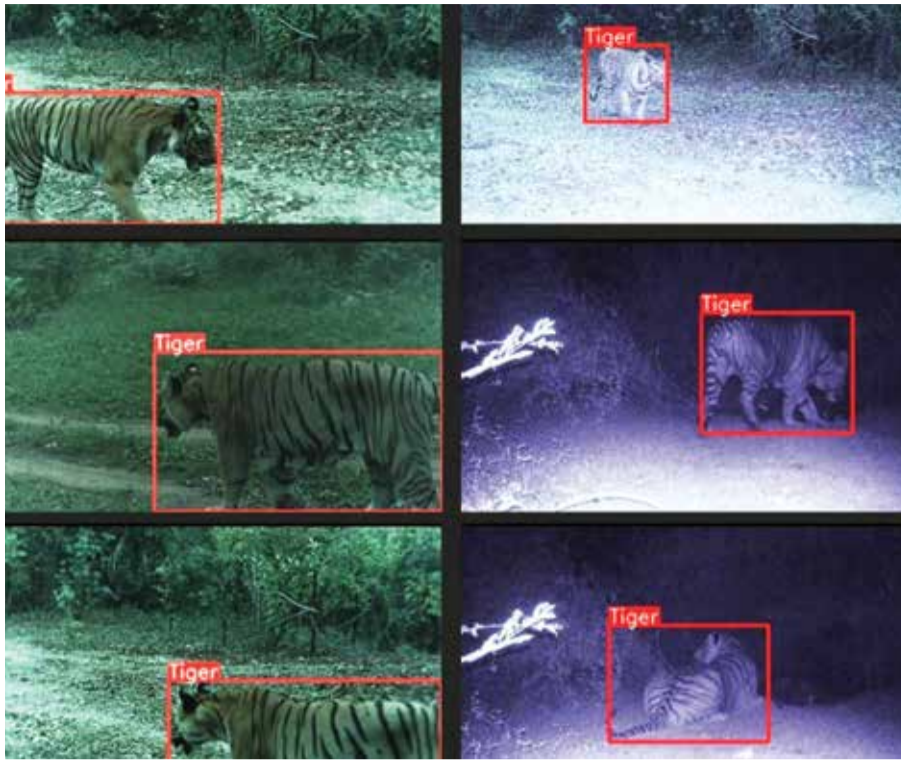
Actors also have their own specific demands, such as restrictions on the use of remote, self-taped auditions,

which became ubiquitous during the pandemic but are disliked by many of them. Some film and TV productions involving smaller Hollywood studios have already resumed, thanks to temporary waivers known as "interim agreements." —AFP



Actors Jeri Ryan (left) and Jonathan Del Arco walk among the SAG AFTRA members at the picket line outside of Warner Brothers in Burbank, California.

## Lifestyle



This picture shows images of a wild tiger taken and transmitted using an AI camera system in the forest corridor between Kanha Tiger Reserve and Pench Tiger Reserve near Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh, India. — AFP photos



This picture shows a team of experts installing an AI-enabled cameras in the forest corridor between Kanha Tiger Reserve and Pench Tiger Reserve near Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh, India.



This picture shows a tiger track (also known as a pugmark) in freshly dried mud in the forest corridor between Kanha Tiger Reserve and Pench Tiger Reserve near Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh, India.

## AI OF THE TIGER: TINY CAMERA 'PROTECTS' PREDATOR AND PEOPLE

Tiger populations are on the rise in the jungles of India and Nepal and the predators are roaming ever closer to villages, sparking a race among conservationists to find ways of avoiding conflict. They are increasingly finding solutions with artificial intelligence, a bunch of technologies designed to reason and make decisions like humans. Experts from Clemson University in South Carolina and several NGOs published research last month on their work using AI-enabled cameras that they say could help revolutionize tiger conservation. They placed tiny devices around enclosures in the two South Asian nations, both to protect villagers from the predators—and the predators from poachers.

According to their research, published in the *BioScience* journal, the camera system called TrailGuard can distinguish between tigers and other species and relay images to park rangers or villagers within seconds. "We have to find ways for people and tigers and other wildlife to coexist," Eric Dinerstein, one of the authors of the report, told AFP. "Technology can offer us a tremendous opportunity to achieve that goal very cheaply."



This picture shows a close up of a tiger in the forest corridor between Kanha Tiger Reserve and Pench Tiger Reserve near Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh, India.

erstein, one of the authors of the report, told AFP. "Technology can offer us a tremendous opportunity to achieve that goal very cheaply."

### Elephants and Amazon loggers

The research claims the cameras were immediately effective, picking up

a tiger just 300 meters from a village, and on another occasion identifying a team of poachers. They say their system was the first AI camera to identify and transmit a picture of a tiger, and it has almost wiped out false alarms—when traps are tripped by passing boars or falling leaves. The scheme is one of several putting an AI spin on the established ideas of wildlife surveillance. Researchers in Gabon are using AI to sift their camera trap images and are now trying a warning system for elephants.

Teams in the Amazon are piloting equipment that can detect the sounds of chainsaws, tractors and other machinery associated with deforestation. And US tech titan Google teamed up with researchers and NGOs four years ago to collect millions of images from camera traps. The project, called Wildlife Insights, automates the process of identifying species and labelling images, saving many hours of laborious work for researchers. Conservationists like Dinerstein, who also leads the tech

team at the Resolve NGO, are sure that technology is helping their cause.

### 'Early warning system'

Their goal is to ensure that 30 percent of the Earth's land and oceans are designated protected zones by 2030, as agreed by dozens of governments last year, with that number eventually going up to 50 percent. Those zones will need to be monitored, and animals will need to move safely between protected areas. "That's what we're shooting for, and the critical element of that is an early warning system," he said. The plight of tigers underscores the size of the challenge. Their habitats have been devastated across Asia and their numbers in India fell to an all-time low of 1,411 in 2006, before steadily rising to current levels of around 3,500. In the mid-20th century, India was home to an estimated 40,000.

### 'Jury still out'

Jonathan Palmer, head of conservation technology at the US-based Wild-

life Conservation Society (WCS), who was not involved in the study, said TrailGuard had exciting potential. But Palmer, who helped found Wildlife Insights with Google, said the broader uses of AI in conservation were not yet settled. "In most cases, AI species identification is still in its infancy," he said. His NGO recommends outside verification of any species identification done by AI.

And Palmer said the "jury was out" on whether AI was better deployed in cameras at the scene or afterwards on servers or laptops. Those uncertainties aside, Dinerstein is widening the rollout of TrailGuard—this time with even bigger animals in his sights. "Elephants wander outside parks all the time and it leads to a massive amount of conflict," he said. They destroy crops, cause chaos in villages and can even cause train crashes, with dozens of deaths every year, he added. "There's an immense opportunity here to prevent that." — AFP



This photograph shows Greenland dogs near a river flowing from a glacier providing drinking water to a nearby village in Ittoqqortoormiit in Scoresby Fjord, Greenland.



This underwater photograph shows a melting iceberg due to unusually high temperatures in Scoresby Fjord, Greenland.



An elderly man sits near polar bear skin items for sale in Ittoqqortoormiit.



This photograph shows snow covered with red ice algae (Sanguina) as Eric Marechal, director of research at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) analyses it in Scoresby Fjord near Ittoqqortoormiit, Greenland. — AFP photos

The thunder of icebergs crashing into the turquoise sea of eastern Greenland is the sound of one of the planet's most important ecosystems teetering on the edge of collapse. As the ice melts, the hunters in the village of Ittoqqortoormiit—home to one of the last Inuit hunting communities—worry where they will get water. Greenland's ice sheets may hold one 12th of the world's fresh water—enough to raise the sea level up seven meters (23 feet) if they were to melt—but climate change is already threatening the village's supply. Cold winters, robust ice and snow are vital for both food and water for the Inuit of the Scoresby Sound, who live deeply intertwined with the natural world.

But temperatures in the Arctic are rising up to four times faster than the global average. On a headland of barren tundra some 500 kilometers (310 miles) from the nearest settlement, Ittoqqortoormiit's 350 people get their fresh water from a river fed by a glacier that is melting fast. "In a few years it's gone," said Erling Rasmussen of the local utility company Nukissiorfiit. "The glaciers are smaller and smaller," he said after the warmest July ever recorded at Summit Camp atop Greenland's ice sheet.

"In the future we may have to get drinking water from the ocean," Rasmussen added. With melting ice for water costly and unreliable, other isolated Greenland communities are already turning to desalination.

### Thinning ice and hungry bears

The Scoresby Sound—the biggest fjord system on the planet—is only free of ice for a month a year, with the locals within it relying on the meat provided by the hunters to survive the long polar night. Cargo ships only get to Ittoqqortoormiit, at the mouth of the fjords, once a year. The colossal drifting icebergs crowding the narrow passages are a challenge to even the most seasoned sailors. "We need our own meat. We cannot only buy Danish frozen meat," said Jorgen Juulut Danielsen, a teacher and the village's former mayor.

But as rising temperatures weaken the ice, traditional seal hunting by stalking their breathing holes on the ice has become progressively more difficult and dangerous for the local hunters. Peter Arge-Hammeken almost lost his wife and two children when the ice gave way under their snowmobile when they were out hunting in January, when the temperature was 20 below zero Centigrade (-4 Fahrenheit). His wife ruptured her biceps getting the oldest child, aged 12, from the water.



## Greenland's Inuit falling through thin ice of climate change

Less snow also makes it difficult for the dog sleds the hunters rely on. And it is not only humans who are facing challenges. The weakening sea ice is also increasingly pushing hungry polar bears to search for food within the settlement, locals report. "They come to land near the village, so people have to be careful," Danielsen said.

### Polar cod in question

Framed by the rust-colored mountains of Rode Fjord, the breathtaking blue walls of glaciers that rise from the sea in the Inuit hunting grounds are vital to the ecosystem. The extreme conditions mean the fjord is among the least studied places on the planet, with parts of it blanketed in icebergs. But after five years of meticulous planning, the French scientific initiative Greenlandia is rushing to document this front line of climate change before it is too late.

"You hear about global warming, but here you see it," expedition leader Vincent Hilaire told AFP on board their sailing boat, Kamak. Caroline Bouchard, senior scientist at the Greenland Climate Research Centre in Nuuk, fears that the receding glaciers will make the Scoresby Sound "a less rich ecosystem". Glaciers that terminate in the sea trigger "upwelling"—pushing the nutrient-rich water from the bottom of the fjord upwards with their cold meltwater. But as the glaciers melt, they recede inland and the ecosystem loses these nutrients for the plankton that feed the polar cod, which in turn feed the seal and bear that the Inuit of Ittoqqortoormiit rely on.

### Catastrophic consequences

On the deck of Kamak, Bouchard checked the contents of her nets, as the bright Arctic sunlight illuminated the myriad of sealife on her Petri dish. Among the plankton and krill, the number of cod larvae in her samples has dropped from 53 last year to only eight this summer. While Bouchard said thorough analysis is required to determine the reasons for the decline, the figures are unexpectedly low.

"If you suddenly crash the polar cod population, what's going to happen with the ring seal, what's going to happen with the polar bear?" she said. The potential collapse of polar cod could have catastrophic consequences for the local population that relies on both for their food from hunting. "It's not just Ittoqqortoormiit that we lose. It's a unique way of life," Bouchard said.

### Red algae melting glaciers

New research conducted on the Greenlandia expedition are grim portents for the future of the glaciers. In the warming fjord, a reddish hue is spreading across the ice that has been dubbed "blood snow". It is from a snow algae only formally discovered in 2019, *Sanguina nivaloides*, which develops a red or orange pigment to save it from the sun. But the pigment also lowers the reflectivity of the snow and speeds up melting. Once aware of it, even an inexperienced observer can see how the crimson veil blankets extensive sections of the snow in the fjord.

Researchers say it is responsible for 12 percent of the total annual surface melt of the Greenland ice sheet, a "colos-

sal" 32 billion tons of ice. With the algae seemingly spreading, scientists say we face being caught in a vicious circle—rising temperatures speeding glacier melt and promoting the growth of the algae which further accelerates the melting.

### 'We need to wake up'

"We are facing a catastrophe," said Eric Marechal, the director of research at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). To scientifically demonstrate a phenomenon on the scale of the algae, 30 years of data is needed, he said, a luxury the world might not have. "The risk we have here is the disappearance of the complete ecosystem," he said.

"Can this process be stopped in time? I don't think so." Approaching the towering glacier cascading down a steep valley in Vikingebugt, expedition leader Hilaire pointed his rifle to a trail left in the mud by a polar bear. For Marechal, making the challenging trek into bear country is a risk worth taking to sample the red snow draping the glacier.

His team at CNRS and the Snow Research Centre of Meteo-France are rushing to collect field samples in Greenland and retrieve historical satellite data to gain a deeper understanding of the algae's behavior. "We need to wake up and address this question seriously," Marechal said. "What is happening in Greenland (is key to) the disruption of the global water cycle, and the major melting that is causing the oceans to rise." — AFP

Lifestyle



# WORLD BOWLING CHAMPIONSHIP OPENS WITH KUWAITI FLAVOR

By Abdellatif Sharaa

Under the patronage and in the presence of Minister of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah, the opening ceremony of the World Bowling Championship was held at the Boulevard Hall. The ceremony featured an operetta and folkloric performances that celebrated world cultures with a distinct Kuwaiti touch, earning applause from the audience.

Sheikh Firas expressed strong support for hosting the World Bowling Championship in Kuwait due to its high technical standards. He also expressed hope that Kuwait would host various sports championships in the future. Sheikh Firas emphasized that hosting such championships in Kuwait would provide Kuwaiti players with opportunities to gain more experience and enhance their technical skills. He commended the efforts of the organizing committee and the thorough preparations made to ensure the success of the tournament at all levels.



Sheikh Firas Al-Sabah and Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah at the opening ceremony.

Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, the Head of the Organizing Committee and President of the World and Asian Bowling Federations, highlighted that the initiative to organize this significant world event was driven by the Kuwait Bowling Club's commitment to developing the game locally and globally. He noted that the championship featured the participation of some of the world's most prominent players,

promising a high level of technical excellence. He expressed optimism about good results from Kuwaiti players, both male and female.

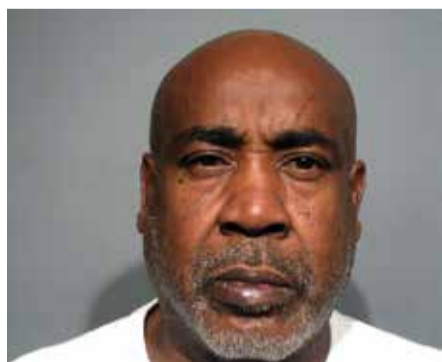
The opening ceremony was attended by Deputy Director General for Sport at the Public Authority for Sport Hamid Al-Hazeem, Sheikha Naeema Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other dignitaries.



Dancers performing during the event.

## Defendant in rapper Tupac Shakur killing appears in court

The man accused of murder in connection with the gang-feud slaying of rapper Tupac Shakur a quarter of a century ago appeared in a US court Wednesday. Duane "Keefe D" Davis, 60, was charged last week over the killing, despite not being the man wielding the weapon in Las Vegas in 1996. Davis was brought into court in handcuffs and wearing blue detention center clothes, the Las Vegas Review Journal reported. The formal arraignment was delayed and Davis did not enter a plea to the charge of murder with a deadly weapon with the intent to promote, further or assist a criminal gang.



This handout picture provided by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department shows the booking picture of Duane "Keefe D" Davis. — AFP

Davis has long acknowledged his involvement in the slaying, boasting he was the "on-site commander" in the effort to kill Shakur and Death Row Records boss Marion "Suge" Knight in revenge for an assault on his nephew. Under Nevada law, anyone who aids or abets a murder can be charged with the killing, in the same way that a getaway driver can be charged with bank robbery even if he never entered the bank. —AFP

## CHIEFS' KELCE SAYS NFL COULD BE 'OVERDOING IT' ON SWIFT

The NFL might be "overdoing it," but the breathless attention on pop superstar Taylor Swift amid her rumored romance with Kansas City Chiefs star Travis Kelce shows no sign of abating. Chatting with his brother Jason, the Philadelphia Eagles center, on their "New Heights" podcast, Travis said Wednesday that broadcaster NBC's 17 cutaway shots to Swift and a few of her famous friends during the Chiefs' victory over the New York Jets on Sunday was probably too many. "I think it's fun when they show who all is at the game, you know?" Travis Kelce said. "I think it brings a little more to the atmosphere, brings a little bit more to what you're watching. "But at the same time ...."

Jason's opinion was a brisk "They're overdoing it," and Travis concurred. "Especially in my situation," Travis Kelce said. Swift, a 12-time Grammy winner with a legion of dedicated fans, collided with the NFL universe when she attended the Chiefs' home win over the Chicago Bears on September 24, sitting with the Kelce brothers' mother, Donna, and fueling speculation that she and the star tight end were an item. The "Lavender Haze" singer was back, along with actors Blake Lively, Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman, for the Chiefs' road win at MetLife Stadium outside New York in the coveted Sunday Night Football slot.

Even the White House was caught up in the conjecture, with National Security Council spokesman John Kirby asked at a press briefing what President Joe Biden made of the rumored relationship. "You know, in the vernacular of the National Security Council, I can neither confirm nor deny those reports," Kirby said. Either way, Front Office Sports counted 17 cutaway shots to Swift and friends during NBC's broadcast of the game—compared to eight cutaways to injured Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers. "Damn that's crazy," Travis Kelce



Donna Kelce and Taylor Swift are seen during the first half of a game between the Chicago Bears and the Kansas City Chiefs at GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium on Sept 24, 2023 in Kansas City, Missouri. — AFP

said. "It's like once a drive." Added Jason: "I mean, that's more than Jack Nicholson courtside for the Lakers." In fact, Jason Kelce said the NFL could perhaps learn from how the NBA showcases its celebrity fans. "Like basketball has it all figured out," he said. "They're all courtside, they're sitting there. They show 'em once or twice, but then they get back to the game. "NFL's like, 'Look at all these A-list celebrities at the game! Keep showing 'em, show 'em!'"

### Pop cultural moment

The NFL, however, made no apologies for "leaning in" to the tidal wave of interest surrounding Kelce and Swift on social media and beyond. "We frequently change our bios and profile imagery based on what's happening in and around our games, as well as culturally," the league said in a statement to People

magazine. "The Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce news has been a pop cultural moment we've leaned into in real time, as it's an intersection of sport and entertainment, and we've seen an incredible amount of positivity around the sport."

The NFL and NBC also saw another huge boost to viewership, with Sunday's game drawing 27 million viewers, more than any for a Sunday night contest since the Super Bowl in February. According to the Nielsen data and analytics firm, that figure included a 53% surge among teenage girls. Swift's weekends won't be free all season. She's taking a break from her wildly popular international tour, but performances will resume in November. The reigning Super Bowl champion Chiefs visit the Minnesota Vikings on Sunday. —AFP

## French rapper appeals murder jail term

French rapper MHD on Wednesday appealed a 12-year jail term handed down last month for the 2018 murder of a young man in Paris, his lawyer Antoine Vey said. MHD, real name Mohamed Sylla, was sentenced on September 24 after the victim was rammed with a car before being set upon by a mob and stabbed to death. Five of his fellow defendants were also jailed over the killing, receiving jail terms of between 10 and 18 years, over what prosecutors said was a fight between rival gangs.



French rapper MHD

Four of them have likewise appealed, while the other defendant is currently on the run, a source close to the case said. Three other men were acquitted of the killing on the night of July 5 of Loïc K, 23, run over by a Mercedes in Paris' tenth district. The car was found burnt the following day in a parking lot. Several witnesses placed Sylla at the scene of the crime. A local resident filmed the incident from his window, and the Mercedes was quickly identified as belonging to MHD.

Other witnesses identified him by his haircut or a sweatshirt by Puma—for which he was a brand ambassador—according to investigative reports seen by AFP. He denies any involvement in the murder. The pioneer of afro-trap—a mix of hip-hop and African traditions—MHD rose to fame after becoming a viral sensation in 2015. The 29-year-old was charged with homicide in January 2019 and imprisoned. He was released after a year and a half in custody as investigations continued, and released a new album. The prosecution had demanded he be slapped with an 18-year term. —AFP

## Sports

# Twins, Rangers advance in MLB Playoffs as Phillies, D-Backs win

## Phillies set up a showdown with top-seeded Braves

LOS ANGELES: The Minnesota Twins won a Major League Baseball playoff series for the first time in more than two decades Wednesday, beating Toronto 2-0 to sweep their best-of-three wild card set. The Twins lined up a best-of-five Division Series against the World Series champion Astros, starting on Saturday in Houston. The Texas Rangers also advanced in the American League with home runs from Adolis Garcia and rookie Evan Carter fueling a 7-1 victory over the Tampa Bay Rays.

In the National League, the Philadelphia Phillies set up a showdown with the top-seeded Atlanta Braves after beating the Miami Marlins 7-1 to complete a 2-0 series win. Bryson Stott crushed a grand slam in the sixth inning to seal Philadelphia's victory. The Arizona Diamondbacks meanwhile will face the Los Angeles Dodgers in the divisional series after downing the Milwaukee Brewers 5-2 in another series sweep. The Twins wrapped up their first playoff series win since they beat the Oakland Athletics in the AL Division Series in 2002. With nine straight playoff series defeats they had become a byword for post-season futility, but that streak ended a day after they ended a playoff skid that stood at 18 games -

the longest such slump in any major North American sports league. "It feels amazing," said shortstop Carlos Correa, who drove in a run with the bases loaded to open the scoring in the fourth inning.

Max Kepler then scored on Willi Castro's ground out and that would be all the offense Minnesota needed. "To get that first win in a long time yesterday, it was special," Correa said. "But to get this win right here and move on to the next round, it feels amazing." Toronto left eight runners on base, stranding multiple runners in the first, second, fifth and sixth innings. The Blue Jays had two runners on the fifth when Twins pitcher Sonny Gray picked off Vladimir Guerrero Jr at second base to end the inning.

Correa will be in familiar territory when the Twins travel to Houston. He played for the Astros for seven seasons, helping them reach three World Series and win one in 2017 before signing with the Twins as a free agent. At Tampa Bay, Rangers pitcher Nathan Eovaldi allowed six hits with eight strike outs and no walks over 6 2/3 innings in his third win over the Rays this year. Garcia launched a four-run fourth inning with a 416-foot leadoff homer against Tampa Bay pitcher Zach Eflin.—AFP



MINNEAPOLIS: Alejandro Kirk #30 of the Toronto Blue Jays hits a single against Sonny Gray #54 of the Minnesota Twins during the second inning in Game Two of the Wild Card Series on October 04, 2023. — AFP

## Biles wins 20th world title; US seal team gold

ANTWERP: Simone Biles claimed her 20th world title as she continued her return from a two-year break to lead the United States to a seventh straight women's team gold at the world gymnastics championships in Antwerp on Wednesday. The USA extended their domination going back to 2011, in the absence of Russia, the last team to beat them in a major competition. "It's crazy, we still pulled it out, I'm really proud of the team," said Biles. "It's the seventh title in a row for the United States. For some girls, it's their first World Championship, I'm excited to share that with them."

The Americans scored 167.729 points to take gold ahead of Brazil (165.530) with Olympic hosts France winning bronze (164.064). "She's the leader, having someone so inspiring and so encouraging... Team USA came together and we did what we needed to do tonight," said Biles' teammate Shilese Jones. The team victory gives Biles her 26th world medal and a record-extending 20th world title.

And she could extend that tally as she is still in the running for five other podiums in Antwerp. The Texan has made an impressive comeback, two years after the Tokyo Olympics. Arriving in Japan as the big favorite thanks to her four gold medals won five years earlier in Rio de Janeiro, Biles broke down in full view of a global audience, withdrawing from four of the five finals. She explained that she was fighting against the "twisties", a temporary mental block whereby gymnasts lose their sense of where they are in the air, with the risk of injury when they land.

## Atletico produce another comeback to beat Feyenoord

MADRID: Alvaro Morata hit a brace as Atletico Madrid twice came from behind to beat Feyenoord 3-2 and move top of Champions League Group E on Wednesday. Spanish striker Morata has excelled this season, becoming a key figure for Diego Simeone's side in attack, alongside Antoine Griezmann, who netted Atletico's other goal. The Rojiblancos were inconsistent but moments of quality from Morata and Griezmann proved the difference in an end-to-end clash at the Metropolitano. "They all have great teams, this is the Champions League, you have to suffer to win," Morata told Movistar. "We pressed for it, we knew how to suffer and took three very important points."

The forward said he was delighted by the atmosphere Atletico fans created. "If we continue like this, with the fans giving everything to us, it will be difficult for anyone to beat us," he added. Atletico, knocked out in the group stage last year, were left

with a familiar sinking feeling at the end of their opening group game at Lazio after the opposition goalkeeper headed home in unlikely fashion to deny them victory at the death.

That disappointment increased the pressure on them to beat Feyenoord at home and take control of the group, with any other result likely to cause them big problems down the line. Simeone was without several players because of injury but acknowledged beforehand what mattered was only the result, regardless of who was fit or not. Feyenoord started brightly and took the lead after just seven minutes when Ayase Ueda's shot, saved by Jan Oblak, ricocheted in off Atletico defender Mario Hermoso, who was sliding in to stop the initial effort.

Japan international Ueda was starting in the stead of Feyenoord's suspended top scorer Santiago Gimenez. Morata pulled Atletico back level with a smart finish at the near post after Feyenoord defender Mats Wieffer diverted the ball into his path and away from the offside Saul Niguez. The visitors again took the lead in the 34th minute when David Hancko blasted home from close range after his first attempt from Calvin Stengs' crossed free-kick was saved by Oblak. However Atletico hit back through Griezmann with an acrobatic effort hooked over his own head to level the game at the break.—AFP



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Spanish midfielder #08 Saul Niguez heads the ball during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 2 group E football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Feyenoord on October 4, 2023. — AFP

### 'I'm not 16 any more'

In Antwerp, however, she seems to be getting her career back on track. It was in the same city that Biles won her first world gold 10 years ago during her first world championships, when she claimed four medals, including two golds. "I think each and every time you are crowned world champion it feels a little bit different," Biles told journalists in Belgium. "I'm still surprised, I'm 26, I'm a little bit older so it feels just as good as the first one just because we broke records, we came together, we had fight. It's different but it's exciting. "I'm not like 16 any more, I'm 26, like everything feels different. "I'm thinking a little bit more about my gymnastics. It's not so carefree."



ANTWERP: US' Simone Biles competes on the Balance Beam in the Women's Team Final during the 52nd FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships, in Antwerp on October 4, 2023. — AFP

"Staying at the top and just pushing day in, day out is a little bit harder because I'm older, my body is tired and everybody's like 'Gosh she looks great' and I'm like, I feel I'm going to die sometimes and then I come out here and I rely on my training and get back to work." To achieve this latest title, the 1.42m gymnast didn't even need to perform her incredible Yurchenko double pike which now bears her name. On Wednesday, she settled for a Cheng, executed to perfection to launch the American campaign. Despite a slight imbalance on the beam, her overall performance, highlighted by scoring 15.166 on the floor, was again strong, like on Sunday during the qualifications.—AFP

## Leicester regain Championship top spot, beat Preston

LONDON: Leicester surged back to the top of the Championship with a record-equalling 3-0 win against promotion rivals Preston on Wednesday. The Foxes had been knocked out of pole position by Ipswich's victory against Hull on Tuesday but they responded in emphatic fashion at the King Power Stadium. Two second-half goals from Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall either side of a Kelechi Iheanacho strike sent a message to the rest of the second-tier promotion chasers. The victory was Leicester's ninth in their 10 Championship matches this season, moving them two points clear of Ipswich as they chase an immediate return to the Premier League after last season's relegation.

Leicester have equaled the best start to a Championship season, matching Sheffield United's 27-point haul from the first 10 games of the 2005-06 campaign. "I just said to the players that what you have done today is something that is not normal," Leicester boss Enzo Maresca said. "And not only because your club is Leicester where you achieved something like this. There are other clubs in the Championship who are important like us but they struggle. "So it is something important, but it is early days." Crysencio Summerville's first-half goal clinched Leeds' 1-0 victory over struggling QPR at Elland Road.

QPR goalkeeper Asmir Begovic was sent off in stoppage time to cap another disappointing display for the third-bottom west Londoners. Niall Huggins' first goal of his career helped fourth-placed Sunderland to a 2-0 win against Watford at the Stadium of Light. It was a goal to remember for the 22-year-old defender as his thunderous effort flew in off the underside of the bar two minutes before half-time. Sunderland wrapped up a sixth win from their last eight matches through Abdoullah Ba's 62nd-minute header.

Watford, who handed head coach Valerien Ismael a contract extension on Tuesday, have only won once since the opening weekend of the season. The Hornets' miserable night was completed with three minutes remaining when substitute Ryan Andrews was given a straight red card for a reckless tackle on Jack Clarke. Tommy Conway scored deep into stoppage time to earn Bristol City a 2-1 victory at second-bottom Rotherham, while Swansea were 2-1 winners against Norwich at the Liberty Stadium. Haji Wright headed a late goal as Coventry made it two consecutive wins with a 1-0 victory over Blackburn.—AFP



Leicester City's Nigerian striker Kelechi Iheanacho

## Pedro lifts Lazio as Celtic crash

GLASGOW: Lazio kick-started their Champions League campaign with a last-gasp 2-1 win against Celtic as Pedro netted in the final seconds of Wednesday's clash in Glasgow. Maurizio Sarri's side arrived at Parkhead under a cloud after a wretched run in Serie A. But Lazio banished the gloom in the most dramatic fashion when Pedro headed home with just moments left to stun raucous Parkhead into silence. Celtic took the lead through Japan striker Kyogo Furuhashi's first Champions League goal. However, the Scottish champions' hopes of winning on home soil in the Champions League group stage for the first time in 10 years were dashed.

Matias Vecino headed Lazio's equalizer before the interval and former Chelsea winger Pedro produced the late plot twist. "We had a great first half, then we had a period of being under pressure, but this time we showed more character to stay in the game. When that happens, usually you are rewarded," Sarri said. "I told the lads before the match that we were nearly there, not to listen to what anyone else says. "We are close to being competitive. I hope this result can give us a positive reaction, some confidence and belief."

Sarri's men are languishing in 16th place in Serie A and looked vulnerable for long periods in the east end of Glasgow. But once again they bagged a priceless late goal in Europe's elite club competition after goalkeeper Ivan Provedel's stoppage-time equalizer in their opening group game against Atletico Madrid. Following a defeat against AC Milan at the weekend, Sarri had criticized the state of his squad in the wake of what he deemed a poor transfer window.

This gritty display was hugely encouraging against that troubled backdrop, leaving Lazio second in Group E on the same points as leaders Atletico. Celtic have not claimed three points from a Champions League home game since a 2-1 win over Ajax in 2013 and the wait will go on at least until they host Atletico on October 25. Beaten at Feyenoord in their opening group game this season, Celtic have won just one of their last 23 Champions League group games and face an uphill task to qualify for the last 16.

"We're bitterly disappointed. It was a devastating way to lose because we deserved something, but we'll analyse it and learn the lessons," Celtic boss Brendan Rodgers said. "To concede late on like we did, it's really harsh on us. But there is learning there, you have to secure the ball in the game and if you're not going to win it at that stage, you certainly can't lose it."—AFP

Sports

# Barcelona 'get rid of ghosts' with important win at Porto

## Catalans cling on desperately to secure victory

**PORTO:** Ferran Torres's strike earned Barcelona a tense 1-0 win at Porto in the Champions League on Wednesday, which coach Xavi Hernandez said "got rid of ghosts" the club had from previous years. Barcelona have been eliminated in the opening stage in the past two editions but this hard-fought triumph on the road puts them in a strong position as Group H leaders to avoid a third consecutive strike-out.

Xavi said the trip to the north of Portugal would be the hardest group game and his team had to dig deep, surviving a penalty which was cancelled after a VAR review and an offside goal in the gripping final stages. Barca midfielder Gavi was sent off in stoppage time for a second yellow card as the Catalans clung on desperately to secure victory. "We lacked a lot of calm, a lot of patience (but) this is Europe, it's Porto, it's away from home, everything is hard, very hard," Xavi told reporters, after his 100th game as Barca coach.

"If we talk about negatives there are a lot, but if we talk about positives there are a lot too. "We came from having 'ghosts', but now we've got rid of them. We were able to win away from home against a historic team." Five-time champions Barcelona last won the competition in 2015, with the years since littered with struggle and failure on the continent. Xavi selected youngster Lamine Yamal on the right wing, making him the youngest starter in Champions League history at 16 years and 83 days.

The teenager showed some bright sparks in the first half but largely Porto were on top, cutting through a Barcelona midfield shorn of the injured Pedri and Frenkie de Jong. Barcelona holding midfielder

Oriol Romeu endured a tough night, with Porto harrying him at every possible moment, roared on by a packed Dragao stadium. Brought in from Girona to replace Sergio Busquets, the job is proving a big one for the former Southampton and Chelsea man to handle. He was fortunate to avoid a yellow card in the first half but his team-mates Joao Cancelo, Ronald Araujo and Gavi went into the book - along with coach Xavi.

Mehdi Taremi appealed for a penalty early on after Jules Kounde took a handful of his shirt in the area but it would have been soft. At the other end Joao Felix was involved in Barcelona's best attacking moments, to a cacophony of whistles from Porto fans who had not forgotten his Benfica past. The Eagles beat Porto in the Portuguese Clasico last week, which Felix said would only motivate his old rivals even further. However Porto midfielder Romario Baro lost concentration just before half-time and it proved costly for his side, who had more than held their own.

### Costly error

Romario's under-hit pass was easily stolen by Ilkay Gundogan, who threaded through Torres. The Spanish forward, who replaced injured hitman Robert Lewandowski earlier in the first half, rolled home a low strike under Diogo Costa. Jules Kounde made a superb tackle and Marc-Andre ter Stegen twice denied Galeno as Barcelona did everything they could to keep Porto at bay. Ronald Araujo had cramp and Yamal had to be taken off with a stomach problem, with Barca problems mounting. Referee Anthony Taylor awarded Porto a penalty with 10 minutes to go after Cancelo handled in the



**PORTO:** FC Porto's Iranian forward #09 Mehdi Taremi fights for the ball with Barcelona's French defender #23 Jules Kounde and Barcelona's German goalkeeper #01 Marc-Andre ter Stegen during the UEFA Champions League 1st round day 2 group H football match between FC Porto and FC Barcelona on October 4, 2023. — AFP

box, but after a VAR review, cancelled the decision for an earlier handball by Stephen Eustaquio.

Taremi then scored a brilliant overhead kick but he was offside as he met winger Pepe's cheeky scooped pass, with Barcelona holding on for the three points, despite Gavi's late dismissal. "We had been talking about it, this match was worth half

of the qualification," Torres told Movistar. "It was a win that we had to get however we can, and we showed that we are good with the ball but we know how to suffer without it too. "Football is about taking advantage of opposition mistakes - they put us under a lot of high pressure. The important thing in the end is the three points." — AFP

## Newcastle serve PSG dose of Champions League reality

**NEWCASTLE:** Newcastle had been waiting 20 years for a night like this and it was worth the wait for 50,000 Geordies as the Magpies blew away Paris Saint-Germain 4-1 to announce their arrival as a Champions League threat. The first ever meeting between the clubs pitted the sporting interests of Saudi Arabia up against Qatar. Saudi emerged victorious and in some style as Newcastle's rapid rise less than two years since the Gulf Kingdom's sovereign wealth fund took control of the club shows no signs of stopping. Not since PSG's collapse to lose a 4-0 first leg lead in a 6-1 defeat at Barcelona in 2017 have the French champions suffered such a humbling on the Champions League stage.

That embarrassment triggered the club's Qatari owners to break the world's transfer record twice in a matter of months to land Neymar and Kylian Mbappe. Yet, the star-studded project is still yet to conquer Europe and there were lessons for PSG to learn on and off the pitch at St. James' Park. Despite spending nearly £400 million (\$483 million) on new players, Newcastle are not even among the top spenders in the Premier League since the Saudi-backed takeover. Three of their goalscorers on Wednesday—Miguel Almiron, Sean Longstaff and Fabian Schar—were already at the club when they were fighting relegation from the English top-flight just two years ago.

## Alvarez, Doku push City over Leipzig 3-1

**LEIPZIG:** Julian Alvarez and Jeremy Doku came off the bench to grab late goals and push Manchester City to a 3-1 victory at RB Leipzig in the Champions League on Wednesday. Facing Leipzig in the competition for the third straight year, City dominated from the start. Phil Foden slamming in the opener after some impressive lead-up play from teenage wing-back Rico Lewis.

Clearly outclassed in the first half, Leipzig struck back immediately after half-time, Lois Openda scoring after a sweeping counter attack to equalize. But with Leipzig focused on talisman

Erling Haaland, who scored five in 60 minutes the last time these sides met, it was the Norwegian's understudy who scored the crucial goal, curling in City's second just five minutes after being introduced.

Doku sealed the win with a goal in injury time. City forward Foden praised Alvarez's "magical" goal, telling TNT sports "he's someone we look to for the big goals." "He came on and changed the game. He's a really important player for us." City boss Pep Guardiola praised his "perfect" side, saying "we took the game with a lot of passes and when a team is able to do this, very nice things are going to happen to you." "We played a fantastic game in all departments."

City came into the game after two losses in a row for the first time since January. Guardiola told the post-match press conference the victory put his



**NEWCASTLE:** Newcastle United's Brazilian midfielder #39 Bruno Guimaraes heads at goal but has his shot saved during the UEFA Champions League Group F football match between Newcastle United and Paris Saint-Germain on October 4, 2023. — AFP

The other, Dan Burn, has fought his way to the top from starting his career in the sixth tier of English football at Blyth Spartans and cost £13 million from Brighton in 2021. Both Burn and Longstaff are lifelong fans of their hometown club and grew up watching Newcastle from the stands of St James' Park. "For me and Burny to score is unreal," said Longstaff. "There's a few here who probably thought three years ago we were out the door. I'm so proud to be from Newcastle, I'm over the moon."

PSG have long been criticized for failing to make

the most of the hotbed of talent on their doorstep in the French capital. Most famously, they lost their only Champions League final to Bayern Munich from a goal scored by Parisian-born Kingsley Coman, who left PSG as a teenager. Luis Enrique warned before the game that Newcastle were the side from the lowest pot of seeds for the group stage that everyone wanted to avoid. Yet it did not stop the former Barcelona boss from naming three big money summer signings Ousmane Dembele, Goncalo Ramos and Randal Kolo Muani alongside Mbappe in a front four. — AFP



**LEIPZIG:** Leipzig's German goalkeeper #21 Janis Blaswich (left) misses to save the ball as Manchester City scores the 1-2 goal (scorer not in picture) during the UEFA Champions League Group G football match between RB Leipzig and Manchester City on October 4, 2023. — AFP

team's recent struggles "in perspective". "People say 'oh, you lost a game, what happened?' but you need to put it in perspective, after what we've won in the last years, we're still here and we have

got this passion." Leipzig manager Marco Rose called the result "a deserved win for City, even if we would have wished to defend that 1-1 until the end." "We'll continue to learn from the best." — AFP

## Messi-less Miami's playoff hopes fade

**MIAMI:** Missing Lionel Messi again, Inter Miami's hopes of squeezing into the MLS playoffs suffered a body blow on Wednesday with a 4-1 defeat to Chicago Fire. The defeat leaves Miami next to bottom of the Eastern Conference and five points off the last playoff spot with just three games remaining and their destiny no longer in their own hands. Wednesday's action saw five teams in the Western Conference, including defending champions Los Angeles FC, earn places in the playoffs alongside top seed St. Louis City.

The prospect of seeing the Argentine World Cup winner Messi in action drew a record home crowd of 62,124 to Soldier Field in Chicago but with no Messi, it was Chicago's own diminutive number 10 who put on the show. Swiss former Liverpool and Bayern Munich playmaker Xherdan Shaqiri scored twice with his compatriot Maren Haile-Selassie also grabbing a brace.

Chicago's win strengthens their chances of making the post-season for the first time since 2017, moving them up to eighth place. All the action came in the second half with Shaqiri opening the scoring four minutes after the interval, finishing off a fine passing move with a left-foot shot at the back post. Miami bounced back swiftly though with Josef Martinez converting a penalty after a handball from Chicago defender Jonathan Dean. Chicago regained the lead in the 62nd minute when substitute Haile-Selassie slotted home after being played in by Fabian Herbers.

Haile-Selassie struck again to make it 3-1 with Miami's back line slow to react to a cross from the right from Ousmane Doumbia and then Shaqiri completed the rout with a smart finish after he was put through by Gaston Gimenez. "It's beautiful to see Soldier Field packed full for soccer game and I hope they're going to come more and more because we showed today how good we are and the team spirit is here," said Shaqiri. "We needed that win obviously and every game now is a final...It was a perfect night for us," added the 31-year-old.

In the Western Conference, the Seattle Sounders clinched their place in the playoffs thanks to a last-gasp winner in a 2-1 victory against the Los Angeles Galaxy. The Sounders, who missed out on the playoffs last year, secured their 14th playoff appearance in 15 seasons. But they had to wait until the sixth minute of stoppage time when Cristian Roldan fired home the winner. Last year's MLS Cup winners Los Angeles FC, earned their post-season spot in more emphatic fashion with a 5-1 thrashing of struggling Minnesota United. Denis Bouanga hit a first half hat-trick, his fourth triple of the season, after his team had fallen a goal behind. — 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

### Change of Name

**I, VINITHA ROSHNI D'SOUZA**, holder of Indian Passport No. X5373929, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as VINEETHA ROSHNI D'SOUZA. (C#4242) - 06-10-2023.

**I, SHABNAM FIROZ SHAIKH**, holder of Indian Passport No. W4671252 having permanent (H.No. 48, Flat No. 302, 3rd Floor, Abdul Qadir Madoo Manzil, Bhusor Mohalla, Bhiwandi Thane, Maharashtra, INDIA n Pin Code: 421302) residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as SHABNAM AHMED MUSTAFA SHAIKH. (C#4240) - 05-10-2023

**I, Osman Bin Salam S/o:** Salam Bin Mohammed Bin Mahfooz R/o: 23-1-915, Moghalpura, inside Dowdi Kalyan, Hyd, TS. Passport No: M9886038, do hereby announce that I have changed my name to OSMAN BIN SALAM BIN MAHFOOZ. For all future record purposes. (C#4241) - 05-10-2023

**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.

## Nations dangle rewards for Asian Games glory

Kuwait medalists gifted; India doles out \$36,000 for a gold



Kuwaiti karateka Salman Al-Mousawi rejoices after winning the bronze medal. — KUNA



HANGZHOU: The Kuwait national handball team celebrate after winning a bronze medal on Thursday. Kuwait defeated their Japanese counterparts 31-30 to win the third-place match at the 19th Asian Games.

### New Zealand crush England

**AHMEDABAD:** Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra smashed centuries to power New Zealand to a crushing nine-wicket win over defending champions England in the opening match of the World Cup on Thursday. England, who were without talismanic Ben Stokes due to a hip injury, were restricted to 282-9 after the Kiwis elected to bowl at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. The left-handed pair of Conway (152) and Ravindra (123) then put on an unbeaten stand of 273 for the second wicket as the Black Caps comfortably overhauled the target with 13.4 overs to spare.

The result was a contrast to the epic World Cup final at Lord's in 2019 between the two teams when England won a tied match on boundary count back. "Sometimes it's unbelievable at times, but great to have a great day out," said Ravindra. "The bowlers bowled well and we were lucky enough to have Devon out there. I have spent a lot of time with Dev and we are very, very close mates." New Zealand, led by Tom Latham in the absence of regular skipper Kane Williamson, kept England down to a below-par total despite Joe Root's 77.

Ravindra and Conway made short work of the target as they smashed the opposition bowlers all around the ground after losing Will Young early to left-arm quick Sam Curran. Conway hit the first ton of the tournament off 83 balls studded with 13 fours and two sixes and soon reached 1,000 runs in 23 ODI matches. The 23-year-old Ravindra quickly followed with his maiden ODI century off 82 balls with nine fours and four sixes, raising his bat to acknowledge the smattering of fans inside the 132,000-capacity arena.

Conway surpassed his previous best of 138 as he and Ravindra pummeled the bowlers for an emphatic win which also provided an early boost to their net run-rate. "It was a disappointing day," admitted England captain Jos Buttler. "We were very much outplayed by New Zealand but it's still just one loss in a long tournament." Earlier, fast bowler Matt Henry returned figures of 3-48 for the New Zealand while spinners Mitchell Santner and Glenn Phillips took two wickets each. Dawid Malan and Jonny Bairstow gave England a brisk start but Malan fell, caught behind off Henry and Bairstow's knock was cut short by Santner, who got the batsman out for 33 off his left-arm spin.

Harry Brook took on Ravindra in the left-arm spinner's first over to smash two fours and a six before the bowler had his revenge on the final delivery. Brook, coming into the starting line-up for Stokes, attempted another big hit and was caught at deep mid-wicket. Root reached his 37th ODI half-century off 57 balls, an innings laced with two fours and one six off a reverse scoop shot. But he fell to Phillips' off-spin while attempting a reverse sweep and England slipped further before Adil Rashid (15) and Mark Wood (13) ensured the team played out their 50 overs with an unbeaten stand of 30. — AFP

**HANGZHOU:** Countries desperate for Asian Games success are dangling houses, money, cars and even government jobs as incentives to athletes to bring home medals from Hangzhou. Competitors at the Games, which end on Sunday, publicly say they are more interested in glory than financial gain. But medals, especially of the gold variety, often come with a windfall that can change the lives of athletes and their families, especially those who are amateurs rather than professionals in their sport.

India doles out \$36,000 for a gold at the Asian Games, a fortune in a country where tens of millions of people live below the poverty line and average annual income is \$2,380. For some Indian competitors, the even bigger prize is a stable salary - Olympic and Asian Games medalists can have a government job if they want one. Wrestler Vinesh Phogat was promoted to the rank of a senior railway official after her gold at the Asian Games in Jakarta in 2018, joining fellow wrestlers Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik. Singapore's National Olympic Committee

awards a \$146,000 prize to individual athletes who clinch gold, a hefty sum but barely enough to buy a small flat in the wealthy city-state.

Indonesia will gift a free home for any Asian Games medalist - as long as they provide the land to build it on. "For those who have land, we will build houses," Indonesia's Asian Games chef de mission Basuki Hadimuljono told local media.

If Kuwaiti gold medalists Abdullah Al-Rashidi and Yaqoub Al-Youha do not already drive, now would be the time to learn. Because a Kuwaiti businessman has offered to buy a car for those who win gold, with 60-year-old shooter Al-Rashidi set to be gifted a Volvo. In South Korea, male athletes who win gold at the Games gain exemption from at least 18 months of military service. It is controversial back home, with one triumphant competitor in Hangzhou declining to talk about it when asked by AFP.

In most countries' cases, the rewards are cash. But asked what it meant to them, athletes at the Games invariably said they were motivated by

higher goals than mere material reward. National pride is the most usual refrain, while Philippine boxing great Felix Marcial is fighting to make his family proud. "It's for myself, for my wife, for my country, and for my father because I'm not here right now if not because of my father," he told AFP after winning his semi-final on Wednesday. But there's no doubt getting a monetary boost can be life-changing for some athletes, especially those from a poor background.

Neeraj Chopra is a world, Olympic and Asian Games champion, but it was not always a gilded life for the Indian javelin great. After a success in 2017, and before becoming the icon he is today in India, Chopra became a junior commissioned officer in the army. "My father is a farmer, mother a housewife... nobody in my family has a government job so everybody is happy," Chopra said after joining the army. "For me it is a sort of a relief because now I am able to help my family financially besides continuing with my training." — AFP

### Women's squad seeks share of Saudi boom

**TAIF:** As Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar pack Saudi stadiums, a quieter but equally dramatic transformation is unfolding for women's professional football, which didn't even exist in the kingdom five years ago. On a recent evening in the mountain city of Taif, the Saudi women's national team ran through a one-touch passing drill ahead of a game against Pakistan, the latest in a series of friendlies intended to give the players some much-needed match experience.

The squad only formed two years ago and entered the FIFA rankings in March, at 171st place. That milestone followed a string of firsts last year, from an inaugural international match against the Seychelles - a 2-0 win - to the establishment of a domestic women's premier league and a formal bid to host the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup. All told, it has been a head-spinning few years for Saudi women who weren't even allowed to attend football matches until January 2018, let alone play at the professional level.

Yet 22-year-old midfielder Layan Jouhari told AFP she and her teammates were measuring their progress "one step at a time", even as they nurture ambitious long-term

goals like playing at the World Cup one day. "I watched the previous World Cup before this just out of curiosity and interest, but this year's World Cup was different," Jouhari said. "I watched it with a different perspective, like these are now my opponents."

#### Reforms and skepticism

The eager Saudi players are standard-bearers for broader changes afoot in Saudi Arabia, a conservative petro-state trying to open up to the world while shifting away from fossil fuels. In recent years, key restrictions that made the kingdom a magnet for criticism from women's rights activists have been lifted, although critics argue that legal discrimination remains in place in areas like divorce and child custody, and that women are frequently ensnared in an ongoing crackdown on dissent. A FIFA+ documentary released last month tracks how the national team has seized on new freedoms, contrasting the hostility its members once received for pursuing a "masculine" sport with today's new era of deep-pocketed government support. A press release for the film also highlights fans of the team outside Saudi Arabia, notably a social media post from the Pele Foundation describing its first FIFA match as "a historic day not only for you, but for everyone who loves football".

But not everyone is keen to fully embrace the Saudi football project. Talks this year about the Saudi tourism board sponsoring the World Cup drew criticism from co-hosts



TAIF: Players of Saudi women's football team attend a training session in Taif. — AFP

New Zealand and Australia as well as US star Alex Morgan before FIFA announced in March no deal had been reached. Monika Staab, the first coach of the Saudi national team who is now technical director, told AFP that critics would benefit from seeing the changes in Saudi Arabia up close. "Someone who is not knowing what is happening here, I always recommend, come here to Saudi, have a look - witness yourself what is happening," she said.

For many national team players, football

was a fact of life well before Saudi Arabia began championing women's sports under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's Vision 2030 reform agenda. "Football has been around in my family for as long as I remember. My older sisters used to play football and they made me fall in love with the game," said Bayan Sadagah, the 28-year-old team captain. The new opportunities, however, have led her to consider quitting her day job as a nurse so she can focus on "one path". — AFP