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## KUWAIT STANDS WITH PALESTINE

MPs support Palestinian struggle • Kuwaiti athletes don keffiyehs • Kuwait hands \$2m to UNRWA



HANGZHOU: Kuwait's athletes wear the Palestinian keffiyeh in a show of solidarity with Palestine during the closing ceremony of the 19th Asian Games. (More pics on Page 16)

By B Izzak and Agencies

**KUWAIT:** Forty-five Kuwaiti lawmakers on Sunday expressed their total support for the right of the Palestinian people to resist the Zionist occupation and retaliate to its attacks and atrocities until they get their freedom. In a statement regarding the breakout of hostilities in Gaza, the lawmakers said the events that began early Saturday are a natural response to atrocities and practices by the Zionist entity.

They called the Palestinian offensive as a "legitimate act" in response to the crimes committed by the Zionist occupiers against Palestinian civilians and Muslim holy places, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, insisting that such actions conform with international law. The statement called on Arab and Muslim peoples to support the Palestinian people and their resistance "in all forms possible" to enable them to confront continued Zionist aggressions.

It also called on Arab and Islamic governments to solidly back the struggle of the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights, stressing their opposition to any Arab normalization of relations with the Zionist entity. In a separate statement, MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem said that the Palestinian cause will never die because it is "a doctrine in the heart of all Muslims", adding that those who don't see Palestine as their cause "should review their stance".

Meanwhile, Kuwait's athletes donned the Palestinian keffiyeh in a show of solidarity with Palestine during the closing ceremony of the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China on

Sunday. This move reflects Kuwait's principled stance in support of Palestinians' rights and their fight against the occupation. The ministry of social affairs launched an urgent relief campaign for the Palestinian people as a result of the current events in Palestine. The ministry invited local charity organizations to register for participation in the campaign.

Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Marri on Sunday handed Kuwait's contribution of \$2 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The ambassador affirmed that Kuwaiti aid is in "accordance with the permanent directives of the high political leadership and on the instructions of the Kuwaiti government, stressing the 'firm' position of Kuwait on supporting the Palestinian cause and committing to support the humanitarian situation of Palestinian refugees in the region.

Marri praised UNRWA's role and efforts in providing basic services such as health and education to Palestinian refugees in its areas of operations, noting the affirmation of Kuwait's efforts to partner with UN organizations and cooperate constructively with them in order to achieve the development goals of communities. UNRWA Acting Director of External Relations Tamara Alrifai said with this additional contribution, Kuwait shows Palestine refugees that its long-standing support is still firm.

Kuwait's sufficient funding to UNRWA will enable it to carry out its mandate and maintain



AMMAN: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan Hamad Al-Marri hands Kuwait's contribution of \$2 million to UNRWA Acting Director of External Relations Tamara Alrifai. —KUNA

all critical services, contributing to the wellbeing and feeling of stability of Palestinian refugees, Alrifai said. "UNRWA is truly grateful to Kuwait's government and people for their generosity and solidarity and the constant contribution is very welcome and will hopefully encourage other partners to come forward," she added. UNRWA serves Palestinian refugees across its five fields of operation in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza and the West Bank.

### World cannot 'unplug' existing energy system



Sultan Al-Jaber



Saad Al-Barrak

**RIYADH:** The president of the upcoming COP28 climate talks in Dubai called on Sunday for governments to abandon "fantasies" such as hastily ditching existing energy infrastructure in pursuit of climate goals. "We cannot unplug the energy system of today before we build the new system of tomorrow. It is simply not practical or possible," Sultan Al-Jaber said during the opening session of Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Climate Week, a UN-organized conference hosted in the Saudi capital Riyadh. "We must separate facts from fiction, reality from fantasies, impact from ideology, and we must ensure that we avoid the traps of division and distraction."

A week dedicated to climate change in the MENA region is imperative given the magnitude of the matter, Kuwait's oil minister said on Sunday, hailing the initiative as beneficial towards regional climate change goals. The initiative comes ahead of COP28, Dr Saad Al-Barrak, who doubles as Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs, told KUNA, saying the gathering allows participants a chance to "sort out their priorities" in the runup to the global event. Much of international climate diplomacy revolves around

Continued on Page 6

## Hamas keeps up Zionist assault

2 Zionists killed in Egypt • Hezbollah hits Zionist posts

**JERUSALEM:** The Zionist entity, reeling from the deadliest attack on its territory in half a century, formally declared war on Hamas Sunday as the conflict's death toll surged to 1,000 after the Palestinian group launched a massive surprise assault from Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu steered the shocked nation for a "long and difficult" war ahead after Hamas launched a barrage of rockets at the Zionist entity before dawn on Saturday and sent in fighters who took at least 100 hostages.

The bloody escalation sharply heightened Middle East tensions and killed more than 600 people on the Zionist side, the country's worst losses since the 1973 Arab-Zionist war when it came under attack from a coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria. In Gaza — which was hammered by Zionist air strikes on 800 targets ahead of what many feared may be a looming ground invasion — officials reported at least 370 deaths, with thousands more wounded across the war zone.

Tens of thousands of Zionist forces were deployed to battle holdout Hamas fighters in the south, where the bodies of civilians had been found strewn on roads and in town centers. Gun battles raged as the Zionist army sought to secure desert regions

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Fire and smoke rise after a Zionist air strike targeted the National Bank in Gaza City on Oct 8, 2023. — AFP

### Death toll from Afghan quakes doubles to 2,000

**HERAT, Afghanistan:** The death toll from a series of earthquakes in western Afghanistan rose sharply again on Sunday to more than 2,000, with nearly 10,000 injured, as rescue workers dug through razed villages for vanishing signs of life. More than 1,300 homes were toppled when Saturday's magnitude 6.3 quake — followed by eight strong aftershocks — jolted hard-to-reach areas 30 km northwest of the provincial capital of Herat, according to officials.

In rural Zinda Jan district, dozens of households were reduced to jumbles of broken masonry, where makeshift rescue teams dug trenches in the hope of unearthing survivors. "Our people witnessed an unprecedented earthquake," said disaster management ministry spokesman Mullah Janan Sayeq, putting the number of dead at 2,053 across 13 villages. "For the treatment of the victims of the incident we are doing our best," he told reporters in Kabul.

"On-site search operations in the affected area are ongoing," he added, warning the fatality figures would likely rise higher still. One further aftershock of magnitude 4.2 hit the same area around 7:00 am (0230 GMT) on Sunday morning, according to the United States Geological Survey.

In Sarboland village of Zinda Jan district, an AFP reporter saw homes ruined near the epicenter of the

quakes, which shook the area for more than five hours. Guttled homes showed personal belongings flapping in the harsh wind, as women and children lingered out in the open preparing to spend the night under an open sky. "In the very first shake all the houses collapsed," said 42-year-old Bashir Ahmad. "Those who were inside the houses were buried," he said. "There are families we have heard no news from."

Nek Mohammad told AFP he was at work when the first quake struck at around 11:00 am (0630 GMT). "We came home and saw that actually there was nothing left. Everything had turned to sand," said the 32-year-old, adding that around 30 bodies had been recovered. "So far, we have nothing. No blankets or anything else. We are here left out at night with our martyrs," he said.

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## Local

# National Guard's critical role in securing Kuwait's vital infrastructure stressed

## Sheikh Faisal conducts inspection tour of First Protection Brigade



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah during the inspection tour. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah directed on Sunday the continuation of exercises and data to align with the latest technologies and operational methods in the field of protection and security. This directive was issued in a statement by Sheikh Faisal, as quoted in a press release issued by the National Guard.

This statement followed an inspection tour he conducted of the First Protection Brigade, during which he was briefed on the operations of the Third

Facilities Protection Battalion responsible for safeguarding the state's critical infrastructure. This infrastructure includes the Doha East and West power plant, water distillation facilities and the Mutlaa transmission station.

Sheikh Faisal emphasized the vital role played in securing these critical sectors, which are the lifeblood of the country. "The capabilities and expertise we observed in the field of protection, inspection and interactions with the public reflect

our ongoing efforts to enhance the National Guard forces and equip them with the best weapons and equipment," he noted.

The statement further mentioned that during his tour, Sheikh Faisal was briefed on the procedures employed in the insurance process, inspection devices, equipment used at entry points and the protocol for handling vehicles and individuals, as well as the deployment of fixed and mobile patrols around these sites to ensure the security of fences and facilities.

## Palestine envoy congratulates Crown Prince

By Rami Tahboub  
Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait

In the name of the President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization Mahmoud Abbas and on behalf of the Palestinian community in Kuwait, I am pleased to congratulate His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the third anniversary of his appointment as the Crown Prince, and pray to Almighty Allah to protect him and grant him good health for the service of the dear country Kuwait. May Allah protect him from all evil and safeguard Kuwait so that it can continue to support Palestine, its people and its cause.



Rami Tahboub



Kuwait Times Content Creator Dhoha Alessa displaying Kuwait Times' archives to the visitors. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Kuwait Times' press printing team interacting with the children.

## Students visit Kuwait Times and Kuwait News

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times and Kuwait News welcomed a group of students alongside their parents on Sunday to learn more about journalism. Public Relations and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeeb, content creator Dhoha Alessa and reporter Ghadeer Ghloom took the visitors on a tour of the Kuwait Times building, where both parents and students had a chance to discover the process of publishing a newspaper.

Alessa took the visitors to the Kuwait Times archives to take a look at the earliest editions of Kuwait Times and travel back through Kuwait's history of news. Everyone was then taken to the printing press to get a closer look at the machines that print the newspaper. Kuwait Times' press team gave a thorough explanation on how the printing



Students display a copy of Kuwait Times' first edition.

process functions and the difference between the new and old printers.

Alnaqeeb then introduced the visitors to the artistic warehouse, where creativity and innovation comes to life. She explained the coworking space is where most of the initial planning, organizing and outlining takes place. The visitors were finally taken to the studio, where Alessa prepared a fun project for parents and children, where they were asked questions on how well they think they know one another.



Visitors exploring Kuwait Times' studio.



Visitors exploring Kuwait Times' warehouse.



Public Relations and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeeb showing Kuwait Times' 62nd anniversary copy.

Local

# As prices ease, gold remains 'a safe haven' for families

## Kuwait's gold souks come alive amid renewed buying interest

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** In recent days, Kuwait's gold market has seen increased activity among buyers due to a slight decrease in gold prices. A gram of 21-carat gold was priced at approximately KD 15.56, with a gold guinea coin reaching KD 124.45 as of Wednesday. Kuwait Times observed the buying trend among customers and interviewed them about their interest in purchasing gold in light of the global economic situation.

Mohammad Hussain, a single individual, shared that his family began buying gold occasionally since the pandemic, viewing gold as a secure way to save money. He emphasized that despite not having his own family yet, this strategy helped him navigate financially challenging days, particularly during the post-pandemic recovery period when he sold some of his gold savings at higher prices.

Abbar Malek mentioned that due to her own economic situation, she reduced her gold purchases in the post-pandemic period. The global rise in prices has increased her spending on essential items. However, she recognizes the significance of taking advantage of the gold price drop to enhance her family's financial security.

Hajar Abdullah, a young woman, expressed a different perspective. She doesn't consider buying gold as a necessary means of saving money. Instead, she relies on her freelance small business, which generates sufficient profits for her savings. Hajar believes that the world is evolving with new ways to achieve financial security and that depending solely on purchasing gold could be a risky move toward economic stability.

Hajar's mother disagreed, asserting that despite global developments, gold remains the safest option for families and individuals to save and

protect themselves from financial fluctuations. She noted that many people looking for financial security have recently turned to investing in gold, whether through online platforms or traditional methods.

In light of the uncertain political and economic situations in certain countries, many residents are seeking to secure their financial future by investing in gold. Additionally, some gold shop owners informed Kuwait Times that customers have been focusing on purchasing pure gold items, indicating a growing trend toward investment in gold.

A recent report by the World Bank revised its forecast for Kuwait's GDP growth in 2023, lowering it to 0.8 percent compared to the previous estimate of 1.3 percent growth in June. The World Bank also anticipated that real GDP per capita would contract by -0.1 percent in 2023, but return to positive growth of 1.7 percent in 2024.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's gold market is witnessing an increased activity recently following a slight drop in gold jewelry prices.

## Kuwait participates in 18th Arab youth meeting in Jordan

**AMMAN:** The 18th meeting of the Youth of Arab Capitals was inaugurated on Sunday, featuring the participation of Kuwaiti delegates and representatives from 13 other Arab countries. This event is organized by the Jordanian ministry of youth in collaboration with the League of Arab States, held under the theme "Arab Youth Forum and the Labor Market: Present and Future."

Israa Al-Fedhala, the leader of the Kuwaiti delegation, highlighted that Kuwait's involvement aligns with the strategy of the Public Authority for Youth. Their aim is to foster exchange and learning from Arab experiences, empower Kuwaiti youth, enhance their capabilities and support their projects, recognizing them as valuable assets to the nation.

Fedhala emphasized that the Arab meeting is focused on exploring the youth-labor market relationship in the context of technological advancements, discussing both challenges and opportunities. This forum serves as a platform to gain insights from Arab experiences and harness the successes and opportunities they offer.

She further mentioned that the Kuwaiti delegation would contribute a specialized session on "the role of government and private institutions in



A group photo of the participants attending the 18th meeting of the Youth of Arab Capitals. —KUNA photos

training and preparing youth for the labor market". They plan to present a working paper showcasing Kuwait's efforts in supporting and involving youth through numerous opportunities provided by the Public Authority for Youth.

Jordanian Minister of Youth Mohammed Nabulsi highlighted Jordan's commitment to youth-related initiatives that encourage their participation in political, economic and social spheres. He announced that the recommendations from the participating delegations would be submitted to the Council of Arab Youth Ministers, serving as the

roadmap for the 19th meeting next year.

Nourhan Abbas, representing the Arab League, reiterated the Arab League Council's dedication to supporting Arab youth across various domains and promoting such youth gatherings to facilitate communication among Arab youth. It's worth noting that the Youth of Arab Capitals meeting is a key annual event organized by the Council of Arab Ministers of Youth and Sports. It is held under the auspices of the League of Arab States and encompasses various youth activities, seminars, lectures and workshops. — KUNA



**AMMAN:** Kuwaiti delegates at the 18th meeting of the Youth of Arab Capitals in Amman on Sunday.



World Medical Association's 74th annual meeting held in Kigali, Rwanda.

## KMA assumes presidency of WMA

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Medical Association has announced its assumption of the position of President of the World Medical Association (WMA) during the 74th annual meeting held in Kigali, Rwanda. This victory came after winning the elections at the previous annual meeting held in Berlin.

Dr Abdullah Al-Banna, the society's treasurer, said on Sunday that this presidency represents global recognition of Kuwait's advanced standing in the field of medicine. It also serves as an acknowledgment of the accomplishments of Kuwait's healthcare sector. He further expressed gratitude to HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince, thanking them for their unwavering support in elevating Kuwait's reputation on the global stage.



Dr Lujain Al-Qadmani



Dr Al-Banna also extended his appreciation to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences for its consistent support in promoting the medical society's progress in scientific areas, both domestically and internationally. Dr Lujain Al-Qadmani, the representative of the medical association and the current session's President of the World Medical Association, outlined the priorities for this session. They include addressing climate change, sustainable food systems, universal health coverage, the leadership role of women in the healthcare system and the application of artificial intelligence in the healthcare field. — KUNA

## Works of 50 artists on display at 'Oman in Heart of Kuwait'

**KUWAIT:** Oman Ambassador to Kuwait Saleh Al-Kharusi said the art exhibition "Oman in the Heart of Kuwait" highlights the importance of coordination among the cultural and artistic institutions of the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait. The exhibition reflects the deep-rooted historical relations between the two countries, he told KUNA after inaugurating the event. The exhibition, which opened at the Kuwaiti Syndicate of Media and Artists on Saturday under the auspices of Ambassador Al-Kharusi, gathered artistic works of nearly 50 Omani artists.

Chairman of Kuwait's Syndicate of Media and Artists Dr Nabil Al-Failakawi reaffirmed the Syndicate's support for arts inside and outside Kuwait, saying "We are keen on building bridges of cooperation and communication with all artists in the Arabian Gulf region." The agenda of the exhibition includes an art show, a poetic symposium and a music seminar on Monday, Dr Al-Failakawi noted.

On her part, Lyali Al-Ghareibi, an Omani formal artist, said she is participating in the show with a painting of a caring and passionate sister in the traditional Omani garb "to highlight our national identity." Hatem Al-Sheili, another Omani artist, said he is participating with China sculpture of a magnified human ear which has copper in the middle. The exhibits also include four works of art by Majed Al-Rwahi, a painting by Zakiya Al-Batashi, and three paintings - one by Jamal Al-Jassasi and another by his 15-year-old daughter and a third by his brother. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Oman Ambassador to Kuwait Saleh Al-Kharusi inaugurates the art exhibition 'Oman in the Heart of Kuwait' on Saturday. — KUNA photos



Paintings on display at the exhibition.



Kuwait Fire Force holds exhibition in collaboration with EQUATE. — KUNA

## Kuwait Fire Force campaign educates public on safety

**KUWAIT:** The campaign 'A Safe House,' launched by Kuwait Fire Force in cooperation with Equate, is aimed at educating families and housekeepers about safety procedures and preventing accidents and fires. The campaign that kicked off on the fairgrounds in Mishref on September 26 continued at the Avenues mall until Saturday. It will then shift to Kuwait University on Monday and continue until Thursday. The activity features lectures, seminars and an exhibition demonstrating how to follow safety procedures at home. — KUNA

## Govt to probe private sector's reluctance to hire Kuwaitis

**KUWAIT:** The Cabinet has called upon the Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority of Manpower Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to designate technical teams for the purpose of assessing the compliance of private companies across various sectors with regard to employing Kuwaiti nationals. This emphasis is particularly directed towards private companies that are mandated to hire a minimum of 90 percent of their workforce from Kuwaiti citizens. Informed sources have revealed that the government has observed a significant gap between the number of Kuwaiti nationals employed in major private sector firms and the potential job opportunities available in these organizations, especially in light of the high unemployment rate among Kuwaiti youth.

The sources have stated that the government has identified instances in which certain private entities are evading the legal requirements pertaining to Kuwaiti employment in the private sector. These sectors are allegedly entering contracts with other companies for employment purposes or establishing companies under the names of different owners. As a result, many expatriate workers are found in these supposed private entities. An extensive number of Kuwaiti nationals are listed as employees of these companies, thereby giving the false impression that these private entities are complying with the stipulated percentage of Kuwaiti employment, with Kuwaiti citizens ostensibly forming the majority of the workforce.

The sources further noted that private entities that attempt to circumvent the Kuwaiti employment laws by replacing Kuwaiti nationals with expatriate workers will face penalties. These penalties may include the revocation of government tenders or privileges.

Upon reviewing the employment records of such private entities, it becomes evident that the majority of employees are actually working for other companies that have contractual agreements with the mentioned private entity or have established a deceptive arrangement, all in an effort to inflate the percentage of Kuwaiti employees.

The sources also revealed that the Cabinet has instructed the manpower authority to hold private entities accountable if they resort to these loopholes as a means to substitute Kuwaiti employees with expatriates. Such private entities will be prohibited from engaging in contracts with companies to hire expatriate workers. Instead, if they wish to hire employees, they must utilize a company that can provide them with Kuwaiti employees.

### Photo of the day



A honey bee collects nectar from a flower in a park in Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# MoI mulls action plan to clear Jleeb of all violators

## Several residency violators arrested in raid

**KUWAIT:** The Interior Ministry is planning to reactivate an old action plan that has been kept in abeyance for months in order to curb the increasing violations in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area, be it residency law violations or rising cases of immoral activities, illicit liquor trade and cases of stealing and storing materials from government offices, sources said. The sources said that there are several ideas in contemplation that includes cordoning off the entire area for several days or dividing it into many sectors and fortifying the security presence there in coordination with other entities such as Commerce Ministry and Municipality to nab the violators and sternly deal with them.

The ministry is also studying the means to remove the obstacles that come in the way of law-abiding residents who leave the area to go to other places

for work. The sources added that the plan to cordon off the area does not intend to evacuate the entire area since evacuation means the residents will have to move to other areas. The primary objective of the plan is to clear the area of violators and anti-social elements. The sources added that the continued inspection campaigns in the area resulted in arresting

thousands of residency violators. Meanwhile, residency detectives arrested five expats who were engaged in selling subsidized goods in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. The detectives also arrested 27 residency violators. The arrests were made during a surprise campaign following tips. All arrested were sent to deportation center according to sources.



A busy market in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

## Kuwait charity launches project for Syrian refugees

**IRBID, Jordan:** Kuwaiti-based International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) launched on Sunday a project to address learning difficulties for Syrian refugees in Jordan. In remarks to KUNA Sunday, the project's Supreme Committee Head, Bader Al-Sumait, said that the \$2 million project stemmed from the strategic vision of the organization, which succeeded over the past three years to implement more than 210 educational projects in 58 countries.

Al-Sumait pointed out that the current stage of project, inaugurated today, focused on training teachers and produce good results. Representatives of the Center for Refugee, Displaced Persons and Forced Migration Studies, the Kuwait Humanitarian Excellence Association, the Islamic Development Bank, the Islamic Solidarity Fund and the Jordanian Yarmouk University participated in the inauguration ceremony. — KUNA



Project to address learning difficulties for Syrian refugees launched in Yarmouk University in Jordan. — KUNA photos



International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) inaugurates project to address learning difficulties for Syrian refugees in Jordan.



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Architects warn against rushed quake reconstruction in Morocco

## Indian flood toll up to 77

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# Saudi-Zionist deal derailed: Analysts

## Palestinian attack forces detour on normalization talks

WASHINGTON: The Palestinian attack on the Zionist entity has dealt a severe blow to momentum to secure a landmark US-brokered deal between Zionists and Saudi Arabia, analysts say. On Saturday, Palestinian fighters in the besieged Gaza strip fired thousands of rockets as scores infiltrated occupied lands, leaving Zionists in total shock. As rocket fire continued, Hamas announced its operation, calling on all Palestinian factions and their allies to rise up.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Zionist entity was at war. Just weeks earlier he had brushed aside the Palestinian issue during a speech at the United Nations and said normalization in 2020 with three other Arab nations in the so-called Abraham Accords had "heralded a new age of peace."

Netanyahu also said Zionists were on the cusp of a bigger prize — recognition by Saudi Arabia, guardian of Islam's two holiest sites. President Joe Biden, eager before next year's US election for a major diplomatic win, has pushed for a deal, and more talks were expected in coming weeks — despite skepticism from some of Biden's fellow Democrats about the proposed security guarantees to the conservative kingdom, whose rights record has long been under scrutiny.

"It was always a tough hill to climb, and that hill just got a lot steeper," said Brian Katulis, vice president of policy at the Middle East Institute in Washington. The Palestinian attack on Saturday "makes it harder to sweep those complicated issues under the rug the way the 2020 Abraham Accords did," he said.

Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has spoken recently of progress with the Zionist entity but also insisted on movement on the Palestinian cause, seen as a priority for King Salman. Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry returned to familiar language Saturday, saying in a statement that the kingdom had been warning of an "explosive situation as a result of the continued occupation and deprivation of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights."

Aziz Alghashian, a Saudi expert on Saudi-Zionist relations, said the statement was intended to dispel any notion that the kingdom would prioritize normalization at the expense of supporting the Palestinians. "This kind of situation has made Saudi Arabia go back to its traditional role," he said. "Netanyahu put another obstacle to these normalization talks because he said this is now a war. I don't anticipate normalization is going to take place against the backdrop of war," Alghashian said.

A US official said it was "premature" to discuss the violence's effect on normalization, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the conflict with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, by telephone. A Saudi readout of the call said Prince Faisal stressed "the kingdom's rejection of targeting civilians in any way and the need for all parties to respect international humanitarian law."

### Public opposition

Netanyahu has cast diplomacy with the Palestinians as antiquated and described a future of friendship with Gulf Arabs, who share the Zionists' hostility toward Iran's clerical rulers. Netanyahu's government, the most right-wing in the occupation's history, has continued to pursue settlements, although the prime minister backtracked in 2020 on annexation in the West Bank as he sought to woo the United Arab Emirates, the lead country in the Abraham Accords.

Joost Hiltermann, Middle East director of the



KHAN YUNIS: People examine the ruins of a mosque destroyed in Zionist airstrikes in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza Strip, on Oct 8, 2023. — AFP photos



Palestinian firemen extinguish a fire that was raging in a residential building destroyed by Zionist airstrikes in Gaza City on Oct 8, 2023.



RAFAH: People gather at a mosque to pray over the bodies of the Abu Quta family and their neighbors, killed in Zionist strikes on the Palestinian city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, during their funeral on Oct 8, 2023.

International Crisis Group, which looks to resolve conflicts, said Hamas may have acted in part due to fear of a "looming further marginalization of the Palestinian cause in Palestinian eyes" if Saudi Arabia recognizes the Zionists. With the Zionist authorities expected to respond forcefully to Saturday's attacks,

Arab states will likely feel obliged to take a harder stance in line with public sentiment, he said.

"If that all happens, then I would foresee a scenario where, just like we have a cold peace between (Zionists) and Jordan, between (Zionists) and Egypt, we end up with a cooling of the relationship

between (Zionists) and the Emirates and probably a delay, at least, of any sort of deal between (Zionists) and Saudi Arabia," he said. A survey shows just two percent of Saudis backed normalizing ties with Zionists, said Steven Cook, a senior fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations. — AFP



GAZA: Rockets fired by Palestinian fighters from Gaza City are intercepted by the Zionist Iron Dome defense missile system in the early hours of Oct 8, 2023. — AFP photos



A Zionist soldier rests next to artillery shells at an undisclosed location on the Palestinian border with Lebanon on Oct 8, 2023.

## Lebanese on Zionist border say they don't fear escalation

KFARSHUBA: Smoking shisha on a balcony overlooking where Hezbollah and the Zionist occupation exchanged fire only hours before, Lebanese villager Abu Rami brushes it off, saying he is now used to such confrontations. In an attack it said had been carried out "in solidarity" with Hamas, which launched an attack on the occupation the day before, Hezbollah fired on Zionist positions in the contested Shebaa Farms border area.

The occupation said it retaliated and warned the

Shiite movement against getting involved in the fight on its southern flank with the Palestinians. Despite the escalation, people in the village of Kfarshuba, which overlooks Shebaa Farms, said they were not afraid of war and that they supported Hezbollah and Palestinian fighters.

"We are no longer afraid; we taught our children that this a country of resistance," said Abu Rami from the village of Kfarshuba. "Our lives at the border are unstable ... we're used to this," said the man in his 40s who did not give his full name.

The tough conditions in southern Lebanon — which endured the 1975-1990 civil war and decades of Zionist occupation followed by intermittent unrest — has forced many people to leave Kfarshuba. Palestinian fighters had taken up base in the border areas in the 1970s, frequently exchanging fire with Zionists, who had occupied the village for 22 years.

In 2006, Hezbollah and the occupation fought a 34-day war that left more than 1,200 dead in Lebanon, mostly civilians, and 160 in Zionist-controlled areas of Palestine, mostly soldiers. The two countries remain technically at war. Speaking at a Hezbollah rally in support of Hamas' offensive, senior official Hashem Safieddine said the group's strikes were "a message" to Zionists that "it's our right and duty to target the enemy so long as it occupies our land".

### 'Lived through all the wars'

With his back turned to the green hills that Hezbollah targeted earlier in the morning, Abu Rami said the Lebanese villagers backed the Palestinians. "We support Palestine ... and we sympathize with the resistance (Hezbollah) because we live on the border," said the municipality worker. "We are not afraid of anything because we have no infra-

structure, no electricity, no food, nothing," he said. Lebanon has been battered by four years of grueling economic crisis, which the World Bank said was one of the worst in recent world history. Its currency, the pound, has lost more than 95 percent of its value against the US dollar and power cuts lasting longer than 20 hours have become common, as cash-strapped state institutions fall in disrepair.

Lebanon's National News Agency said a baby and another child were injured by flying shards of glass caused by the Zionist strikes on Sunday. Ismail Abdel Aal, a former Lebanese soldier, said people were carrying on with their lives in Kfarshuba despite the violence. "Life in the village is normal. We are not scared," the retiree now in his 70s told AFP while taking a stroll outside. "We have lived through all the wars here in Kfarshuba," he added. — AFP

## International

# Indian flood toll up to 77

## Water levels return to normal but thousands left stranded

**GUWAHATI:** At least 77 people are confirmed dead in the floods that hit India's northeast, authorities said Sunday, with destroyed roads and bridges leaving thousands more still cut off despite waters receding. Violent torrents struck Sikkim state on Wednesday after a high-altitude glacial lake suddenly burst.

Scientists warn that similar disasters will become an increasing danger across the Himalayas as global temperatures rise and ice melts, spurred by climate change. "A total of 29 bodies have been retrieved from different parts of Sikkim," state relief commissioner Anilraj Rai told AFP by phone. In neighboring West Bengal state, Jalpaiguri district police told AFP that another 48 bodies had been recovered. More than 100 people are still missing, according to official figures.

Water levels along the Teesta river "returned to normal" four days after the floods hit, an official from Sikkim's state disaster control room told AFP. The office said more than 2,500 people stranded in the floods had been rescued. But evacuations have been complicated by the destruction of roads, bridges and telephone lines across much of Sikkim. Another 3,000 people were still stranded in several relief camps in the state's north with airlift rescues delayed by bad weather, the office said. More than 1,200 houses were damaged by the floods, according to the state government.

Among the dead were eight Indian

army soldiers posted to Sikkim, which sits on India's remote frontiers with Nepal and China and boasts a sizeable military presence. India's defense ministry said in a Saturday statement that the floods had washed away "firearms and explosives" from military camps.

Local media reports on Friday said that two people had been killed and four others injured by a mortar shell that exploded while flowing through the flood waters in West Bengal. The water surge came after intense rainfall burst the high-altitude Lhonak Lake, which sits at the base of a glacier in peaks surrounding the world's third-highest mountain, Kangchenjunga. Water powered downstream, adding to a river already swollen by monsoon rains, damaging a dam and sweeping away houses.

Himalayan glaciers are melting faster than ever due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters, according to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) research group. "The root cause is climate change," ICIMOD's Arun Bhakta Shrestha told AFP on Thursday. "Similar glacial lake outbursts flood events are very likely." Earth's average surface temperature has risen nearly 1.2 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times but high-mountain regions around the world have warmed at twice that pace, climate scientists say. — AFP



**RANGPO:** Residents walk along a street covered in mud and debris past damaged buildings on Oct 6, 2023. — AFP

## Toxic sand storms cloud Tajikistan, harm inhabitants

**DUSHANBE:** The air was dry and warm and the skies over Dushanbe were grey without a hint of sun during another recent toxic sand storm that enveloped the capital of Tajikistan. Storms like this, which experts say are being caused by climate change, are becoming increasingly frequent across Central Asia, harming its inhabitants.

The imposing mountains around Dushanbe were barely visible through the haze and hulks of apartment blocks under construction stood like ghostly apparitions. Tajikistan was ranked one of the top 10 most polluted countries in the world in the 2022 IQAir air quality index. "I can't stop coughing. I'm fed up with this dust choking me," Munira Khushkadamova, a teacher, said during a visit to the Sofia clinic in Dushanbe.

For the last two years, the 43-year-old has been suffering from respiratory failure — a diagnosis given to her from her doctor Faical Sakhray. "In the last few years I have been getting more and more patients with cardiovascular diseases," he told AFP, blaming fine particles from the storms. "The biggest ones enter the organism and stay in the upper respiratory tract but the finer ones go into the lower respiratory tract, then the lungs, the

heart and other organs," he said.

The United Nations estimates that 80 percent of the Tajik population is exposed to the highest concentrations of fine particles, known as PM2.5. Sakhray said people should drink plenty of water and wear a mask for protection. But the number of people wearing a mask in the streets of Dushanbe is minimal. Despite having "difficulty breathing and headaches", Nigora Yusupova said she would not wear a mask because it "makes breathing harder".

These types of storms used to be rare but they now start in spring and continue into the autumn in large parts of Central Asia. "In the 1990s, there were two or three sand and dust storms per year in Tajikistan. Now there can be up to 35," said Zebuniso Muminzoda, head of the Tajik branch of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia. "Because of climate change, longer dry seasons lead to sand and dust storms by drying out the ground and stronger winds then pick up this dry soil," she said.

The storms often start out in the dried-out stretches of the Aral Sea in Uzbekistan but also in the Kazakh steppes and in neighboring Afghanistan. Muminzoda pointed to a "human factor", saying forestry, bad irrigation and year-round livestock farming were all contributing to "degrading the soil". It is a vicious circle for a poor, mainly rural country like Tajikistan, where the toxic storms also have a negative effect on farming and soil fertility.

The sand and dust also falls on the region's many glaciers — a crucial source of water in the region and "speeds up their melting," Muminzoda said.



**DUSHANBE:** This photo taken on Oct 2, 2023 shows central Dushanbe during a sand storm. — AFP

While there are often tensions between Central Asian countries, they are attempting common efforts to tackle environmental questions like water management and nuclear waste disposal. But the

storm threat in Tajikistan is still under-estimated "as natural catastrophe", according to the Regional Environmental Centre, which operates in all five countries in the region. — AFP

## World cannot 'unplug' existing...

**Continued from Page 1**

The thorny issue of how and when to quit fossil fuels. At COP26 in Glasgow in 2021, countries agreed to phase down "unabated coal", the first time a fossil fuel was explicitly mentioned in a final text. But efforts since then to extend such a target to all fossil fuels have foundered, most recently at last month's G20 summit in India.

Energy officials in the United Arab Emirates and other oil-producing countries — notably Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter — have argued for continued investments in fossil fuels to ensure energy security even as they eye an eventual transition away from them. The vast and fractured landscape of climate finance is the other major stumbling block in climate negotiations. Developing countries least responsible for climate change are seeking money from richer polluters to adapt to its increasingly destructive and expensive consequences.

In 2009, rich countries pledged to supply \$100 billion of climate finance every year to developing nations but failed to meet the 2020 deadline. There are hopes the goal will be met this year. "Old promises must be kept, including the \$100 billion pledge made over a decade ago," Jaber said on Sunday.

Last year's COP27 talks in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, ended with the first ever creation of a "loss and damage" fund into which countries would pay to

support poorer nations suffering the most from more intense and frequent storms, floods and droughts. The fund's operation, governance, location, contributors, beneficiaries and a timeline for payouts are all up in the air ahead of COP28. "We must make the fund for loss and damage that was promised in Sharm el-Sheikh a reality in Dubai," Jaber said.

The talks in Riyadh are intended to "shine a spotlight on challenges and solutions in a region that is among the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change," organizers said in a press release on Sunday. The region must already grapple with high temperatures and water scarcity, with more than 60 percent of the population having "very little if any access to potable water", the statement said. "Increasing temperatures are predicted to lead to more persistent and acute drought," it added.

Jaber also highlighted challenges facing the region, referring to extreme events like hurricane-strength Storm Daniel, which last month caused two dams in eastern Libya to burst and flood the city of Derna. "Climate change isn't a threat waiting around the corner — the MENA region knows this from first-hand experience with fierce heatwaves and water shortages," said Inger Andersen, executive director of the UN Environment Program.

Simon Stiell, executive secretary of UN Climate Change, said the region was "at a crossroads, facing not only the devastating impacts of climate change but also the challenge of transitioning their economies to ensure prosperity in a 1.5C aligned world". The goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels was set at the 2015 climate talks in Paris. — Agencies

## Hamas keeps up Zionist...

**Continued from Page 1**

near the coastal enclave, rescue Zionist hostages and evacuate all areas near Gaza, a day after hundreds of Hamas fighters launched their shock offensive and surged into the Zionist entity using vehicles, boats and even motorized paragliders.

There was widespread shock and dismay in the Zionist entity after at least 100 citizens were captured by Hamas and abducted into Gaza, with images circulating on social media of bloodied hostages, and distraught relatives pleading for the state to rescue them.

The Zionist entity also came under attack from the north when Lebanon's Hezbollah launched guided missiles and artillery shells Sunday "in solidarity" with the unprecedented Hamas offensive, without causing any casualties. The Zionist entity responded with artillery strikes across the UN-patrolled border.

"The Islamic resistance... attacked three positions of the Zionist enemy in the occupied Lebanese Shebaa farms... with large numbers of artillery shells and guided missiles," the movement said in a statement. Witnesses living on the Lebanese side of the border said a dozen rockets were fired towards the Zionist entity in the morning. Lebanon's National News Agency said later two more rockets were fired from the Lebanese side towards enemy positions in the Shebaa farms, prompting the Zionist entity to retaliate with fresh artillery fire.

The Zionist entity was stunned when Hamas launched their multi-pronged offensive on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, raining down at least 3,000 rockets as fighters infiltrated towns and kibbutz communities and stormed an outdoor rave party. Panicked Zionist residents phoned media outlets as they hid in their homes from militants going door to door. Two Thai nationals were among those killed, and other Asian nationals, many of whom work as farm laborers in the region, were believed to be among the hostages.

Global concern has mounted, with Western capitals condemning the attack by Hamas. The Zionist entity's foes have praised the assault, including Iran whose President Ebrahim Raisi voiced support when he spoke with Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders. Anti-Zionist protests have flared in Iraq, Pakistan and some other majority Muslim

countries, while Germany and France were among nations stepping up security around Jewish temples and schools.

In the Egyptian city of Alexandria a police officer opened fire "at random" on Zionist tourists Sunday, killing two of them and their Egyptian guide before he was arrested. The policeman fired "at random" at a Zionist tour group using "his personal weapon", the state-affiliated private television Extra News said quoting a security source. A fourth person was wounded and the policeman was "immediately arrested", it added. The Zionist foreign ministry confirmed the deaths in a statement.

US President Joe Biden has voiced "rock solid and unwavering" support for the Zionist entity and warned "against any other party hostile to (the Zionist entity) seeking advantage in this situation". US Secretary of state Antony Blinken told CNN "we have reports that several Americans were killed" and others missing and "we're working to verify those reports".

Hamas has labelled its attack "Operation Al-Aqsa Flood" and called on "resistance fighters in the West Bank" and "Arab and Islamic nations" to join the battle. Its attack came half a century after the outbreak of the 1973 conflict called the Yom Kippur war in the Zionist entity, sparking bitter recriminations on what was widely seen as an enormous intelligence failure. "There was a very bad failure here," said Sderot resident Yaakov Shoshani, 70. "The Yom Kippur War was small compared to it, and I was a soldier in the Yom Kippur War."

He recalled the terror of the attack on their town near Gaza. "I held a kitchen knife and a large screwdriver, and I told my wife that, if something happens, to make sure to read the Kaddish (prayer) over me, if you stay alive," he said. "And so we stayed close to each other at home, shut everything and turned off the lights."

Hamas chief Ismail Haniya has predicted "victory" and vowed to press ahead with "the battle to liberate our land and our prisoners languishing in occupation prisons". Hamas said Saturday it had fired 5,000 rockets, while the Zionist entity reported some 3,000 incoming projectiles. Zionist attacks have reduced several Gaza residential towers to rubble, and another strike completely destroyed a mosque in Gaza's Khan Yunis. Many Gaza residents voiced defiance. "We will not give up, and we are here to stay," said Mohammed Saq Allah, 23. "This is our land, and we will not abandon our land." — Agencies

## Death toll from Afghan quakes

**Continued from Page 1**

Most rural homes in Afghanistan are made of sun-fired mud bricks built around wooden support poles, with little in the way of modern steel reinforcement. Multi-generational extended families generally live under the same roof, meaning disasters like Saturday's quake can devastate local communities. In Herat city, residents fled their homes and schools, while hospitals and offices evacuated when the first quake was felt. There were few reports of casualties in the metropolitan area.

More than 1,000 people were killed and tens of thousands left homeless in June last year after a 5.9-magnitude quake struck the impoverished province of Paktika. "The Herat earthquake is worse than the eastern earthquake that happened last year," said disaster agency spokesman Janan. "Not only by the magnitude and depth, but also more areas are affected and destroyed." — AFP



**HERAT:** Afghan residents clear debris as they look for victims' bodies in the rubble of damaged houses after earthquakes struck Siah Ab village in Zinda Jan district on Oct 8, 2023. — AFP

## International

# Architects warn against rushed quake reconstruction in Morocco

## Temporary housing in works as rebuilding could take several years

**RABAT:** How do you rebuild and earthquake-proof a centuries-old Moroccan mountain village, at speed, without sacrificing its traditional architecture? That's a key challenge facing the reconstruction of the country's isolated "douars" (or villages), which were devastated by a strong 6.8-magnitude earthquake last month.

The September 8 quake, which killed around 3,000 people and injured 5,600, according to the latest official figures, damaged about 60,000 homes across 3,000 villages in the High Atlas mountains and their surroundings. One month on, the survivors are still living in tents and relying on a field hospital and temporary schools set up by the authorities.

In the meantime, a small army of architects has mobilized and is sketching out ideas on how to reconstruct the douars in a way that respects the traditional architecture of these isolated and largely deprived communities. Karim Rouissi, a Moroccan architect, has been on investigative trips to around 30 of the villages, in particular those in Al-Haouz — the province most affected by the earthquake.

"Supervised self-build should be encouraged, using local materials," he told AFP. "It's important that the response in the douars and rural centers be different to that for urban areas," said Rouissi, who was joined on his visits by fellow volunteer architects, engineers and officials from the housing ministry.

### 'Overconfidence in concrete'

Returning to traditional architecture may, in fact, be part of the answer to the need for greater resilience. In recent years, "often poorly built" concrete construction has displaced traditional earthen and stone buildings in the High Atlas, said Elie Mouyal,

another Moroccan architect. "Overconfidence in concrete has been a trap," the specialist in traditional housebuilding told AFP. "I saw many more collapsed concrete houses," he said. While some earthen buildings had also fallen down, he added, they were mostly already in poor condition before the earthquake.

Morocco must avoid "copying external experiences or opting for standardized housing", said Philippe Garnier, a French architect who studied Iran's 2003 Bam earthquake and the devastating 2010 tremor in Haiti. "The idea is to build on local expertise in traditional construction, making some improvements, and therefore enhancing their know-how," he said.

Rabat has announced a budget of 120 billion dirhams (\$11.6 billion) over five years to support 4.2 million people affected by the quake. And King Mohammed VI has stressed the importance of "listening to the local population" and respecting the "unique heritage" and traditions in the region during the reconstruction.

### 'Winter worries me'

Such is the scale of the task that it may well last several years, said Garnier. Avoiding a rushed reconstruction will be essential to ensuring solid and lasting foundations, the architects said. Proper positioning of rebuilds to take seismic activity into account and avoiding open-plan ground floors is essential, Garnier said.

Given how long this could take, Mouyal has designed a prototype "nouala", a type of traditional cabin, as a potential temporary housing solution. The 15-square-metre (160-square-foot) cabins are built using reed canes wrapped in earth and straw. For



**IMINTALA:** A man rides his motorcycle next to the rubble in the earthquake-hit village of Imi N'Tala, in central Morocco on Oct 5, 2023. — AFP

insulation, the architect at first opted for foam but eventually settled on hemp and PVC tarpaulins. The temporary housing can be built in as little as a week for just 6,000 dirhams (\$582) without insulation, said Mouyal, who has already begun training others in how to build the prototypes.

Nevertheless, Abderrahim Akbour, who has been

homeless for a month, remained worried. He lived in Imi N'Tala, a mountain village 75 kilometers (46 miles) south of Marrakesh. It was completely flattened by the earthquake, and residents were relocated to a neighboring village. "Living in a tent with winter coming quickly worries me a lot," he said. "It could be much worse than the earthquake itself." — AFP



**Majken Felle,** head of the Copenhagen renters' association, stands in the courtyard of the housing estate.

## Families slam 'racist' Danish law to clear immigrant 'ghettos'

**COPENHAGEN:** Outraged residents say they will resist a "racist" Danish law which allows large numbers of people to be evicted from social housing in areas where the authorities say there are too many immigrants. "It's straight up racism," said Jawad, a doctor from Mjølnerparken in central Copenhagen, which is surrounded by rapidly gentrifying areas. "Even though I was born and raised in Denmark, in the statistics I'm a non-Western immigrant," the 29-year-old told AFP.

Denmark passed a controversial law in 2018 to redevelop poor urban "ghettos" with high concentrations of immigrant populations by 2030. It involves rebuilding and renovating rundown estates and changing the social mix by renting at least 60 percent of the homes at market rates.



**COPENHAGEN:** Local residents rest at a playground of Mjølnerparken housing estate in Copenhagen, Denmark, on Aug 28, 2023. — AFP photos

For decades Denmark has had one of Europe's most restrictive immigration policies, with populist right-wing parties often stoking anti-immigrant rhetoric. "Our apartments are not for sale!" said banners strung across Mjølnerparken, with locals saying that using their ethnicity to decide where they can live is discriminatory and illegal.

Eight out of 10 people in Mjølnerparken are deemed "non-Western", with people from non-EU countries in the Balkans and Eastern Europe also

falling into that category. The Mjølnerparken residents are suing Denmark, with European Court of Justice due to rule in the coming months.

### People left hopeless

Thomas Monberg, spokesman on housing issues for the ruling left-wing Social Democrats, insisted that the aim of the law — which will compel 11,000 people to move — is good. "We don't want to force people out," he said. "We want to give them a better life so they can have the same opportunities as any other Dane," he told AFP.

But for Jawad, whose parents were born in Pakistan, the so-called "ghetto law" is emblematic of Denmark's relationship with immigrants. Instead of improving integration, it has left many feeling hopeless. "A lot of people here have just given up hope of the government actually being on their side," he said.

The law aims to eradicate "parallel societies" in poor neighborhoods that often struggle with crime. This means that 295 of Mjølnerparken's 560 homes will have to be replaced by market-rate rentals — which are out of reach for most locals. Experts say some 11,000 people across Denmark will have to leave their apartments and find new housing elsewhere in the next seven years.

Majken Felle, the head of Mjølnerparken's renters' association, said that before the law was passed residents had agreed to be temporarily relocated to allow the renovation of their apartments. Even if they could afford to return after the work, they've been strongly encouraged not to, she said. To avoid being moved around several times, many agreed to leave the neighborhood, which is surrounded by some of Copenhagen's most desirable areas. "Even if they want to stay, some families said to themselves, 'There's too much uncertainty, I can't live like this for years. Maybe it would be better to move and get on with my life,'" Felle added.

### 'Second class citizens'

"Residents are living in a construction site even though they're paying rent, it's scandalous," said Hassan, a 25-year-old raised in Mjølnerparken, who left because of the renovation work but wants to move back once it is done. The "ghetto" law is in stark contrast with Denmark's image as "an egalitarian, democratic society with strong social and economic systems," said Susheela Math, a lawyer from the Open Society Justice Initiative which is helping residents bring their case.

Yet in this wealthy Scandinavian nation, their fight has gone largely ignored. "Eighty percent of the Danish population doesn't have any personal contact with ethnic minorities," said sociologist Aydin Soei, an expert on disadvantaged areas, "and an even smaller number of Danes have set foot in one of these areas." Rather than helping integration, he argued, the law had left many feeling like "second-class citizens". — AFP

## China's N Korean eateries refuse S Korean diners

**BEIJING:** South Koreans hoping to taste authentic North Korean cuisine abroad may be out of luck, with Pyongyang-run restaurants across northern China saying they will refuse to serve their capitalist compatriots. Dotted throughout China and Southeast Asia, North Korean-run restaurants dish up culinary staples like cold noodles and kimchi pancakes to customers typically more interested in the novelty factor than the cuisine. Staffed by waitresses hand-picked from the country's elite for loyalty — and who often perform musical numbers for customers — they are a major source of funds for Pyongyang. And for South Koreans they have long offered a quirky opportunity to break bread with their longtime foe while abroad — and enjoy some schmaltzy song and dance on the side.

But half a dozen branches in China, from restaurants in the capital Beijing to cities in the borderland, told AFP they would not serve South Koreans. "This rule came into effect this year," said one Chinese staff member at Ryugyong restaurant in Dandong — a stone's throw from the diplomatically isolated nation. "We have to comply," said the staff member, who did not give their name. "There is a regulation from the North Korean embassy: None of the North Korean restaurants in Dandong are permitted to serve South Koreans."

### 'Very hostile'

The rules meanwhile appear to be applied inconsistently: eateries surveyed by AFP in Shanghai, Changchun and Hanoi in neighboring Vietnam said they had no issue with South Koreans dining there. But others were downright hostile at the mention of South Korean guests. "We hate them!" said one North Korean worker in Shenyang — a hub in northeast China where North and South Koreans frequently rub shoulders. "If you bring a South Korean friend, we will not accept them ... and won't serve them." North Korea's embassy in Beijing did not respond to a request for comment.

One former South Korean government official said he was asked to leave a North Korean restaurant in Dandong after staff heard him speaking their shared language with a friend. "The tone was very hostile," said the man, who asked not to be named. "I felt very frustrated, awkward. I felt sorry for them."

Before visiting Dandong, he said he had heard that North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un had instructed restaurants to stop serving South Koreans. These bans have happened before, he said — usually when

inter-Korean relations fall to a low ebb. "But knowing it and experiencing it is different," he said. "Being rejected to your face ... that's really bad."

### 'Enemy state'

After a brief easing of tensions in the late 2010s helped by three summits between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korea's then-president Moon Jae-in, relations between Seoul and Pyongyang have nosedived. In a speech last month, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol warned Pyongyang that "its regime will be brought to an end" if it ever used nuclear weapons. Pyongyang meanwhile has repeatedly derided the "puppet" government in Seoul as it this year has conducted a record number of missile tests.



**BEIJING:** This picture taken on Oct 4, 2023 shows staff preparing a table for patrons at a North Korean restaurant. — AFP photos

"The North's ban on South Korean visitors is in line with its aggressive posture when dealing with the South," Hong Min, at the Korea Institute for National Unification, told AFP. "It's demonstrative of its view that South Korea is an enemy state rather than one it can cooperate with."

South Korea's unification ministry — which manages relations with the North — declined to comment. "We can assume it is linked to the Yoon government and general deterioration of relations during his administration," said Chris Green, a Korea expert at the Netherlands' Leiden University. Those tensions now mean that South Koreans looking to experience the cuisine of a neighbor cut off for over 70 years may have to look elsewhere. "We can't do that," a woman who answered the phone at Beijing's Okryu restaurant said when asked if South Koreans could dine there. The waitresses "will know they are South Korean as soon as they look at them". — AFP



**SHENYANG:** A North Korean worker (with mask) stands at the entrance of a North Korean restaurant in one of China's largest Korea towns in Shenyang in China's northeastern Liaoning province on March 31, 2023.

## Business

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2023

## AI useful for stock markets, but human factor inevitable: Experts

Market specialists caution against use of AI without safety guards

KUWAIT: Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become more than a 'buzzword' recently with numerous entities, individuals, and groups touting the technology's usefulness. At the same time, there are others who casted doubts and fears over the reliability of AI, cautioning against its use without limits. On the subject of AI, a number of exchange market and trade experts have pondered and reflected on the issue, saying that AI had been applied in trading and investments in some global markets.

Those running Boursa Kuwait are also considering its application to identify fraud and streamline market procedures, they added. The experts told KUNA in various interviews that there was usefulness in using AI; however, the human factor in trading must remain to ensure things go smoothly. Member of the board of the Kuwait Information Technology Society (KITS) Shrouq Al-Sayegh said that AI could predict market activity and also monitor exchange in various markets at once, a matter that provides investors with investment choices based on detailed data and analysis. AI could provide fast analytic data for shares and recommend investments based on said data, she added.

She pointed out that AI could be used in crises management at trade markets as well as providing investors with safe choices to avoid losses. Al-Sayegh also noted that AI could provide evaluation to economic and financial news reports, providing users with reliable data to move forward. Despite the detailed predictions and analyses, AI's efficacy could reach around 70 percent, which entailed that investors must be involved in the

trading process and not depend solely on AI automation.

Speaking in a similar fashion, member of the board of Surooh International Holding Suleiman Al-Wuqayan stressed that the human element was still a necessity in terms of giving authorization for selling and purchasing of shares unlike AI technology, which might be hacked spelling danger to the whole process.

He said that AI could be used in the financial analysis of data, which would reduce time and effort in making investment decisions, but it would be hard for the technology to replace financial portfolios and investment funds, which mostly rely on a human "investment sense" and "intuition". Providing a different view, financial and economic expert Maytham Al-Shakhs cautioned against the use of AI without safety guards, noting that most traders preferred to make decisions through traditional visual and audible means. He called for holding lectures and training courses to explain the use of AI, adding that some traders preferred having brokers handle their businesses.

Al-Shakhs also said that AI could be used to streamline some of the markets' processes, but full dependence on AI technology remained somehow far-fetched. On his part, head of the shareholders society Mohammad Al-Tarrah explained that some traders were not very keen on using new technology in the market, opting for making their own decisions instead of depending on innovations. If the passage of time proved that AI or any future technology were reliable, then maybe shareholders would start to trade and make decisions

## Kuwaiti experts: AI could predict exchange market operations and advise investors



Shrouq Al-Sayegh:  
AI systems provide immediate market analytics and advise investors.



Suleiman Al-Wuqayan:  
Human touch is important for market activities and brokerage.



Maytham Al-Shakhs:  
The usage of AI must be regulated in the beginning due to risks.



Mohammad Al-Tarrah:  
Some shareholders might hesitate to use AI and prefer brokers to conduct their market business.



based on them, added Al-Tarrah who affirmed that AI could be used in recent situations to emulate trade and predict the best decisions to be made. A recent report by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) said that there was a possibility

to use AI in exchange markets in the Middle East, predicting that the region might receive around two percent of AI benefits by 2030 with GCC countries probably heading investment lists with AI technologies. — KUNA

## Saudi to kick off Green Building Forum Monday

RIYADH: The Saudi Green Building Forum, hosted by the Saudi Municipal, Rural Affairs, and Housing Ministry, will focus on speeding up the construction industry's transition to carbon neutrality by promoting sustainable practices in energy, water use, and green cities, according to reports.

The Saudi Green Building Forum is hosted on 9-10 October 2023 at King Abdullah Financial District's Conference Center, Riyadh, bringing together some of the most avid advocates and supporters of the national SDGs, and thought leaders from esteemed organizations to discuss the Saudi green transformation that is shaping up to become the most ambitious in the world. Since the beginning of its journey in 2010, the Saudi Green Building Forum has been positioning the Kingdom at the forefront of the global sustainable development industry, thus fostering dialogue amongst key stakeholders and thought leaders and enabling prosperous partnerships.

This year's forum will discuss the consolidation of the local construction sector and achieving energy and water efficiency and delving into the challenges faced by the Saudi real estate development sector, the progress, and the numerous opportunities present in the market. Key stakeholders from government authorities, private developers, contractors, builders, and tech providers will be present to showcase the achievements, dissect the challenges, celebrate the breakthroughs, and collaborate on driving the Kingdom closer towards fully localizing its SDGs. — Agencies



The US economy added 336,000 jobs last month in the highest surge since January, and the jobless rate was unchanged at 3.8 percent, said the Labor Department.

## US logs fastest hiring pace in months

WASHINGTON: US employers stepped up their hiring pace unexpectedly in September while unemployment held steady, government data showed on Friday, adding pressure on policymakers seeking to cool the economy.

The US economy added 336,000 jobs last month in the highest surge since January, and the jobless rate was unchanged at 3.8 percent, said the Labor Department. This adds to signals that the American job market remains robust despite efforts by the central bank to cool the world's biggest economy and lower inflation sustainably.

When the Federal Reserve lifts interest rates and borrowing costs rise, this can dampen hiring associated with business expansion and the jobless rate is generally expected to tick up. But for now, the pace of hiring hovers above pre-pandemic levels and unemployment is still around a historically low level, meaning that Fed officials could consider further policy action. President Joe Biden lauded Friday's hiring figures, adding that unemployment among groups like women and minority groups remained low. "We have the highest share of working age Americans in the workforce in 20 years," Biden told reporters. He added that this was helped by his economic agenda.

## Caution ahead

Analysts, however, have warned that the job market could weaken going forward as it takes time for existing policy changes to ripple through the economy. In September, sectors that saw job gains included leisure and hospitality, government as well as

health care, said the Labor Department.

An area contributing to the increase was education with the government sector adding 73,000 jobs—mainly teachers for the new school year—said EY chief economist Gregory Daco. But despite the blowout jobs report, he does not rule out the possibility that hiring will decline later this year.

Financial conditions are tighter, Daco said, adding: "The auto union workers strike will weigh on job growth in October while easing consumer spending and more cautious business activity will lead to slower labor demand." Economist Oren Klachkin of Nationwide Economics told AFP he does not expect the current trend to continue either.

"The economy might be resistant to high interest rates and tighter lending standards today, but it isn't immune," he said. Apart from the overall acceleration in employment, hiring figures for August and July were revised upwards by 119,000 combined, the Labor Department said on Friday. Average hourly earnings rose 0.2 percent, the same rate as in August. The pick-up in employment is expected to support incomes, and this may be of concern to Fed officials as it could feed into consumer demand and inflation.

But wage growth is moderating on an annual basis, providing some relief to policymakers. Economist Rubeeela Farooqi of High Frequency Economics noted the annual change in earnings was a 4.2 percent increase—the smallest gain since June 2021.

"A slowing in wage pressures will be welcome news," she said. Currently, her expectation remains that there will not be further interest rate hikes this year. If the labor market continues to strengthen, however, she cautioned that this would keep the Fed open to raising rates further in 2023. Economist Nancy Vanden Houten of Oxford Economics added that even as the Fed is expected to "proceed cautiously," a strong consumer inflation reading next week could also "tip the scales in favor of a rate hike" in the central bank's November meeting. — AFP

## Lack of affordable child care hinders US work force

YORK, US: Parents of young children in the United States are finding that with day care centers in short supply, or too expensive, more and more of them—mostly mothers—are having to stay at home to look after their kids.

"It was just an undercurrent previously that was exposed and compounded by the pandemic," said Kevin Schreiber, who heads an association of business leaders in York County, Pennsylvania. He was speaking to AFP on the sidelines of a visit by the chairman of the US Federal Reserve, Jerome Powell, and of its Philadelphia branch, Patrick Harker, who came to meet local economic leaders.

Without available or affordable day care in place, it is almost impossible to find a job, or to keep one, at a time when the country is experiencing a significant labor shortage. The manufacturing region of York, located between Washington and New York, has lost 20 percent of its day care centers since the COVID-19 pandemic.

And those that remain operate at only 85 percent of capacity due to a lack of staff, said Schreiber. In total, in the United States, nearly 16,000 day care centers—around 10 percent—have closed their doors since the pandemic, noted Council for Professional Recognition chief executive Calvin Moore. He was citing a report by Child Care Aware of America.

As a result, "in more than 20 percent of families, one parent, most often the mom, had to leave the workforce to provide child care themselves, leading to a sizeable loss of household income," Moore added in a statement on the group's website. At the start of 2023, 4.5 million Americans were not working be-

cause of child care issues. Even for the lucky ones who can afford to have their kids looked after, the game isn't over, because the prices are often exorbitant. Around "25 percent of the household income goes towards child care," said Kim Bracey, of the YWCA association in York.

When there are two parents, they "have to determine ... who gets to work, who gets to stay home." Some families use their credit cards, taking on high-interest debt to pay for child care.

Already in February 2021, Fed chairman Powell lamented that many "advanced economy democracies have a more built-up function for child care, and they wind up having substantially higher labor force participation for women." "We used to lead the world in female labor force participation, a quarter-century ago, and we no longer do. It may just be that those policies have put us behind," he said. After strong growth in the 1970s and 1980s, "the US lagged in the following decades. Among the major advanced economies, only Italy has a lower share of working-age women in the workforce," said Michael Pearce, an economist for Oxford Economics, in a note.

In August, however, the rate of female participation in the labor force rose to 57.7 percent, back to where it had been at the end of 2019, before the pandemic. But it remains lower than the historic high of 60.3 percent in April 2000, and it fell again in September, to 57.5 percent, according to figures published Friday. "The US could close the female labor force participation gap with other advanced economies over the next five years," said Pearce.

The main issues would be flexible schedules, more extensive parental leave, and a drop in fertility. And, in the medium term, support for working parents. The York business community decided to tackle the lack of day care centers, raising "millions of dollars to roll out several initiatives not only to address access to quality, affordable child care, but also growing teachers in the child care industry," said Schreiber. — AFP



YORK, US: US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell (center L) and the President and CEO of the York County Economic Alliance, Kevin Schreiber (center R), walk down the street during a visit by Powell to York, Pennsylvania. — AFP





# Heists at sea: Shrimp bandits terrorize Ecuador farmers

## Farmers forced to shell out millions of dollars for security

**GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador:** From robberies on land to hold-ups at sea by rifle-toting, hooded men, Ecuador's shrimp industry is facing a wave of violent crime that is threatening the country's star export.

The South American country is the world's largest shrimp exporter, putting one in every five of the crustaceans on tables around the world, and this "pink gold" raked in a record \$7.3 billion in 2022, according to official figures. However, shrimp farmers are being forced to shell out millions of dollars in private security, which could impact the industry's competitiveness compared to countries like India or Vietnam where production is cheaper.

"We continue to be victims, daily, of criminals who are better armed than the police," said Jose Antonio Camposano, president of the National Chamber of Aquaculture (CNA), which unites 4,000 shrimp producers and exporters. In the first eight months of 2023, the CNA registered 64 crimes against its members, including violent robberies at sea or along roads, some leaving deaths and injuries.

In one attack, armed men shot at six shrimp workers at close range as they left southern Puerto Roma, stealing their cargo and racing off in speedboats.

The workers arrived bloodied at a dock in the

port city of Guayaquil, which has become a hotbed of organized crime linked to international drug trafficking. Shrimp producers, speaking off the record, told AFP that criminals were robbing their wares to finance other illicit business.

In another attack, a driver for a shrimp farm was seriously injured after being hijacked and robbed by armed men along a highway.

According to the CNA, robberies also take place at production pools where shrimp are farmed on shore. The criminals sell the shrimp at local markets or to traders who attempt to introduce them into the export chain.

"When we leave to take our merchandise to land, we work defensively and locate the risk points where we could be attacked," said a 51-year-old local from Puna, one of several islands near Guayaquil dedicated to shrimp, which has dethroned bananas as the country's main non-oil export.

"The navy patrols, but doesn't dare get near the shrimp farms." Navy officials said they could not take AFP on their patrols for security reasons. Camposano said that attacks typically take place in the same "red zones" such as Punta Roma in the gulf of Guayaquil, the southern Jambeli archipelago and two strategic



TAURA, Ecuador: A worker casts a net to catch shrimps at a production pond in a shrimp farm, in Taura, Ecuador. — AFP

coastal roads used to transport shrimp to packing plants. Using radar and its own technology, the CNA has gathered information on the hotspots and passed

them on to police. However, Camposano slammed the "total absence" of security forces in some areas, which he calls "no-man's land". — AFP



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies announced its strategic collaboration with HEC Paris' Accelerating Women's Leadership Program, a landmark initiative designed to empower women and foster their leadership roles within the banking sector.



## KIBS launches second cohort of Accelerating Women's Leadership

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS) is proud to announce its strategic collaboration with HEC Paris' Accelerating Women's Leadership Program, a landmark initiative designed to empower women and foster their leadership roles within the banking sector. This collaboration underscores KIBS's unwavering commitment to aligning with the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) mandate and positions itself as a frontrunner in promoting diversity and gender equality in leadership. As the banking industry continues to prioritize ESG principles, KIBS recognizes the pivotal role it plays in contributing to sustainable and responsible practices.

The Accelerating Women's Leadership Program is a testament to the banking sector's dedication to inclusivity and gender diversity. Underpinned by the Central Bank of Kuwait's directives and the industry's collective commitment to fostering a diverse and empowered workforce, this collaboration represents a proactive step towards meeting ESG goals and promoting women's advancement in leadership positions.

Key highlights of the collaboration include ESG mandate alignment as this collaboration reinforces KIBS's dedication to aligning with the ESG mandate, emphasizing the Institute's role in driving sustainable

practices within the banking sector. The program also stresses leadership development as through the Accelerating Women's Leadership Program, KIBS seeks to nurture a pipeline of talented women leaders who will contribute to the industry's growth and sustainability. Due to the Central Bank of Kuwait's influence, this initiative is in line with the Central Bank of Kuwait's directives, showcasing KIBS's commitment to supporting national banking policies and contributing to the advancement of women in leadership roles. KIBS and HEC Paris' collaboration reflects the industry's recognition of the importance of diversity and leadership development in achieving long-term sustainability and success. Rana A Al-Nibari, KIBS Director General, commented, "By investing in women's leadership, we are not only responding to the ESG mandate but also shaping a more sustainable and resilient future for the banking industry in Kuwait."

A recap event that took place on September 25, 2023 at Kuwait's Waldorf Astoria gathered the women who were enrolled in the program's first cohort that was held over five days in Qatar on February 12 – 16, 2023 where they recounted their professional progression. Led by Prof Shaheena Janjuha – Jivraj, an Associate Professor in Entrepreneurial Leadership and Diversity at HEC Paris in Qatar, the hour-long discussion gathered feedback that was positive, sincere and empowering.

Afterwards, General Managers, Heads of Human Resources, Talent Management and Learning & Development Departments from Kuwait's stakeholder banks joined the group with members of the Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies' (KIBS) management team to observe Prof Shaheena's presentation that summarized

the program's benefits which includes how women can lead their team to high performance and innovation, prepare their own leadership skills to access new career opportunities, strengthen their impact in building effective relationships with stakeholders across their organization, develop mental agility and an approach to innovation that is diffused across their time and finally, how to develop executive presence with effective verbal and non-verbal skills to communicate with power.

Eng. Suha Isaac concluded the event by announcing the launch of the second cohort of the program that will take place during November 2023 in Kuwait. The five-day program will include contain themes that navigate around global business environment, entrepreneurial mindset, innovation, leadership brand, strengthening self-efficacy, resources and resilience and finally, how to become an agent of change.

After being nominated by KIBS, English-proficient woman may apply to the program: she must be a leader in her respective company with a minimum of ten years of work experience. The Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies (KIBS) is a not-for-profit, semi-governmental organization that functions under the auspices of the Central Bank of Kuwait. KIBS offers education, training, language programs and research to serve the developmental needs of the Kuwaiti banking and finance sector.

HEC Paris is a globally recognized leader in executive education, making a lasting impact on organizations through the design and delivery of customized learning solutions. Leverage global resources from their branch campus in Qatar, HEC Paris provides proximity and ensures relevance for organizations operating throughout the region.



KUWAIT: Anfal Al-Kandari from stc's Public Relations team with the trainers of the program.



A group photo of the participants and honorees at the Future Leaders Program.

## stc sponsors 'Future Leaders Program'

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Telecommunications Company – stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, concluded its sponsorship of the "Future Leaders Program" organized by the Youth Public Authority in line with its "upgrade" educational initiative. As a sponsor of the program, and considering its extensive contribution to the community, stc was recognized for its efforts and various programs that aim to empower the younger generation.

A closing ceremony was held to commemorate the 100 young participants between the ages of 11-17 that were exposed to various activities that assisted them in enhancing their professional skills. The ceremony was attended by Dr Mishal Al-Jnoobi, Acting Deputy Director General of the Youth Development Sector, alongside Anfal Al-Kandari, Public Relations and Social Media Specialist at stc, who attended on behalf of the Company. During the closing ceremony, stc was recognized for its extensive and active engagement with the youth in Kuwait, as well as the various programs launched by the Company to support the younger generation, such as the educational 'upgrade' initiative.

The 'Future Leaders Program' was designed to instill a set of professional skills that would assist young participants in excelling within their chosen career paths. The program was initially launched to educate Kuwaiti students in the 12th grade of both public and private schools who meet the Ministry of Higher Education's scholarship criteria. Throughout the program, the participants were exposed to methods on developing positive behavioral habits, effective planning, building leadership skills, and fostering charismatic qualities. Sessions held under the program were organized at various youth centers throughout Kuwait, where stc also distributed gifts to all participants.

Danah Al-Jasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at stc, said, "We are proud to witness the successful conclusion of the 'Future Leaders Program' and are thrilled with the students' level of engagement throughout this unique experience. Our collaboration with the Youth Public Authority has been fruitful, and together, we have made strides in empowering the youth of Kuwait. Having said that, supporting the community and empowering the younger generation has been a cornerstone of our extensive CSR framework, and we are honored to be recognized for the various activities launched by stc to support the community on several fronts. This recognition is a testament to stc's commitment to the community and our drive to create positive lasting change."

Al-Jasem added, "As a digital pioneer and world class digital leader, stc actively participates in programs and initiatives that can positively impact the communities it serves. We introduced the educational 'upgrade' initiative to support the educational activities and provide the younger generation with a range of opportunities, across various fields, to gain knowledge and valuable insights that can set them on the right career path. Programs, such as the 'Future Leaders Program', as well as others, have the potential to truly enhance the lifestyle choices of those enrolled in the program. Having said that, stc will continue to collaborate with local entities from both private and public sectors to form strategic partnerships that aim to support the younger generation as part of our sustainable CSR program through community driven initiatives."

stc's participation in the program is in line with its commitment to education, a key pillar of its extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. As part of its 'upgrade' initiative, stc focuses on supporting the youth within the community to enable a brighter and more prosperous future. Through several initiatives coordinated under the "upgrade" program, stc actively works to support the local education activities. Some of its initiatives include forging strategic partnerships with various government and private organizations, such as "dawrat," to facilitate education and deliver valuable online content to the community.

## Joe & The Juice opens three new stores in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Light Food, a subsidiary of Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Commercial Co (AAW) on Sunday announced the opening of three additional Joe & The Juice stores in Kuwait, bringing the total to six. This expansion comes just six months after the world renowned Danish chain's debut in the country, highlighting the increasing demand for healthy dining options. The three new stores are in Al-Andalus Mall in Hawally, The Warehouse Mall in South Subahiya, and Sahara Golf Resort in Subhan.

Joe & The Juice debuted in Kuwait in March 2023 with the opening of its first branch at the Argania Complex in Shuwaikh. Since then, the company has been executing an expansion plan to bring the brand closer to all customers. This expansion is driven by the high demand for Joe & The Juice, reflecting both the diversity of the Kuwaiti market and the growing need for healthier and lighter food options.

All new Joe & The Juice stores feature an inviting interior design that seamlessly blends Danish aesthetics with a modern touch. The Al-Andalus store is the largest Joe & The Juice store in Kuwait and the first to offer a drive-thru service globally, ensuring convenience for all customers. With its spacious interiors, including a glass elevator, the store provides an inviting ground-floor outdoor seating area and an upper-balcony seating option. Joe & The Juice locations include the Argania Complex store in Shuwaikh, the Argan Square store in Salmiya, The Walk store in Ardiya, Al-Andalus store in Hawally, the Warehouse in South Subahiya, and Sahara Golf Resort store. All stores offer free Wi-Fi, allowing customers to remain connected while enjoying their visit.



Joe & The Juice store at Al-Andalus Mall in Hawally



Joe & The Juice store at Sahara Golf Resort in Subhan



Joe & The Juice store that offers drive-thru service



A student practices contortionism at the Flower Studio in Ulaanbaatar. — AFP photos



Students practice acrobatic exercises at the Mongolian Circus School in Ulaanbaatar.



Students practice contortionism at the Flower Studio in Ulaanbaatar.

# Mongolia's circus performers fight to preserve their craft

Mongolian circus performers fly through a cavernous hall inspectors have warned could collapse any time, one of the few places left to train if they hope to travel the world with their country's spectacular big top shows. The decaying, more than a hundred-year-old venue at the Mongolian Circus School is where hundreds of young artists, many now performing at celebrated outfits like Cirque Du Soleil, started their careers. Defying gravity in a building shaped like a traditional Mongolian ger, the performers practice acrobatics and trapeze, suspended on ropes lashed to the building's dilapidated rafters.

the country to see breathtaking shows packed with extreme gymnastics, aerial stunts—and even wild animals. Its contortionists—known as Uran Nugaralt, a practice dating back centuries—were particularly renowned. But faced with meagre prospects at home, hundreds of the country's top talents have gone overseas in recent years.

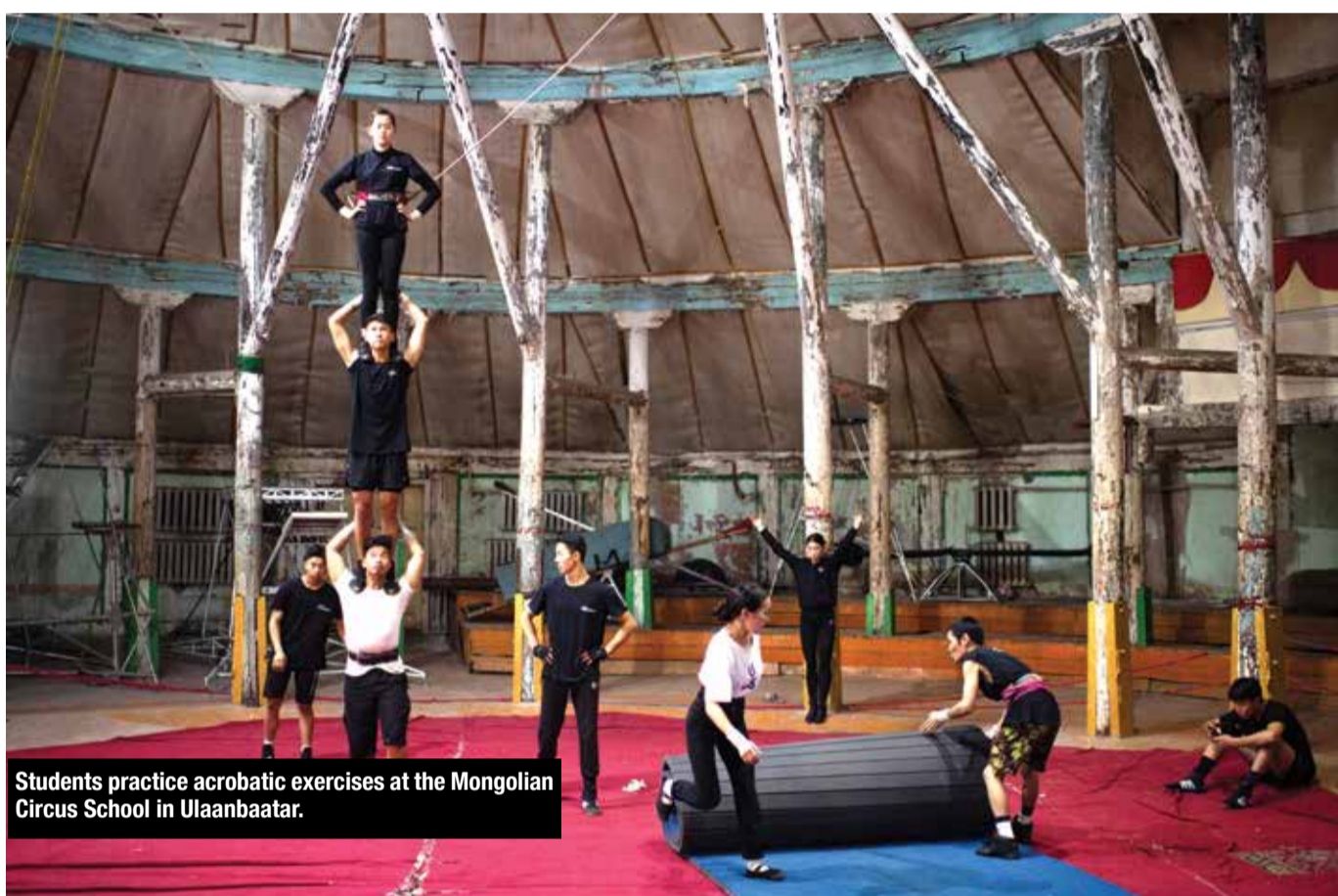
"When we go to international competitions and festivals, we're always asked to train international students," Bolortuya Purevdorj, Dean of the Circus Faculty of the Mongolian Conservatory, told AFP. "But we politely say we don't have enough teachers or human resources," she said. "We don't have training facilities." Performers told AFP they estimated about 85 percent of their colleagues live and work abroad, with at least 400 artists in Turkey as well as 500 contortionists in the United States and Europe. "Antarctica is perhaps the only place that Mongolian circus performers have not performed," Gerelbaatar told AFP.

### 'Rise again'

Mongolia's only modern circus venue was built in the Cold War by Romania as a gift to the socialist ally. The government sold it in 2007 to Dagvadorj Dolgorsuren, Mongolia's first Sumo champion, who was keen to splash his wealth on investments back home. He renamed it Asa Circus and it was intended to provide a rent-free training facility for circus students.

But it has instead been used for high-profile concerts and events, with fewer and fewer circus acts taking to the stage in years. That venue was home to the Mongolian Circus School's only training facilities, leaving few options for performers to hone their craft. The public school—which has dozens of students and 15 teachers—now severely lacks training spaces, with a new venue having been under construction for years.

Performers are demanding the government speed things up. "Once we build a proper circus school facility, (circus art) will succeed," Gerelbaatar, the former circus art director, told AFP. After that, he said, "the government can expect results and success" and the Mongolian circus can "rise again". In the meantime, the school has rented a space far away from its headquarters, forcing students to endure long commutes to train. "There are a lot of problems. Circus is the art



Students practice acrobatic exercises at the Mongolian Circus School in Ulaanbaatar.

of space, but space is very limited here," Bayarchimeg Erdenebayar, a juggling student, said. "I will keep improving my skills for another year."

### 'Cannot teach everything'

In light of the privatization, many contortionists split away from the main Mongolian circus to set up smaller, more specialized schools. During a visit to one



Students practice acrobatic exercises at the Mongolian Circus School in Ulaanbaatar.

such school, AFP saw students twisting themselves into all sorts of weird and wonderful shapes and sizes, legs held high as heads poked through hips. But teacher Erdenetsetseg Badarch, who trained as a contortionist under the country's Soviet-backed regime and performed thousands of times on the stage of the Mongolian Circus, said the facilities available are far from enough.

"In order to become a circus artist, we need to learn many other aspects of the art such as costume design, stage speech and body language," she said. "My little studio cannot teach everything." Another contortionist teacher there said that despite the obvious talent on display, his hopes for the future were bleak unless the state steps in to help.

"Our own state ignores its talented artists, who deserve better recognition," Bud Tumurbaatar told AFP. "That's why Mongolian artists are leaving Mongolia for other countries for better treatment and a better income."—AFP



Students practice acrobatic exercises.



Students practice acrobatic exercises.

One performer, 18-year-old Uuganbayar Nerguibaatar, said he hopes to follow in his sister's footsteps and take part in international competitions. "I want to try and become a circus artist," he said. With paint peeling off the walls and rusty equipment, the building where the artists practice is simply not safe, authorities have warned. But for the performers, the high-vaulted ceilings provide an ideal space to perfect the daredevil feats that made the Mongolian circus world famous. "The circus was so popular. We all want to revive it," Gerelbaatar Yunden, a former circus art director, told AFP. "It is our duty."

### 'Don't have facilities'

The circus was long one of Mongolia's most popular forms of entertainment, bringing crowds from across



Students practice acrobatic exercises at the Mongolian Circus School in Ulaanbaatar.



Students train at the Mongolian Circus School in Ulaanbaatar.



Students practice acrobatic exercises.



A student practices with hoops at the Mongolian Circus School in Ulaanbaatar.



Students practice acrobatic exercises.



Students practice contortionism.



Reverend Robert Whitmer visits the body of 'Stoneman Willie' (James Murphy), during his funeral service in Reading, Pennsylvania. — AFP photos



The body of 'Stoneman Willie' lies on display at the local funeral home that has been his resting place for 128 years in Reading, Pennsylvania.



The body of 'Stoneman Willie' lies on display at the local funeral home.

# RIP STONEMAN WILLIE: US MUMMY BURIED AFTER 128 YEARS

After more than a century living with a macabre mystery, the US town of Reading, Pennsylvania closed the casket Saturday on its oddest-ever resident—a mummified man who was finally buried. Crowds of people have lined up in recent days to pay their respects, snap photos or gaze with bewildered awe on a scene unlikely to ever be repeated in the United States.

"Stoneman Willie" was the nickname bestowed long ago on an alleged thief who died in 1895 in jail and was taken to the Theo C Auman Funeral Home when no one claimed the body, before being accidentally mummified by undertakers. "Fast-forward 128 years and he's still here," funeral home director Kyle Blankenbiller told AFP ahead of the burial.

At his interment, a crowd gathered under overcast skies, circling around Willie's black tombstone at a local cemetery for one final farewell. The man who became known as Willie gave a false name when he was jailed, but his true identity was tracked down and finally revealed during Saturday's ceremony, a fitting end to his life—and bizarre afterlife.



The body of 'Stoneman Willie' lies on display at the local funeral home.

He was revealed to have been named James Murphy as his grave-stone was unveiled at the climax of funeral events—which also included his remains joining a recent parade commemorating Reading's 275th anniversary. Both names are etched on his tombstone, though his real name only in small print at the bottom.

### 'Gawked at enough'

The corpse has been in an open casket for almost his entire stay at the funeral home, until being loaded into

a motorcycle-drawn hearse Saturday. His leathery skin and smooth sunken facial features have been the object of fascination for thousands, including countless curious locals, researchers and, in decades past, schoolchildren on class trips. Willie had become a quirky fixture of Reading history, "our friend" who now got a well-deserved sendoff, Blankenbiller said.

According to Willie's cellmate, the man arrested for pickpocketing adopted the fictitious name James Penn because he did not want to shame his



People look at a headstone for 'Stoneman Willie' (James Murphy), during his funeral service in Reading.

respectful thing to do." Among those saying goodbye in recent days was Berks County resident Michael Klein, who was fascinated by the "mystery of who this guy really was," he told AFP. Stoneman Willie was buried in a vintage black tuxedo, fittingly from the 1890s. "Everyone comes to America to live the American dream. Nobody comes to die in a prison unknown," Klein said.—AFP

# COMME des GARCONS



Models present creations for COMME des GARCONS during the Paris Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2024 in Paris.—AFP photos

# Bizarre and weird fashion



Lifestyle



City Surf Project students enter the water during an outing at Pacifica State Beach.



City Surf Project students prepare for an outing at Pacifica State Beach in Pacifica, California. — AFP photos



City Surf Project students prepare for a surf outing at Pacifica State Beach.



A City Surf Project student sits on his board during a surf outing at Pacifica State Beach.

# Catching a break: Inner city Californians try surfing

As Dianne Finez helps her Latino and African American students through their first surf lesson, she remembers the time she first took to the waves, trying out a sport she barely even knew existed. The 20-year-old of Filipino descent grew up 30 minutes' drive from the beach in a working class neighborhood of San Francisco. "I never knew surfing was an actual thing," she told AFP. "It was also hard to get into the sport just because there's mostly white males."

Finez is one of more than 2,000 young people who have been introduced to the waves by City Surf Project over the last decade. The association works with schools in working-class neighborhoods of San Francisco, where the bulk of the student population is Hispanic or African American.

### Cultural assumptions

The organization offers long-term partnerships with schools that allow educators to tailor their programs. But it also provides necessary practical help, like free use of equipment and transport to get students to and from the beach. Unlike in the Hawaiian societies of yesteryear where surfing originated, the California coast today is largely the preserve of the wealthy—the result of segregation and expropriation of minorities. "When you look at who lives on the coast, it's usually affluent, white communities," says Andrew Perry, the City Surf Project's program manager. "When you're a kid that lives almost two hours by bus from the beach, and then you've



City Surf Project program manager Andrew Perry (center) and senior alumni instructor Dianne Finez (right) wait to pick up students from Mission High School for an afternoon surf outing.

got to bring a surfboard on the bus, it is a monumental effort... as opposed to the person that lives two blocks from the beach and grew up there."

The cost of the sport is a limiting factor for many -- \$300 for a wetsuit, \$800 for a new board, and \$200-a-day lessons. That's where the organization's equipment loans come in handy, says Perry. But it's not just the practical obstacles—there are also cultural assumptions within the communities they are trying to reach, with what Perry calls a "generational stigma around swimming in the ocean" for working class families who live inland. "A lot of the times kids are growing up viewing it as a really scary place," he said.



The City Surf Project headquarters are seen in San Francisco, California.

### 'Laid back'

That's a familiar idea for Trew Gantt, an African American whose mother was terrified by the ocean. "I was allowed to go to pools on my own, but not to the beach," he said. "Everybody around me was telling me the ocean is cold and dangerous. Surfing just seemed unrealistic, unless you lived someplace tropical." But after his first taste of life on a surfboard with the program, he was bitten, and now he works as an instructor, delighting in showing his young charges they should not be afraid of the water.

He credits the sport with keeping him out of trouble during his teenage years, and helping him remain on an even keel. "Surfing taught me to be a lot more laid back and made me understand that I didn't need to impress anybody," he said. And that's something that educators have noticed as well. The ocean "is this force beyond measure that is good for us," says high school teacher Sara Kosoff. "And so I think that students of color need access to that equally, if not more than white students."—AFP

## Can chatbots be therapists? Only if you want them to be

A manager at artificial intelligence firm OpenAI caused consternation recently by writing that she just had "a quite emotional, personal conversation" with her firm's viral chatbot ChatGPT. "Never tried therapy before but this is probably it?" Lilian Weng posted on X, formerly Twitter, prompting a torrent of negative commentary accusing her of downplaying mental illness. However, Weng's take on her interaction with ChatGPT may be explained by a version of the placebo effect outlined this week by research in the Nature Machine Intelligence journal.

A team from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Arizona State University asked more than 300 participants to interact with mental health AI programs and primed them on what to expect. Some were told the chatbot was empathetic, others that it was manipulative and a third group that it was neutral.

Those who were told they were talking with a caring chatbot were far more likely than the other groups to see their chatbot therapists as trustworthy. "From this study, we see that to some extent the AI is the AI of the beholder," said report co-author Pat Pataranutaporn. Buzzy startups have been pushing AI apps offering therapy, companionship and other mental health support for years now—and it is big business. But the field remains a lightning rod for controversy.

### 'Weird, empty'

Like every other sector that AI is threatening to disrupt, critics are concerned that bots will eventually replace human workers rather than complement them. And with mental health,



the concern is that bots are unlikely to do a great job. "Therapy is for mental well-being and it's hard work," Cher Scarlett, an activist and programmer, wrote in response to Weng's initial post on X. "Vibing to yourself is fine and all but it's not the same." Compounding the general fear over AI, some apps in the mental health space have a chequered recent history.

Users of Replika, a popular AI com-

panion that is sometimes marketed as bringing mental health benefits, have long complained that the bot can be sex obsessed and abusive. Separately, a US nonprofit called Koko ran an experiment in February with 4,000 cli-

ents offering counseling using GPT-3, finding that automated responses simply did not work as therapy. "Simulated empathy feels weird, empty," the firm's co-founder, Rob Morris, wrote on X. His findings were similar to the MIT/Arizona researchers, who said some participants likened the chatbot experience to "talking to a brick wall". But Morris was later forced to defend himself after widespread criticism of his experiment,

mostly because it was unclear if his clients were aware of their participation.

### 'Lower expectations'

David Shaw from Basel University, who was not involved in the MIT/Arizona study, told AFP the findings were not surprising. But he pointed out: "It seems none of the participants were actually told all chatbots bullshit." That, he said, may be the most accurate primer of all. Yet the chatbot-as-therapist idea is intertwined with the 1960s roots of the technology. ELIZA, the first chatbot, was developed to simulate a type of psychotherapy.

The MIT/Arizona researchers used ELIZA for half the participants and GPT-3 for the other half. Although the effect was much stronger with GPT-3, users primed for positivity still generally regarded ELIZA as trustworthy. So it is hardly surprising that Weng would be glowing about her interactions with ChatGPT—she works for the company that makes it. The MIT/Arizona researchers said society needed to get a grip on the narratives around AI. "The way that AI is presented to society matters because it changes how AI is experienced," the paper argued. "It may be desirable to prime a user to have lower or more negative expectations."—AFP

## London restaurant offers chance to dine like a king (and a president)

There won't be a royal toast nor the sumptuous surroundings of the Hall of Mirrors at the Versailles palace near Paris. But a London restaurant is offering diners a chance to savor the menu of the state banquet laid on for King Charles III on his state visit to France last month. Those unaffected by the UK cost-of-living crisis can pay £275 (\$335) a head to tuck in to the feast created by top French Michelin-starred chefs Anne-Sophie Pic and Yannick Alleno.

Monday's gastronomic event is being held at Alleno's London restaurant Pavillon at the Four Seasons hotel on Park Lane. By midday on Friday, there were still places left. The starter is Pic's blue lobster and brown crab with fresh almond voile and costmary mint, followed by Alleno's main—Bresse poultry with gratinated cepes, and romaine stuffed with corn and truffle. Dessert, by pâtissier Pierre Herme, is based on his Ispahan macaron, re-confectioned for the occasion with raspberry, lychee and rose sorbet.—AFP

## Sports

# 'Fantastic' Verstappen wins third straight Formula One title

'This has been a fantastic feeling and it has been a fantastic year'

**DOHA:** Max Verstappen clinched his third consecutive world title on Saturday when he finished second behind rookie Oscar Piastri in an incident-filled sprint race at the Qatar Grand Prix, describing his success as "fantastic".

It was a fine maiden Formula One victory for Australian 22-year-old Piastri, but his feat was overshadowed by Verstappen's achievement, the Dutchman having required only three points to take the title. His only rival and Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez was involved in a collision and retired, making him the first "Saturday champion" since Nelson Piquet, father of his girlfriend Kelly, in South Africa in 1983.

"I don't know what to say. Incredible year. Thank you for providing me with such a car. It has been a pleasure so far this year," 26-year-old Verstappen told his team over the car radio. Red Bull team boss Christian Horner described the Dutchman as "phenomenal" and "out of this world". Piastri's win was McLaren's first since Daniel Ricciardo triumphed for them at the 2021 Italian Grand Prix and it was only the second time this season that Red Bull had been defeated. Verstappen won the title with six races remaining in the season, the greatest margin since 2002 when Michael Schumacher was champion for Ferrari.

His title win enabled him to join a rare club for three-time champions alongside Jack Brabham, Niki Lauda, Nelson Piquet, Ayrton Senna and Jackie Stewart — and an even more elite group of those to have won three in a row, Juan Manuel Fangio, Schumacher, Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton.

"This has been a fantastic feeling and it has been a fantastic year. We have had some great races and I am super proud of the team job and it is so enjoyable to be a part of this group of people. To win three times is incredible," added Verstappen. He said that he had no records in sight as targets, but wanted to continue

racing and winning. "We'll keep on pushing and doing the best we can." Verstappen, who will start Sunday's Qatar Grand Prix from pole position, has an unassailable 184-point lead with six races left in the season.

Piastri said: "I am very happy but that was a stressful race. We did a great job." His McLaren team-mate Lando Norris came home third ahead of Mercedes' George Russell and Hamilton with the Ferraris of Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc sixth and seventh. Alex Albon of Williams was eighth, two-time champion Fernando Alonso of Aston Martin ninth and Pierre Gasly of Alpine 10th.

## Perez in the gravel

After a sweltering day, the sprint race started in warm conditions under floodlights at the Lusail International Circuit, Piastri making an excellent start to pull clear as team-mate Norris was engaged by a cluster of skirmishes behind him. Norris dropped from second to sixth while Russell went through to second ahead of the two Ferraris with Verstappen fifth before Liam Lawson ran off-track in a cloud of dust, prompting a safety car intervention.

On re-start, a fiery Alonso pressurized Norris in a wheel-to-wheel battle while Piastri ran wide and allowed Russell through to lead. Logan Sargeant then spun off in his Williams to bring another safety car interval. Piastri had chosen medium compound tyres while Russell, Sainz and Leclerc were all on softs, giving them an early advantage in grip. Verstappen, in fifth as the safety car led into lap six of the 19-lap race, was comfortable in the knowledge that he was on course to clinch his third title by finishing in the top six.

As lap seven began and the safety car went in, Russell stormed into a 1.4 seconds lead ahead of Piastri, who was fending off attacks from Sainz, hoping that



**LUSAIL, Qatar:** (From L-R) Formula One CEO Stefano Domenicali, Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen, McLaren's Australian driver Oscar Piastri, McLaren's British driver Lando Norris and FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem pose for a picture after the sprint race ahead of the Qatari Formula One Grand Prix at the Lusail International Circuit. — AFP

his medium tyres would prove more durable in the closing stages. Perez and Verstappen then began to show Red Bull's speed, the Mexican moving up to 10th by passing Pierre Gasly and the Dutchman sweeping past both Ferraris in succession on the straight to take third. On lap 10, Piastri regained the lead, blasting past Russell on the straight while Norris overtook Leclerc for fifth as Perez was entangled in a collision with Esteban Ocon and Nico Hulkenberg, the Mexican spin-

ning across the gravel and out of the race. Perez was unable to score points and effectively ended his last mathematical hopes for the title, as another safety car intervention began, Verstappen being assured of his third crown. As the racing re-started, on lap 16, it was clear the Dutchman had no intention of taking a third title without a win as he passed Russell down the inside of Turn One to take second and begin his pursuit of Piastri. — AFP

## Williamson to miss second game of WCup

**HYDERABAD:** New Zealand captain Kane Williamson will miss Monday's World Cup clash against the Netherlands but is expected to return to the team later in the week, said coach Gary Stead on Sunday. Williamson is still recovering after six months out with a knee injury although he did feature in the World Cup warm-up series last week. He sat out New Zealand's nine-wicket rout of champions England in the tournament opener on Thursday and will watch from the sidelines again in Hyderabad on Monday. However, Stead said Williamson is expected to play in the third game of the tournament against Bangladesh in Chennai on Friday.

"He is progressing really well but his fielding needs to be higher and needs trust in his body," said Stead. "We're confident he will be ready for the third game to start his tournament." Williamson is the current squad's top scorer in ODIs with more than 6,500 runs and 13 centuries. Stead said veteran fast bowler Tim Southee, who also missed the victory over England, is available for selection after recovering from a dislocated thumb. Meanwhile, New Zealand all-rounder Glenn Phillips Sunday stressed that the Black Caps must keep their feet on the ground after the convincing win over England.



Kane Williamson

Runners-up in the last two World Cups, New Zealand upstaged England in Ahmedabad, riding on brilliant centuries from Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra. "We enjoyed the first win but obviously with the tournament having such a quick turnaround, we try not get too high when we win and not get too low when we lose," said Phillips.

Phillips said New Zealand will not take the Netherlands lightly despite the Dutch being the only second-tier Associate team at the 10-nation event. "We approach every game the same way every time, every team is strong in their own right, especially on any given day," said the all-rounder.

"The Netherlands have a lot of strong players, and we're going to have to still put our best foot forward, as I'm sure they will," Phillips praised the skill sets of the Netherlands' players. "Obviously, they've beaten quite a few good opponents to be able to qualify for the tournament in the first place. So, they're a team definitely not to be taken lightly."

Phillips hailed Conway and Ravindra for their undefeated centuries in Ahmedabad, 152 and 123 respectively. "They were absolutely brilliant," said Phillips of the two left-handers who shared an unbroken 273-run stand for the second wicket to overhaul England's 283-run target with 82 balls to spare.

"I guess from a team perspective it's really nice to know that those two boys are in some serious form and that's a good feeling," Phillips denied he was surprised at Ravindra's stunning man of the match performance. "Oh, no. I wasn't surprised at all," said Phillips of the 23-year-old batsman. "Obviously, I've played a lot of cricket with him back home and he actually plays a very aggressive brand of one-day cricket." He added: "Being up at the top of the order, he likes to play with a lot of flair." —AFP



**SHANGHAI:** Russia's Daniil Medvedev hits a return to USA's Sebastian Korda during their men's singles match at the Shanghai Masters tennis tournament in Shanghai. — AFP

## Defending champion Medvedev out of Shanghai Masters

**SHANGHAI:** Defending champion Daniil Medvedev said missing one key opportunity had cost him a spot in the Shanghai Masters' fourth round after he was knocked out in straight sets by 26th-ranked Sebastian Korda on Sunday. The Russian fell apart in the second set after Korda won the first on a tiebreaker taken to the brink, with the match finishing 7-6 (10/8), 6-2.

"I should have won the tiebreak but didn't," said the world number three afterwards. "I was, for sure, down mentally after such a first set... In the tiebreak, he actually didn't play that good (compared to the rest of the match). I didn't use this opportunity and I'm going home."

Medvedev fell three games behind an emboldened Korda in the second set, but looked like he might be about to make a comeback with a blistering win in the fourth game. But the American fought back, taking the next game, and Medvedev grew increasingly agitated, gesticulating in frustration and smashing his racket.

"I feel awesome. I played an incredible match," said 23-year-old Korda at the end, thanking the crowd for their enthusiasm. "It's been a really long year for me. A lot of injuries, a lot of time off," he said later at a press conference. "To finally get a really good win like this against a top-5 player is great for me."

## 'Not amazing'

Medvedev had said the game would be "interesting" for him beforehand, referencing his loss to Korda in their last meeting. At a press conference after Sunday's match, looking deflated, he summed up his time in China as "not amazing".

He made the final of Beijing's China Open this week but lost to Italian Jannik Sinner. "Shanghai is really important... I wanted to do better," Medvedev said. "I felt good being here, so I'm a little bit, not a little bit, I'm very disappointed to lose."

His elimination was watched from the courtside by tournament top seed Carlos Alcaraz. Medvedev said the 20-year-old Spaniard and Sinner, who also beat Alcaraz in Beijing this week, were the top contenders for his title now. "But at the same time... Maybe Jannik loses today, Carlos loses tomorrow, and it's all over... That's why tennis is interesting, we can never know," he said with a wry smile.

Medvedev's words seemed almost prophetic in the first set of Sinner's evening match against Argentina's Sebastian Baez. The world number four had a sluggish start and looked tired, leaning on his racket at one point. Taking advantage, Baez won the first set by three games. But at the beginning of the second set, Sinner was transformed, claiming the first three games in quick succession. The 29th-ranked Baez ultimately couldn't outlast Sinner, with the final score 3-6, 6-3, 6-2. "I think I handled the situation quite well," the Italian said of being down a set. —AFP

## Bowling Championship extremely competitive

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The World Bowling Championship proved to be highly competitive from the start, and that of all singles group as Germany, Canada, UAE, Qatar, Oman and Denmark moved to the second round, meanwhile in the women's side Korea, Singapore, Colombia, Malaysia and Germany also made it to the second round.

Meanwhile Executive Director at the Canadian Tenpin Federation Kathy Anaise said Kuwait succeeded in hosting the World Bowling Community through an outstanding organization.

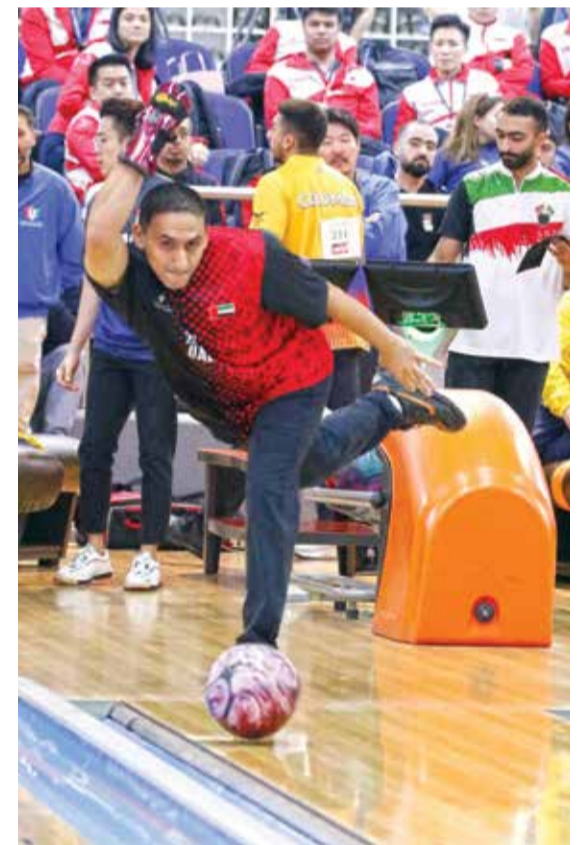
She said everything is at its best by the bowling complex, or even the hotel and all are pleased with what they have seen so far. She said she is happy to be in Kuwait for the first time and lauded the reception and hospitality. She said the opening ceremony was fantastic and expressive as it reflected the world's cultures in a way that all enjoyed.

About the general assembly meeting she said there were no surprises, adding that she will work closely with the board of directors of IBF to improve and advance the game, though this will take some time and effort.

## Swiatek beats Samsonova to win China Open

**BEIJING:** Iga Swiatek delivered a dominant performance to win the China Open on Sunday, crowning a resurgent run of form with a straight-sets win over Liudmila Samsonova in Beijing. The world number two triumphed 6-2, 6-2 to take the first China Open women's title since 2019, after Beijing lifted its isolationist zero-Covid policy. The victory capped a strong showing for four-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek, who was deposed as the world's top-ranked player by Aryna Sabalenka last month. The 22-year-old broke Samsonova's serve in the sixth game and sealed the opening set when the unseeded Russian slammed a forehand into the net.

Swiatek looked assured throughout and quickly notched another break in set two when her error-prone opponent fired another forehand wide. And when Samsonova sent an ill-advised drop-shot into the net to hand her the victory, the Pole doubled



over with emotion before a delighted crowd. Swiatek was the favourite to win the final after handing US Open champion Coco Gauff her first defeat in 17 matches in the final four on Saturday. Sabalenka had been knocked out in the quarter-finals by fifth-ranked Elena Rybakina, who was in turn dumped out by Samsonova in the other semi-final.

Ranked 22nd, Samsonova had racked up a string of impressive victories against higher-ranked players but the result of Sunday's final rarely looked in doubt. The match brought to a close the first China Open in four years, after Beijing lifted onerous travel restrictions that formed part of a longtime policy to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

It was also the first time the women's tournament had taken place since the international governing body announced the end of an embargo imposed on China following sexual assault allegations by former player Peng Shuai. The Women's Tennis Association had withdrawn from the country after Peng accused a top Communist Party official of forcing her into sex, but the overlap with Beijing's zero-Covid strategy meant its ban was largely symbolic. The men's tournament wrapped up on Wednesday when Italy's Jannik Sinner beat world number three Daniil Medvedev to take the trophy. — AFP



**BEIJING:** Poland's Iga Swiatek holds the winning trophy after defeating Russia's Liudmila Samsonova in the women's singles final match of the WTA China Open tennis tournament in Beijing on October 8, 2023. — AFP

Sports

# Martinelli strikes late as Arsenal end Manchester City curse

## Liverpool held by Brighton, Newcastle drop points at West Ham

**LONDON:** Arsenal ended their eight-year wait for a Premier League win over Manchester City as Gabriel Martinelli's late strike sealed a dramatic 1-0 victory against the champions on Sunday. After 12 successive league defeats at the hands of Pep Guardiola's men, the Gunners enjoyed a moment of sweet redemption at the Emirates Stadium.

With just four minutes left, Martinelli's shot took a hefty deflection off City defender Nathan Ake, sparking wild celebrations as Arsenal clinched a top-flight success against the treble winners for the first time since December 2015. Arsenal had beaten City on penalties in the Community Shield in August, but that victory in the curtain-raiser to the domestic season could not be taken as seriously as this potentially crucial result.

It lifted unbeaten Arsenal two points above third-placed City into second place, leaving them behind leaders Tottenham on goals scored.

For the first time since December 2018, City have lost successive league games following their 2-1 defeat at Wolves last weekend. Add in a League Cup loss against Newcastle and City have been beaten in three of their last four games. It is a rare sign of vulnerability from a team who started their bid for a fourth successive title by winning the first six games of the season.

Few will expect City to surrender without a fight, but Guardiola has issues to solve as he looks to reinvigorate a squad that may have lost a little hunger after their treble triumph.

City nearly took the lead inside five minutes when Josko Gvardiol's lunging effort was headed off the line by Declan Rice after Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya misjudged a cross.

With Arsenal failing to clear the danger after that narrow escape, City's Nathan Ake should score from close range, but the defender wastefully fired over. For the second time in the opening 20 minutes, Raya almost gifted City a goal as he took too long to



**LONDON:** Arsenal's Spanish goalkeeper #22 David Raya catches the ball under pressure from Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Manchester City at The Emirates stadium in London. — AFP

deal with Gabriel's back-pass, allowing Julian Alvarez to close the 'keeper down and deflect his panicked clearance inches wide. Eddie Nketiah tried to ease Arsenal's stress when he cut inside the City area and curled wide of the far post.

Frantically waving his arms to the crowd, Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard raised the decibel levels before Mateo Kovacic brought the atmosphere to boiling point. Earlier, Liverpool missed the chance to go second in the Premier League as the Reds were pegged back in a pulsating 2-2 draw at Brighton on Sunday, while Newcastle were also held 2-2 by West Ham.

Manchester City can go back to the top of the table later when they travel to Arsenal in a clash between last season's top two. A point leaves Liverpool

three points behind leaders Tottenham and after their justified fury in losing to Spurs last weekend when a goal was wrongly ruled out by a VAR error, Jurgen Klopp's men will feel aggrieved at another refereeing decision.

Pascal Gross somehow avoided a red card when pulling down Dominik Szoboszlai for a penalty that led to Liverpool's second goal just before half-time. The visitors had been given the run around by Brighton in the opening half hour. Alexis Mac Allister struggled on his return to the Amex Stadium and was one of the culprits for the opening goal.

The Argentine was caught in possession by Simon Adingra, who then caught Alisson Becker out of position by taking his shot early from outside the box. After a bright start to the sea-

son, Brighton have now won just once in six games as the rigors of European football have told on Roberto De Zerbi's men. The Seagulls' daring approach has won plenty of plaudits but Liverpool pounced on their weaknesses to turn the game on its head five minutes before the break.

Twice Brighton were punished for giving the ball away inside their own half as Harvey Elliot unselfishly allowed Darwin Nunez's pass to find Mohamed Salah to slot home the equalizer.

Liverpool's high press then won the penalty as Szoboszlai dispossessed Gross and was pulled down by the German midfielder. Salah confidently dispatched the spot-kick, but Liverpool will ask questions about why they were not up against 10 men for the rest of the game. — AFP

## Kohli, Rahul lead India out of peril to beat Australia

**CHENNAI:** Virat Kohli and KL Rahul hit defiant knocks to lift India from a perilous three down for two runs to a six-wicket win over Australia in their opening Cricket World Cup match on Sunday. Chasing a tricky target of 200, India lost three batsmen, who all failed to score, inside two overs before Kohli (85) and Rahul (97 not out) put on 165.

Victory was secured with 52 balls to spare. Spinner Ravindra Jadeja returned figures of 3-28 to help bowl out Australia for 199 in 49.3 overs in the 150th ODI meeting between the two cricket giants. Australia's fast bowlers then came out all guns blazing to rattle the Indian top-order after left-arm quick Mitchell Starc sent back Ishan Kishan for a duck in the first over.

Josh Hazlewood struck twice in the next to remove skipper Rohit Sharma lbw and then Shreyas Iyer caught at cover also for nought to silence the home crowd of 32,531. Hazlewood nearly made it four down when he got Kohli to top-edge a delivery only for Mitchell Marsh to drop a skier. Kohli was on 12 at the time.

Kohli made the most of the reprieve as the star batsman reached his 67th ODI half-century and raised his bat to acknowledge the loud cheers. Rahul soon reached his fifty in the 28th over as India went to 106-3 and in control. Kohli finally fell to Hazlewood caught out at mid-wicket and walked off to standing ovation. Rahul hit the winning six with Hardik Pandya at the other end.

"I had just taken a shower and was hoping to put my feet up for half an hour after the fielding innings, but I had to come in," said Rahul of his unexpectedly early arrival at the crease. "Virat said that I should play like Test cricket for a bit." Australia



**CHENNAI:** India's Virat Kohli (L) and KL Rahul run between the wickets past Australia's captain Pat Cummins (C) during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between India and Australia at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. — AFP

captain Pat Cummins admitted his team had been "50 runs short".

"Facing the spinners was tough and it was the kind of wicket you had to get yourself in." Five-time champions Australia won the toss and elected to bat first but faltered. Jadeja stood out in his 10 overs of left-arm spin. Fellow spinner Kuldeep Yadav and fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah took two wickets each.

Australia lost an early wicket before veteran batsmen David Warner (41) and Steve Smith (46) hit back in a partnership of 69. Kohli made an early impact with a diving slip catch to send back Marsh, for a six-ball duck, off Bumrah.

The left-handed Warner reached 1,000 World Cup runs, passing Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar's previous best landmark. Warner needed 19 innings to Tendulkar's 20. Kuldeep, a left-arm wrist spinner, broke the stand to send back Warner, caught and bowled.

Jadeja bowled Smith to deny the former captain his fifty and then struck twice in his next over including wicketkeeper-batsman Alex Carey for a duck to rattle the opposition batting. Australia collapsed from 110-2 to 140-7 before Cummins hit the first six of the match, but fell for 15. Number nine Mitchell Starc hit 28 to add some respect to the total. — AFP

News in Brief

### Biles wins beam gold

**ANTWERP:** US superstar Simone Biles continued her winning return from a two-year break by claiming a 22nd world title with gold on the balance beam at the world gymnastics championships on Sunday. Biles, 26, followed her gold in the team and all-around events during the week, as she sealed the beam title for a fourth time with a dazzling routine which earned her 14.800 points. China's Zhou Yaqin, 17, scored 14.700 to take silver with Brazil's Rebeca Andrade, who beat Biles to gold in the vault on Saturday when the American fell, claiming bronze with 14.300. In a high-level final, Biles performed her acrobatics without moving a millimetre on the apparatus. The title was decided by a tiny margin, as teenager Zhou also impressed. Gold only escaped the Chinese gymnast because she took a step back at her exit of the beam and was penalised a tenth of a point. For Biles it was a 29th world medal. The Texan could add another later on Sunday when she competes in the floor routine on the final day of competition in Antwerp. Biles has made an impressive return to competition two years after her "twisties", a temporary mental block whereby gymnasts lose their sense of where they are in the air, ended her Tokyo Olympics. — AFP

### Kiptum wins Chicago Marathon

**CHICAGO:** Kenya's Kelvin Kiptum set a world record to win Sunday's Chicago Marathon men's title in an unofficial time of two hours and 35 seconds. The 23-year-old shattered the old world record of 2:01:09 set by Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge to win the 2022 Berlin Marathon. "I feel so happy," Kiptum said. "I wasn't prepared. I knew I was coming for a course record but fortunately a world record." It was Kiptum's third victory in as many starts over the 26.2-mile distance. He won on his debut last December at Valencia and then in London Marathon last April. "I'm very happy," Kiptum said. "A world record was not in my mind today. I knew one day one time I'd be a world-record holder." It marked the third time a men's world record had been set on the streets of Chicago but the first time since Morocco's Khalid Khannouchi in 1999. Before the finish, Kiptum was waving and blowing kisses at spectators before raising his arms in triumph at the finish line. — AFP

### Milan make Giroud goalkeeper

**MILAN:** Olivier Giroud was officially made a goalkeeper by AC Milan on Sunday after the France striker's heroics between the sticks at Genoa helped his team take top spot in Serie A. Veteran forward Giroud took Mike Maignan's place in the Milan goal after his Les Bleus teammate was sent off in the seventh minute of injury time and did enough to ensure the away side won 1-0 and moved two points ahead of local rivals Inter Milan. "Last night Olivier Giroud became part of Milan history by courageously defending the Milan goal in the final minutes of our match with Genoa," Milan said in a statement. "The club has decided to honour his performance in our last line of defence by putting him in the list of goalkeepers." — AFP

### Sainz out due to fuel problems

**DOHA:** Carlos Sainz was ruled out of starting Sunday's Qatar Grand Prix for Ferrari after suffering a fuel-system problem on his car. The Italian team confirmed his absence from the grid in a statement that followed a frantic effort by his mechanics, on the grid, before the race. In the end, the team decided with barely an hour to go that his SF-23 would not be ready in time to occupy his disappointing 12th spot on the grid for the race. The statement said: "Due to a fuel system issue on his car, Carlos will not take part in the Qatar GP." Sainz claimed victory for Ferrari at the Singapore Grand Prix last month, ending a 10-race winning streak for world champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull. — AFP

# Classifieds

## Clinics & Hospitals

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### Hospitals

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

## Change of Name

I, **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.

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## China brings curtain down on biggest Asian Games



HANGZHOU: (Left and center) Kuwaiti athletes don the Palestinian keffiyeh in a show of solidarity with Palestine during the closing ceremony of the 19th Asian Games on Oct 8, 2023. (Right) Kuwaiti team of Salman Al-Mousawi, Mohammad Al-Mousawi and Mohammad Hussein win the karate kata bronze medal at the Asian Games, raising Kuwait's tally to 11 medals.

HANGZHOU: Hosts China racked up a record 201 gold medals before the curtain came down on two weeks of tears and triumphs at the Asian Games in Hangzhou on Sunday. The 19th and biggest Asian Games concluded at the 80,000-capacity Olympic stadium with China handing over to Japan for 2026 at a celebratory closing ceremony.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable on Sunday to Chinese President Xi Jinping, congratulating him on the success of the 19th Asian Games, hosted by the Chinese city of Hangzhou. The smooth and seamless manner in which the event planned out depicted China in a positive light, garnering the adulation of the entire world. His Highness the Amir said in his cable, wishing Beijing perpetual prosperity and development.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Sabah also sent similar cables to the Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulating him on the success of the 19th Asian Games.

Dancers holding lit-up props fanned out towards the

audience in a performance evoking ocean waves while the words "love Asia" were projected on a big screen. The Games are normally every four years but Nagoya-Aichi has a shorter run-up because Hangzhou was postponed by a year due to China's now-abandoned zero-COVID measures.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, a spectator surnamed Xia told AFP that the Games made her feel "very moved and proud". "The Chinese team did great," she said. Taiwan's Gu Shiau-shuang won the final gold earlier in the day when she successfully defended her title in women's karate.

But it was the hosts who dominated over much of the fortnight, their 201 golds beating the 199 they collected at Guangzhou 2010. Their exploits across the 40 sports at the Games reinforced China's status as Asia's sporting superpower, topping the medals table at every Asian Games since 1982. The competition will be much stiffer in less than 10 months at the Paris Olympics.

With about 12,000 athletes, this was the biggest Asian Games in history and had more competitors than the Olympics. The Games were China's chance to show

it was business as usual following the Covid policies that largely sealed its borders. Crowds waving mini Chinese flags regularly filled the 54 venues.

"Technically we have had one of the finest Asian Games ever," said Olympic Council of Asia acting director general Vinod Kumar Tiwari. "We have had 97 Games records, 26 Asian records and 13 world records, so the standard has been very, very high and we are very happy with it."

World records tumbled in shooting and weightlifting, with North Korea celebrating their return to the global sporting arena after four years away by hoovering up six weightlifting golds. But the hoisting of their flag—in contravention of World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) sanctions—was a running controversy in Hangzhou that was never resolved.

North Korea's athletes, wearing dazzling white blazers, again waved their flag at the closing ceremony. The scourge of doping was never far away. Seven athletes failed drugs tests and more will likely be announced in the coming days.

The Olympics on the horizon added extra spice.

Nine sports, among them boxing, break dancing and tennis, served as qualifiers for Paris. Breakdancing was appearing at the Asian Games for the first time, ahead of its Olympic bow, while eSports was a huge hit on its full debut.

Overwhelmingly young spectators packed out the futuristic 4,500-seat eSports arena and tickets were the most highly sought after at the Games. Lee "Faker" Sang-hyeok, who was followed by frenzied crowds from the moment he landed, won gold with South Korea in League of Legends—and earned an exemption from military service back home.

Chinese swimmers Zhang Yufei and Qin Haiyang were named the Games MVPs and it was in the pool where the hosts were especially impressive. They won 28 swimming golds—Zhang and Qin accounting for 11 of them—to send a warning of what they can do in Paris.

Japan were a distant second in the final medals table with 52 golds, down from 75 at Jakarta in 2018, and South Korea third on 42. India's pinpoint archers and shooters helped propel the country to 107 medals, their best showing ever.— AFP



Zain welcomes champions Al-Youha, Al-Rashidi, Al-Mudhaf and Al-Faihan.



Bader Al-Kharafi honors the champions with attendance of Al-Aiban, Al-Baidan and Jaffar.

### Zain proud of Team Kuwait's champions at Hangzhou Games

KUWAIT: Zain, the proud official partner of Team Kuwait at the 19th Asian Games in collaboration with the Kuwait Olympic Committee, has joined in honoring and welcoming a new group of athletes back home from China. The champions recently attained several new medals, bringing up Team Kuwait's total tally to 11 medals.

During Dawri Zain's thrilling Clasic match between Al-Qadisiya and Al-Arabi at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi honored the champions in recognition of their outstanding achievements. In attendance were Minister of Commerce and Industry & Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al-Aiban, Public Authority for Sports GM Yousef Al-Baidan, and Kuwait Olympic Committee VP Mohammed Jaffar.

Zain was keen on being among the first to welcome the returning champions at Kuwait International Airport, expressing its utmost pride in the accomplishments of Kuwaiti athletes in the biggest international sporting events. Team Kuwait's total tally reached 11 medals at the end of the Hangzhou games, with three

gold, four silver and four bronze.

Zain welcomed Yaqoub Al-Youha, who proudly achieved the gold medal in men's 110m hurdles. The company also welcomed Khalid Al-Mudhaf, Abdulrahman Al-Faihan and Talal Al-Rashidi, who attained the silver medal in shooting – trap team, men. Al-Rashidi also attained another silver medal in shooting – trap individual, men. Zain also welcomed the handball team, who achieved the bronze medal.

Among the latest achievements for Team Kuwait, Fahad Al-Ajmi proudly achieved the gold medal in Karate – Kumite, 67kg, while Abdullah Shabaan attained the silver medal in Karate – Kumite-60kg. Furthermore, Sayed Salman Al-Mosawi achieved the bronze medal in Karate – Kata, individual, while also sharing another bronze medal in Karate – Kata, team with Mohammed Hussain and Sayed Mohammed Al-Mosawi.

The above medals add to Team Kuwait's previous achievements, where Abdullah Al-Rashidi attained a gold medal in shooting, skeet individual, men, as well as a silver medal with Iman Al-Shamma in shooting, skeet team, mixed. In addition, Yousef Al-Shamlan achieved a bronze



Zain welcomes the handball champions at the airport.

medal in fencing – sabre individual, men.

Zain was keen on being at the national team's side in China, reflecting a fruitful partnership between the country's private and public sectors to support local athletes in international arenas to inspire them to raise Kuwait's flag high in the biggest competitions and bring gold back home.

Under this partnership, Zain has supported 141 players representing Kuwait in 25 sports:

Golf, football, tennis, squash, shooting, archery, cycling, taekwondo, karate, boxing, kurash, judo, fencing, jujitsu, wrestling, rowing, diving, triathlon, handball, swimming, athletics, sport climbing, rhythmic gymnastics, chess, and equestrian.

The Asian Games is a multi-sport event that brings together athletes from across the continent of Asia. It is organized every four years by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) under the supervision of the International Olympic Com-

mittee (IOC). This year, the 19th Asian Games features 483 games in 40 different disciplines.

Zain is proud to support Team Kuwait in this major sporting event in collaboration with the Kuwait Olympic Committee. The company is always keen on shouldering sports programs and local athletes to elevate the Kuwaiti sports scene, as it strongly believes in the role played by the sports sector in progressing national economy.