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# Do your utmost best, Crown Prince urges Kuwaiti athletes

Sheikh Mishal arrives in China for opening of 19th Asian Games



HANGZHOU, China: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives Kuwaiti athletes competing in the 19th Asian Games on Sept 21, 2023. — KUNA photos



HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal arrives at Hangzhou's Xiaoshan International Airport on Sept 21, 2023.

HANGZHOU, China: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah urged athletes competing in the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou Thursday to do their best to represent Kuwait in the best way possible. HH the Crown Prince, in a speech while receiving Chairman of Kuwait National Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, members of the NOC board and athletes in Hangzhou, said he was keen on meeting them to encourage them to do their best and raise their flag high.

He conveyed the greetings of HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the athletes and his best wishes of luck in their competitions. "You came here to represent your country, not yourself; sport is about conduct before being a performance; (I urge you to) show commitment to the noble values and remember that

your training and preparation is your strength to reaching objectives of winning prizes," HH the Crown Prince said. He highly appreciated efforts of the coaches and asserted the importance of development of sport in Kuwait.

The audience was attended by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and

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Investment Saad Al-Barrak, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Jassem Al-Ostad, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Raquba, Director General of the Public Authority for Sport Yusuf Al-Baidan and senior officials.

HH the Crown Prince earlier arrived at Hangzhou's Xiaoshan International Airport in eastern China's Zhejiang province to attend the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Olympic Games at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping. HH the Crown Prince was welcomed by Chinese Minister of Transportation Li Xiaopeng, Chairwoman of Zhejiang Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Huang Lixin, head of the accompanying honorary mission and Ambassador to Kuwait Zhang Jianwei, and from the Kuwaiti side, Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Affairs Sameeh Jowhar Hayat, Ambassador to China Jassem Ibrahim Al-Najem, Consul General in Shanghai Mishal Al-Shamali, Consul General in Guangzhou Abdullah Al-Turki and Consul General in Hong Kong Nasser Saqr, as well as heads of the offices of the Kuwait Embassy in Beijing. — KUNA

## India-Canada row escalates

NEW DELHI: New Delhi said Thursday it is seeking the reduction of Canadian diplomatic staff in India and has stopped visa services, as a row over the killing of a Sikh separatist deepens. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has demanded India treat with "utmost seriousness" allegations that Indian agents played a role in the June murder of Hardeep Singh Nijjar near Vancouver.

The fallout prompted tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions and a forceful denial from India, which said any suggestion it played a role in Nijjar's killing was "absurd". The allegation has sent already strained relations between the world's most populous country and G7 member Canada to a new low. "We have informed the Canadian government that there should be parity" in diplomatic presence, Indian foreign ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi told

Continued on Page 6

## PM calls on Iraqi counterpart to abide by Khor Abdullah accord

NEW YORK: Representative of HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah, received Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia Al-Sudani at his residence in New York on Wednesday. The meeting, held on the sidelines of the 78th UN General Assembly session, dealt with the impacts of the recent verdict of the Iraqi federal court rescinding the agreement on mari-

time navigation in Khor Abdullah. The agreement, signed by both countries in 2012, was endorsed and lodged at the United Nations in the following year.

HH the Amir's representative stressed the importance of urgent and decisive measures by the Iraqi government to address the historical fallacies against Kuwait in the court ruling. He affirmed the need of commitment to the security, independence and territorial safety

Continued on Page 6

## MBS: Palestinian issue key for normalization

NEW YORK: Saudi Arabia's crown prince said Wednesday that a historic normalization of relations with the Zionist entity is getting "closer", as he also warned that the kingdom will seek a nuclear weapon if foe Iran gets one first. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Sal-

man denied in an interview with Fox News that the Saudis have suspended US-brokered talks with the Zionist entity.

"Every day we get closer," the prince said. But he said the kingdom was seeking more progress on ensuring the rights of the Palestinians, while Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-right government continues to pursue controversial settlements in the occupied West Bank. "For us, the Palestinian issue is very important.

We need to solve that part," he said. "We need to ease the life of the Palestinians."

The Zionist entity has normalized relations with five Arab nations — but recognition by Saudi Arabia is seen as a historic prize in Middle East diplomacy, due to the kingdom's role as the guardian of Islam's two holiest sites. Both the Zionist entity and Saudi Arabia, as well as other Arab states, share mutual hostility toward Iran.

Continued on Page 6



NEW YORK: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah receives Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammad Shia Al-Sudani on Sept 20, 2023. — KUNA



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman speaks during an interview with Fox News. — KUNA



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# Souk Al-Manakh: Worst financial crisis in Kuwait

## 'To succeed in Al-Manakh, shut off your brain'

### Surviving financial catastrophe: Lessons from Souk Al-Manakh

By Fares Al-Shammari

The collapse of Souk Al-Manakh in 1982 left us with valuable lessons to avoid enduring such a crisis and its devastating losses again. Nevertheless, an investor in Souk Al-Manakh, as recounted in the book "Manakh 82" by author Nadia Alsharrah, mentioned that if given the chance, they would do it all over again. Alsharrah, in an interview with Kuwait Times, emphasizes the significance of studying crises like Souk Al-Manakh for the insights they provide.

#### Lesson 1: Avoid the obsession with quick wealth

"He who wishes to be rich in a day will be hanged in a year." (Da Vinci). Numerous successful Kuwaitis abandoned their thriving businesses in pursuit of quick riches in Souk Al-Manakh. The book "Manakh 82" highlights that among the investors who suffered losses were accomplished businessmen, graduates of prestigious universities, and even an expert in financial crises. Therefore, it is crucial not to assume that education alone can shield you from such mistakes.

Alsharrah underscores that bubbles emerge when intellect clashes with obsession, demonstrating that even the brightest individuals can succumb to rampant greed, as Souk Al-Manakh exemplifies. Some investors faced heart attacks and even left Kuwait permanently due to severe losses.

Imad, a 62-year-old interviewed by Kuwait Times, advises young investors to exercise caution before engaging in risky investments, using a Kuwaiti saying that encourages measuring the depth of a pool before diving in, as measuring won't help once you're drowning. The obsession with quick riches persists, evidenced by shady and fraudulent schemes on platforms like Instagram, promising instant wealth, and the losses incurred by Kuwaitis in high-risk investments like cryptocurrencies and NFTs.

Talal Al-Ajmi, CEO of VI Markets, points out that "many young people have invested in cryptocurrencies" but laments their lack of proper investment knowledge and capital management. Ajmi advises young investors to "thoroughly research the market before investing, particularly with the abundance of free and useful online resources".

#### Lesson 2: Resist the herd mentality

The collapse of Souk Al-Manakh teaches us that the majority is not always right. A prominent Souk Al-Manakh investor mentioned to author Alsharrah that "Greed and fear of missing out on wealth drive obsession." Many individuals joined Souk Al-Manakh late due to the fear of missing out and invested despite their reservations. This highlights the fact that the majority can be wrong, as has been observed in various financial crises, including the 2008 housing crisis.

Therefore, if you have a strong conviction, stick to it and don't succumb to the fear of being left behind. Abdulaziz Al-Shammari, an accounting and finance graduate interviewed by Kuwait Times, refers to an anchoring bias, where people are heavily influenced by their initial sources of information when making decisions. For instance, if your first impression of Souk Al-Manakh is an investor with a Rolls-Royce urging you to join, you're likely to invest. However, many financial crises remind us to consistently question information and be aware of biases in our decision-making.

#### Lesson 3: Don't rely solely on government assistance

As reported by Business Recorder, "it was not surprising that investors expected government assistance in a nation where they even cover citizens' marriage expenses and telephone bills." Many believed that the government would intervene to rescue investors, motivating them to make risky investments in Souk Al-Manakh. In reality, the government did not provide substantial aid.

Alsharrah, in her conversation with Kuwait Times, believes that holding investors responsible for their decisions is more beneficial. A paternalistic governance model is unsustainable for Kuwait, given declining oil prices and a growing population. Relying on the government to compensate for losses will likely lead to further financial catastrophe. Therefore, it's advisable to anticipate a scenario where the government won't bail you out, as there is no guarantee they will.

#### Lesson 4: Documentation matters

Researching Souk Al-Manakh reveals that the crisis is better documented by foreign authorities, such as a comprehensive 20-page article by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. Unfortunately, local authorities have not adequately documented one of Kuwait's major historical events, possibly due to the involvement of influential individuals in the crisis. Nonetheless, it is our responsibility to future generations to maintain transparency.

This is not to diminish the commendable efforts of Kuwaitis in documenting the crisis. Alsharrah, in her interview with Kuwait Times, mentions her ongoing research in London to write a second book on Souk Al-Manakh. Notable documentation efforts include "The Knights of Al-Manakh" play by the late Abdullhussain Abdurredha, the Mahfoof podcast, "Blackbox" by Ammar Taqi, and "Kuwait Fall/Rebirth" by author Mohammed Al-Yahya.

Financial crises have occurred in the past, will continue to do so, and have occurred after Souk Al-Manakh. Some worthy mentions are the 1637 Tulip Mania, the 1997 Asian crisis and the 2008 Great Recession. Imad, who was a university student during the Souk Al-Manakh crisis, says that forgetfulness can sometimes be a blessing. It may indeed be useless at times to remember the misfortunes of the past. However, it is crucial that we learn from our mistakes. Souk Al-Manakh teaches us not to be driven by greed, not to blindly follow the crowd, to take responsibility and to document our history. The question now is: Will you survive the next financial crisis?

By Fares Al-Shammari

KUWAIT: Fawaz, a 22-year-old, speaking to Kuwait Times, acknowledged he had always heard the name 'Souk Al-Manakh', but admitted to not knowing much about it. Fawaz candidly stated the importance of studying historical events and learning from past mistakes to avoid their repetition. The collapse of Souk Al-Manakh is a significantly underexplored chapter in Kuwait's history, offering valuable lessons.

For many people today, it may be hard to imagine that Kuwait once had the third-largest stock exchange in the world. In fact, more trading activity took place in Souk Al-Manakh than in the London markets with all of their foreign listings combined. To provide context, Kuwait's economy thrived after a substantial increase in oil prices during the 1970s, resulting in increased wealth for Kuwaitis.

The newly established stock exchange was one of the few avenues for investment. However, it was tightly regulated, with limited companies available for investment. This combination of newfound wealth and limited investment opportunities laid the foundation for one of the most significant financial crises, not only in Kuwait but globally.

Trading commenced in Souk Al-Manakh in 1978, within an air-conditioned parking garage. Interestingly, this location had previously served as a marketplace for resting camels. The term "Al Manakh" bears a resemblance to another Arabic word meaning "climate", and ironically, the market's collapse unfolded swiftly, much like a sudden storm. Today, the market is somewhat abandoned, but according to author Nadiah Alsharrah in her book "Manakh 82", a small office space there once commanded prices as high as KD 15 million.

A majority of the listings in the market featured companies founded in neighboring GCC countries. It's worth noting that trading foreign stocks in Kuwait was prohibited, but it still occurred. Alsharrah, in an interview with Kuwait Times, explains that investors would travel

to neighboring countries, such as the UAE, to establish companies with the approval of local sheikhs. These shares were later traded in Souk Al-Manakh.

Ten prominent individuals, known as knights, achieved knighthood status due to their exceptional success in the market. They enjoyed opulent lifestyles, with stories of one knight withdrawing KD 5 million just to grasp the extent of his wealth, another dining casually in Paris, one gifting 16 Rolls-Royces, and yet another purchasing a Siamese cat for KD 3 million. They were billionaires.

Investing in Souk Al-Manakh may seem like a profitable and wise decision even today, but in reality, it was not. Many of the GCC companies listed in Al-Manakh were unproductive. Author Alsharrah provides an intriguing example of a poultry company whose shares were traded even before it had its first chicken. These companies lacked intrinsic economic value, and the rising prices were fueled by speculative trading, which was unsustainable.

The situation worsened with the introduction of post-dated cheques. A post-dated cheque is one bearing a future date. For instance, if Fares agreed to buy 100,000 shares from Nasser, to be received in six months, Nasser would benefit by selling the shares for more than their current price, while Fares would be betting on their value increasing in six months. Alsharrah likens this practice to gambling. A common saying in Kuwait at the time was, "To succeed in Al-Manakh, shut off your brain."

Why were post-dated cheques problematic? Although it was culturally discouraged to cash a cheque before its date, it wasn't illegal. This is where the problems began. In 1982, when one person cashed a cheque before its date and found no available funds, chaos erupted in the market. This triggered a domino effect, with investors rushing to cash their post-dated cheques, causing share prices to plummet. As a result, people couldn't meet their financial obligations.

## Are wedding parties still essential for couples?

By Majd Othman

KUWAIT: In 2020, the lockdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic led people to adjust their traditional approaches to celebrating weddings, opting for simpler gatherings due to restrictions on the number of attendees. Many couples even chose to forego wedding parties altogether, redirecting their funds towards travel and longer honeymoons once the pandemic subsided. Fast forward to 2023, and this new trend has gained further traction, particularly among Kuwaiti citizens who prioritize enjoying their resources over splurging on lavish wedding ceremonies. However, some remain unconvinced, viewing this shift as contradictory to local customs and traditions.

Kuwait Times interviewed a couple who decided to cancel their wedding party. Preferring to remain anonymous, they highlighted the exorbitant costs associated with modern Arab wedding traditions, which often burden the groom with significant debt. Furthermore, the pressure to invite a large number of guests places a substantial responsibility on the couple to provide top-notch hospitality.

The couple stressed that the de-

cision to forego a wedding party is a personal choice, but they faced resistance from their families who were accustomed to extravagant celebrations at the country's finest venues. To appease their parents, they hosted a small reception party upon their return from their honeymoon, inviting only close relatives. They concluded by suggesting that this new approach to marriage may take time to gain acceptance in the community, as many are still attached to the tradition of grand wedding parties that became essential over the last decade, despite simpler and less financially draining weddings being the norm in the past.

Another Kuwaiti couple that values wedding parties for their social significance also shared their perspective. They believe that the issue is not solely about having a party but the social connections it fosters. They chose to celebrate their union with a modest gathering of friends and family, but some criticized it as being too simple. The bride, however, described it as a wonderful event, one that challenged societal norms.

Many Kuwaiti citizens and expatriates continue to embrace the tradition of extravagant wedding parties, and



hotels and wedding halls still witness a constant stream of celebrations. However, a proportion of couples, especially those from diverse backgrounds or with financial constraints, are adopting the idea of simpler weddings.

#### Marriage announcements

Kuwait Times also sought public opinion regarding the question of marriage announcements. Many individuals emphasized the importance of announcing marriages as part of Arab culture and traditions, thus disagreeing with the idea that forgoing wedding parties is an acceptable way to wed. Kuwaiti citizen Afraa Mohammad

noted that some people merely follow trends, while others use financial excuses. However, she emphasized that announcing weddings through parties is an essential practice.

Expat Arwa Abdulsalam agreed, stating that wedding parties hold particular significance in conservative communities. In contrast, more liberal communities are accustomed to such trends, which may reflect a forward-thinking approach to building a better financial future. She concluded by asserting that wedding announcements within traditional communities contribute to the strengthening of social relationships.



KUWAIT: Participants are pictured during the event. — KUNA photos



Tariq Al-Obaid

## 101 nights festival to transform Kuwait to a commercial center

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Festival for Tourism and Entertainment will launch its first session next January under the slogan 'Kuwait: One Hundred and One Nights'. The event is aimed at transforming Kuwait into a distinctive financial, economic, and cultural center, the President of the Kuwait Festivals Association, Tariq Al-Obaid, said after the meeting of the festival's organizing commit-

tee of the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre in the presence of liaison officers.

The festival would also achieve the objectives of the coordinating committee on enhancing non-oil revenues "because the recreational tourism is one of the most important non-oil sectors for the national economy. The Kuwait Festival for Tourism and Entertainment will stimulate family tourism in Kuwait and the Gulf countries through the establishment of many events and various tourism activities, during which the focus will be on Arabic content and is characterized by inclusiveness, diversity, innovation, and modernity," he explained.

He stated that the festival's activities will include tourism, entertainment, cultural, artistic,

and sports activities to meet different tastes of all ages, pointing out that "those in charge of this work are young Kuwaitis trained to organize such celebrations." The festival's programs and activities will also highlight the competitive value of Kuwait and the Gulf region in its cultural and historical heritage, rich arts, and literature, as well as a series of family events, competitions, raffles, live television broadcasts, and a grand opening ceremony.

Al-Obaid said that the festival is concerned with promoting cultural tourism by holding heritage, literary, artistic, poetry, and other activities in the fields of fine arts in a festive atmosphere. He also praised the unlimited support provided by the cultural centers of Amiri Diwan. — KUNA

Local



HANGZHOU: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is flanked by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Saad Al-Barrak, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Aiban, Minister of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy Jassem Al-Ostad, Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Faleh Al-Ruquba, Director General of the Public Authority for Sport Yusuf Al-Baidan and senior officials. — KUNA photos

# Kuwait, China parallel development plans encapsulate growing relations

More than 40 Chinese-based firms currently operating in Kuwait



HANGZHOU: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrives at Hangzhou Xiaoshan International Airport in Hangzhou city to attend the opening ceremony of the 19th Asian Olympic Games at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Vision 2035 economic diversification plan and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) infrastructure project are intertwined in the sense that the strategies reflect deepening bilateral relations, besides common ambitions for national prosperity. Given its strategic location in the Gulf Arab region, Kuwait has long shared a historic relationship with the world's second-most populous nation, having been the first Gulf Arab country to establish dip-

lomatic relations with Beijing, which commenced in earnest back in March of 1971. Kuwait has always given the lion's share of precedence to China in terms of its diplomatic relations with Eastern Asia, as evidenced by the increasing exchange of high-profile visits between both sides that has given impetus to an improvement in relations, mainly in economic cooperation. Trade ties between Kuwait and China have been on an upward trajectory since 1982,

while no Arab nation has given more soft loans to Beijing than Kuwait, in addition to a pivotal memorandum of understanding in 2014 that aimed to pave the way for Kuwaiti ambitions to morph into a global financial and trade hub. China's BRI infrastructure plan and Kuwait's 2035 economic diversification plan draw parallels in their common aim to form a vibrant global trade zone that will bode well for the global economy,

while Kuwaiti-Sino cooperation to tame the COVID pandemic is one of many instances of solidarity between the two countries. In July of 2018, Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Beijing in an event that was a catalyst for greater bilateral relations, one which yielded a number of significant bilateral deals, the bulk of which revolved around economic cooperation. The deals run the gamut from coop-

eration on e-commerce and energy to infrastructure and the establishment of smart cities, while the two countries' respective leaders have always given their backing to any initiative aiming to propel ties to greater levels. More than 40 Chinese-based firms are currently operating in Kuwait as part of Beijing's contributions towards national development projects, a testament to the meteoric rise in bilateral relations. — KUNA

## Kuwait tackles fanaticism, extremism and terrorism

**NEW YORK:** Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation Ambassador Hamad Al-Mishaan said his country is keen on doing everything possible to eliminate fanaticism, extremism, and terrorism. Speaking to KUNA after taking part in the 13th ministerial meeting of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), he affirmed that the meeting approved Kuwait's accession to the Forum. The meeting was co-chaired by Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry and European Union High

Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Josep Borrell. It was held on the sidelines of the High-Level Week of the 78th United Nations General Assembly session in New York, Ambassador Al-Mishaan noted. "Our world faces many crises that cast a shadow on the lives of individuals and contribute to the emergence of intolerance and extremism across national borders, which requires our countries to coordinate and unify the approach used to address and prevent these phenomena," he stressed. "The State of Kuwait maintains a



principled position against attempts to associate terrorism with any religion, nationality, culture, or ethnic group. Last Monday, members of the Forum's 22nd Coordination Committee invited the State of Kuwait to join the Forum in honor of its local and international efforts to refute terrorism and dry up its sources and various endeavors for international cooperation. — KUNA

## Kuwait calls for peace, promotes human rights

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has affirmed states' sovereignty, independence and territorial sanctity. He has also asserted non-intervention in states' domestic affairs, resolving conflicts peacefully and abstaining from usage of force, peoples' right to self-determination, bolstering and encouraging respect for human rights. The Kuwaiti deputy foreign minister was speaking during the UN Security Council session on safeguarding global peace, held on margins of the 78th UN General Assembly session in New York. He underlined significance of the UN charter's goals and UN principles "role in defending small countries." Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber noted in his speech that the global order currently is facing the toughest test since establishment of the UN in 1945 due to multiple challenges at various levels. The international community has no choice other

than uniting to face regional and international challenges, he said, urging for adherence to the UN charter for attaining global peace and security. Citing some of the objectives outlined in the UN charter, he mentioned states' right to maintain their independence, territorial sanctity, non-intervention in their local issues, settling conflicts with peaceful means, abstaining from usage of force and establishing cordial relations among the countries, affirming peoples' right to self-determination and respecting human rights. Kuwait renews its rejection of using force or resorting to threats in the relations among the states, he said. Kuwait which has been following with deep concern hike of tension in Ukraine affirms necessity of adherence to the international law, the UN convention and respect for states sovereignty. Elaborating, he said that the State of Kuwait calls for respecting independence and sovereignty of the Ukraine and renews support for all efforts aimed at restoring calm, de-escalating the violence, giving preference to dialogue and settling the strife through negotiations. "We also call upon the parties (of the conflict in Ukraine) to abide by rules of the international law and the



Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

humanitarian law with respect of protecting the civilians, facilitating safe and rapid delivery of humanitarian aid to the needy," Ambassador Sheikh Jarrah Jaber said in his speech at the UNSG session. He called for renewing mandate of the deal of exporting grain via the Black Sea and re-called for reforming the UNSC. — KUNA

## Arab nations to boost world crude supplies

**KUWAIT:** Arab countries' global crude reserves are at 54.3 percent, and the region is eager to boost world supplies by 38.1 percent by 2050, said Jamal Al-Loughani, Secretary General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), on Thursday. Speaking during his participation at the Seventh China-Arab Energy Cooperation Conference, held in Haikou, China, Al-Loughani said that Arab countries contributed around 29.3 percent of global production and also had a 30.2 percent share of the world's oil exports.

He indicated that OPEC was keen on participating in the China-Arab Energy Cooperation Conference, which is held this year with the slogan "Entering the Golden Era of China-Arab Energy Cooperation of Quality and Sustainability." By 2050, Arab countries would be eager to contribute to world energy supplies, especially with the region having around 26.3 percent of certified natural gas reserves and an intention to boost supplies by 19.8 percent in the same year, said Al-Loughani. The OPEC chief indicated that China's growing demand for oil imports might reach 76.5 percent by 2045. He added that the Asian giant's demand for natural gas had been growing, revealing that it would reach 41 percent by 2022, despite China being the fourth-largest global supplier of gas. Al-Loughani said that fossil fuels could contribute to a balanced shift in diversifying energy resources that would be environment-friendly as well as compatible with efforts to counter climate change. The energy industry also has a challenge in the form of securing resources of oil and natural gas, which will be the main drivers of global development by 53 percent until 2045, revealed the OPEC chief. — KUNA

## News in Brief

## High heat persists in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's weather over the weekend will remain hot but moderate at night time - exceeding the 45 degrees level at day times. Director of the meteorology department, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, said in a statement to KUNA on Thursday that the Indian seasonal low depression would continue to grip the country, coupled with hot air blows. On Thursday, the heat would range between 43 and 45 degrees in the day and would fall to 25- 30 degrees level at night. On Friday, daytime temperature will be between 44 and 46 degrees and drops to the 26-30 degrees level at night. On Saturday, maximum heat will be 46 degrees and drops at night to 27 degrees. — KUNA

## Duty Medals for soldiers

**KUWAIT:** Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has directed officials to award 8,686 soldiers the National Defense Medal and 1,690 soldiers the Military Duty Medal of various grades, in accordance with the regulations and systems. The Ministry of Interior General Department of Security Relations and Media said in a statement that Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled's directives come out of the political leadership's concern for the ministry members and its keenness to achieve justice and equality by granting them their full rights. — KUNA

## Naeima Al-Dousary dies

**KUWAIT:** The Amiri Diwan has announced the passing of Naeima Khalaf Al-Dousary, widow of Sheikh Oqab Al-Malek Al-Salman Al-Sabah who died at the age of 74. The funeral service took place at 4:00 pm on Thursday, the Diwan said in a statement, praying for the Almighty Allah to lodge the soul of the deceased in Paradise. Contacts for male mourners at cemetery: 66689914 - 66058856. Female mourners at building 11, St 12, block 6, South Surra area. Phone No: 99833109 - 97873131. — KUNA

## Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** Members of a Chinese ethnic dance group perform on stage at the Yarmouk Cultural Center during the Kuwait summer festival on Sept 19, 2023. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# KU holds 'Power of the Word' debate forum



**KUWAIT:** The 'Power of the Word' debate forum was inaugurated in Sabah Al-Salem University City under the patronage of the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Al-Aiban, and in the presence of the Acting Director of Kuwait University, Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri, and the Acting Dean of Student Affairs, Dr Jassim Al-Hamdan.



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**KUWAIT:** The "Power of the Word" debate forum, held by Kuwait University (KU) in cooperation with the National Debate Team, was inaugurated in Sabah Al-Salem University City. The program was scheduled from Sept 19 to 21, 2023, under the patronage of the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Muhammad Al-Aiban, and in the presence of the Acting Director of Kuwait University, Dr Fayez Al-Dhafiri, and the Acting Dean of Student Affairs, Dr Jassim Al-Hamdan.

Minister Mohammed Al-Aiban stressed the support for such programs, which are aimed at preserving Kuwait's identity, supporting the Arabic language, and promoting reading, pointing out that "investing in youths is a real and sustainable investment, and its returns are always visible and tangible in the quality of the performance." He added that the support and sponsorship will encourage state institutions, led by Kuwait University, and young men and women.

The Acting Dean of Student Affairs, Dr Jassim Al-Hamdan, said: "This meeting brings us back to the first building block in 2011 and the launch of student activity at Kuwait University for the first student debates." He expressed his happiness to be present in this forum, pointing out that the establishment of such a forum provides university students with the opportunity to express their opinions, develop respect for other opinions, and develop the skills of listening, analysis and criticism, in addition to refining the skill



of expression, collecting and selecting ideas and developing their skills.

The head of the National Debate Team, Fahad Al-Subaie, explained: "The debates contain a set of messages with a positive impact, including the activities of a student, which develop his or her abilities, strengthen his or her personality, and increase his or her circle of knowledge." Al-Subaie thanked Kuwait University for embracing the Debate Forum, stressing that this enriches the art of debate and increases people's awareness. The panel discussion revolved around the role of dialogue in decision-making and was moderated by the media, Mohammed Al-Saddani, MP Dr Abdulaziz Al-Saqoubi and MP Hamad Al-Olayan, among others.

## Kuwait eager to preserve cultural heritage: NCCAL

**FES, Morocco:** Kuwait is eager to preserve cultural heritage as a means of bringing nations closer, said the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL). Kuwait had taken steps to preserve historic and cultural sites by fencing archeological sites, following the terms of Kuwait's archeology law, said head of the archeology and museums department at NCCAL Mohammad bin Redha in a statement to KUNA on Thursday during the 26th Conference on Archeology and Cultural Heritage in the Arab World, held in Morocco on Thursday.

Kuwait is committed to international standards in protecting and maintaining these sites and includes their adherence in sustainable development, he said. Yesterday, bin Redha performed Kuwait's speech at the event, organized by the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), where he expressed his deepest condolences over the earthquake and floods' victims in Morocco and Libya. He affirmed that NCCAL is ready to help the two countries repair damage done to archeological sites due to the devastating natural disasters. — KUNA



Mohammad Bin Redha



## Azerbaijan, Karabakh separatists hold 'constructive' peace talks

Baku claims to have restored sovereignty for first time in decades

**YEVLAKH:** Azerbaijan and Armenian separatists from the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh held their first direct peace talks Thursday, after Baku claimed to have regained control over the breakaway region in a lightning military operation. The separatists agreed to lay down their arms on Wednesday as part of a Russian-brokered ceasefire plan that halted Azerbaijan's 24-hour offensive to retake land at the center of decades of conflict.

Azerbaijan's presidency said the two-hour meeting had been "held in a constructive and peaceful atmosphere" in the presence of Russian peacekeepers, and both sides expressed readiness to hold more talks. Baku's negotiators presented plans for the "re-integration" of Karabakh's Armenian population into Azerbaijan and pledged to provide urgently needed fuel, humanitarian supplies, and medical care to residents. While the meeting was happening, gunfire rang out in the separatist stronghold of Stepanakert on Thursday despite the truce deal.

"There was a small exchange of fire outside the city," Arutyun Gasparyan, a businessman and father of two, told AFP. "We are sitting at home and waiting for the results of the talks." The breakaway authorities accused Azerbaijan of violating the ceasefire, but Baku denied the allegation. The region's human rights ombudsman said on social media that "the

streets of Stepanakert are filled with displaced people, hungry, scared, and in uncertainty".

### 'Crime against humanity'

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Armenia and Azerbaijan have fought two wars over the small mountainous region. Now, there are concerns of a fresh refugee crisis as Karabakh's Armenian population fears being forced out. Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said the ceasefire was holding overall and he did not see a "direct threat" to the civilian population.

Nonetheless he said Yerevan was prepared to host 40,000 families from the region, which is estimated to hold up to 120,000 ethnic Armenians. The European Union said it was ready to provide "urgent humanitarian assistance", urging Azerbaijan to allow access to the enclave. And the UN Security Council was due to hold an emergency session to discuss the situation, after separatists said the assault claimed 200 lives. The collapse of the separatist resistance represents a major victory for Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev.

Aliyev said his country had restored its sovereignty over the region for the first time in decades. Baku insists it now wants to see the "peaceful reintegration" of Karabakh Armenians. A separatist official

said more than 10,000 people had been evacuated from Armenian communities in Nagorno-Karabakh.

### Putin talks to Aliyev

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday urged Aliyev to ensure the security for the region's Armenians. Russia — the traditional regional powerbroker — sent peacekeepers to Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 as part of a deal to end a six-week war in which Azerbaijan regained partial control of the region. Under this week's truce, the separatists said they had agreed to fully dismantle their army and for Armenia to pull out any forces it had in the region. Azerbaijan's defense ministry said all weapons were to be surrendered.

After the Soviet Union fell apart, Armenian separatists seized the region — internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan — in the early 1990s. That sparked a war that left 30,000 people dead and displaced hundreds of thousands. The latest violence comes with Moscow bogged down in its war against Ukraine, and after the United States and European Union had stepped up attempts to find a lasting peace.

Pashinyan on Thursday condemned "failures" by the Russian peacekeeping mission to avert Azerbaijan's assault. The Kremlin said Aliyev had apologized to Putin over the death of an undisclosed number of Russian

peacekeepers during the fighting on Wednesday. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has expressed "wholehearted support" for its ally, Azerbaijan.

### 'Path is not easy'

The apparent capitulation of the separatists has sparked jubilation among Azerbaijanis hoping for an end to decades of strife. But it ratchets up domestic pressure on Pashinyan, who has faced stinging criticism at home for making concessions to Azerbaijan since the 2020 war. Pashinyan said on Thursday that a road to peace with Armenia's arch-rival was difficult but must still be pursued. "This path is not easy, it goes through internal and external shocks, and we must pursue it," he said.

Aliyev has said this week's events would have a "positive impact" on attempts to negotiate a lasting peace between the two feuding Caucasus neighbors. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the question of which country Nagorno-Karabakh belongs to had been "decided" and conditions were in place for an enduring solution. But mutual distrust remains high and finding a lasting settlement to the decades-long dispute will be a major task. Armenia's defense ministry said late Wednesday Azerbaijan had fired on its positions along the border, just the latest in what have been frequent skirmishes. — AFP

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## International

# Charles urges France-UK climate entente in French senate speech

## King remembers mother's 'golden' legacy, pledges stronger ties

PARIS: King Charles III on Thursday pledged to do everything he could to strengthen the relationship between France and Britain, suggesting the "indispensable" partners should also team up to tackle the climate emergency. In a speech at the French Senate on the second day of a three-day visit to France that London hopes will tighten post-Brexit relations, Charles won a standing ovation from lawmakers after deftly mixing English and French as well as personal and political reflections.

The visit has so far been seen in British and French media as a success, with occasional calls of "Vive le roi!" ("Long live the King!") even heard on the streets of Paris. In his speech, Charles recalled his mother Queen Elizabeth II, whom he succeeded upon her death one year ago, describing her legacy for France-UK relations as a "golden thread which will forever shine brightly" and saying the royal family was "moved beyond measure" by tributes to her from France.

"For the time that is granted to me as King, I pledge to do whatever I can to strengthen the indispensable relationship between the United Kingdom and France," he said. "Quite simply, the United Kingdom will always be one of France's closest allies and best friends," he said, speaking from a lectern adorned with British, French and EU flags.

### 'Catastrophic destruction'

He suggested that France and Britain should team up to tackle the climate and biodiversity emergencies with a new version of the 1904 Entente Cordiale pact, which sealed the friendship between Paris and London. "I would like to propose it also becomes an 'Entente pour la Durabilité' (Partnership for Sustainability) in order to tackle the global climate and biodiversity emergency more effectively."

He also vowed that London and Paris were "steadfast in our determination Ukraine will triumph" in fighting the

Russian invasion. "Just as we stand together against military aggression, so must we strive together to protect the world from our most existential challenge of all—that of global warming, climate change and the catastrophic destruction of nature," said the king, known for campaigning on environmental issues for the past decades.

By coincidence, Charles' latest call on the environment came a day after Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak softened green policies aimed at achieving net zero carbon emissions by mid-century. His speech will also be etched in history as the first British monarch to speak in the main chamber of the Senate: his mother spoke in a conference hall within the Senate in a 2004 speech. "Applause we can only dream of in our chambers!" said Senate speaker Gerard Larcher when lawmakers rose to their feet in unison after the speech as lower-house speaker Yael Braun-Pivet laughed in agreement.

### Notre-Dame homage

Charles' speech at France's upper house of parliament is the diplomatic high point of the day that followed Wednesday's banquet at the Versailles Palace hosted by President Emmanuel Macron. The visit, which was rescheduled from March because of mass protests against French pension reforms, is packed with ceremony and pomp in a country that abolished its monarchy in the 1789 revolution and executed its king.

He then visited the northern Paris suburb of Saint-Denis — home to the French national stadium used for the current Rugby World Cup and the Olympics next year — meeting residents and visiting its majestic mediaeval basilica. In Saint-Denis, Queen Camilla and French first lady Brigitte Macron even briefly played ping-pong at a sports center.

Later on the Ile de la Cite on the river Seine, Charles — a keen gardener who once admitted he talked to his plants



PARIS: Britain's King Charles prepares to address Senators and members of the National Assembly at the French Senate in Paris on Sept 21, 2023. — AFP

— will tour a flower market named after Queen Elizabeth II on her last state visit in 2014. From there, he will view renovation and reconstruction work at the nearby Notre-Dame Cathedral, which was partially destroyed by a devastating fire in 2019.

Charles had said in an emotional message to Macron after the fire that he was "utterly heartbroken", calling Notre-Dame "one of the greatest architectural achievements of Western civilization". The Paris leg of the state

visit wraps up with a formal farewell from Macron at the Elysee Palace before a final day Friday in the southwestern city of Bordeaux.

The French president is known to have a strong personal rapport with Charles, with both men known for their love of books. Commentators in France excitedly noted how Macron repeatedly touched Charles's shoulder and his wife kissed Camilla, in a new protocol unthinkable under the more distant and austere Elizabeth II. — AFP

## Disappearances in China's government raise questions

BEIJING: The sacking of a top diplomat and mysterious disappearance of a defense minister have raised fresh questions around President Xi Jinping's increasingly opaque decision-making, experts say. US officials believe defense minister Li Shangfu is under investigation and has been relieved of his duties just six months after his appointment, the Financial Times reported last week. In July, foreign minister Qin Gang — long seen as a close ally of Xi's — was removed from office without explanation.

Later that month China announced that former navy commander Wang Houbin would take over as the new head of the Chinese military's Rocket Force, as media reports emerged of a corruption probe. Wang's predecessor Li Yuchao had not been seen in weeks, and state media offered no explanation for his removal. "As Shakespeare wrote in Hamlet, 'Something is rotten in the state of Denmark,'" US Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel said on X last week, adding that defense minister Li "hasn't been seen or heard from" in weeks.

"President Xi's cabinet lineup is now resembling Agatha Christie's novel And Then There Were None. First, Foreign Minister Qin Gang goes missing, then the Rocket Force commanders go missing, and now Defense Minister Li Shangfu hasn't been seen in public for two weeks," Emanuel wrote in a separate post.

Sun Yun, senior fellow and director of the China Program at the Stimson Center in Washington, told AFP: "It does say a lot about the unpredictability of China's personnel decisions and domestic politics today." Since rising to the top of the Communist Party in 2012, Xi has consolidated control within the govern-

ment and is believed to have promoted close political allies to the country's top posts. "If it turns out Li is also demoted, it would not be a positive image for Xi," Sun said. "Both Qin and Li were selected by him."

### Inner circle

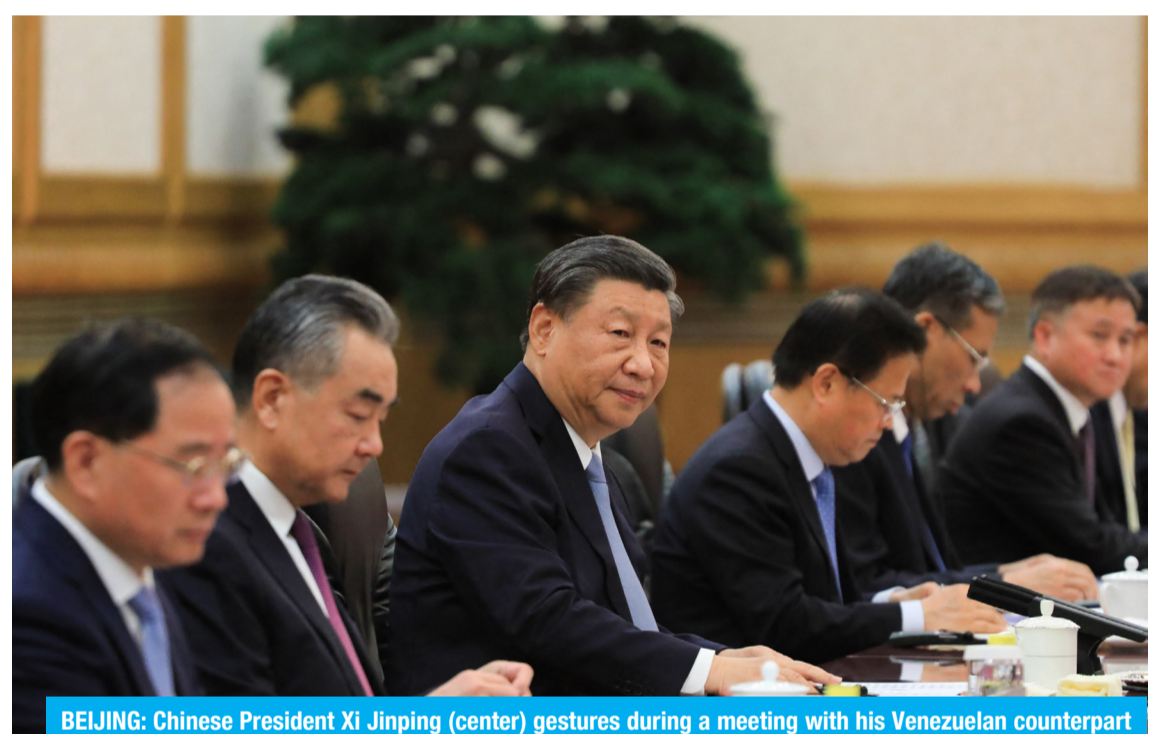
Fighting alleged corruption has long been a central theme of Xi's rule, with the Chinese leader waging a sweeping campaign since taking office that critics claim helps him purge political rivals. "Xi Jinping began purging top personnel in the military and security forces very early in his time in power and has continued to do so through to the present," Sheena Chestnut Greitens, an expert on authoritarian politics in East Asia who teaches at the University of Texas at Austin, told AFP.

The Chinese leader views corruption as a "fundamental threat", she said, "because it makes people loyal to personal profits, rather than to the Party". But while early corruption probes targeted officials seen as a challenge to Xi's rule — populist upstarts or allies of ex-leaders, for example — recent investigations appear to be hitting closer to home.

Both Qin and Li are believed to have been hand-picked personally by Xi for their roles as ministers of foreign affairs and defence, said Chestnut Greitens. "For them to be removed so quickly does raise questions about what information Xi is and is not getting when he selects people," she said, as well as "what's happening to cause them to be removed so quickly". "Interlocutors have to wonder if the person they're dealing with has any power and clout back in Beijing or will disappear tomorrow and be incommunicado for months."

### 'Not some obscure official'

The possible removal of Li Shangfu and unexplained sacking of Li Yuchao appear to indicate the campaign extends into the upper echelons of the world's largest military force. Lyle Morris, a senior fellow for foreign policy and national security at the



BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping (center) gestures during a meeting with his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro (out of frame) on Sept 13, 2023. — AFP

Asia Society Policy Institute, wrote that Li Shangfu's disappearance "suggests Xi's anti-corruption campaign in the PLA (is) nowhere near done", referring to the People's Liberation Army. "He's not some obscure official that can be swept under the rug," Morris wrote on X.

China is yet to confirm that any of the men are under investigation — and has rebuffed repeated questions about their whereabouts. Asked this week about Wall Street Journal reports that foreign minister Qin's removal was tied to an alleged extra-marital affair,

foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said Beijing had "already released information about the appointment and removal". "I am not aware of the other situation you mentioned," she said.

But the lack of official explanations on the status of the officials has fanned speculation about the inner workings of the world's second-largest economy. "That heightens the sense of unpredictability around Chinese foreign policy, at a time when China's political system is already less transparent and harder for outsiders to understand," said Chestnut Greitens. — AFP

## PM calls on Iraqi counterpart to...

### Continued from Page 1

of both countries and maintaining neighborly relations pursuant to relevant UN Security Council resolutions, notably Resolution 833 on borders.

HH the Amir's Representative expressed Kuwait's desire to finalize the border demarcation process with

Iraq beyond seamark no. 162, in keeping with international laws. The meeting was attended by Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jassem Al-Budaiwi, Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Khaled Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister's Office Hamad Bader Al-Amer, Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Sadeq Maarafi, Ambassador to the United States Sheikh Al-Zain Sabah Nasser Al-Sabah and Permanent Representative to the UN Tareq Mohammad Al-Banai. — KUNA

## India-Canada row escalates...

### Continued from Page 1

reporters. "Their numbers here are very much higher than ours in Canada... I assume there will be a reduction."

New Delhi also said it had stopped handling visa applications in Canada, blaming "security threats" which they said were "disrupting" the work of their officials. "For now, the security situation in Canada and because of Canadian government inaction, we have stopped visa services temporarily", Bagchi said.

Hours earlier, Canada's High Commission said it would "adjust" diplomat numbers in India after "threats on various social media" against their staff. "In light of the current environment where tensions have heightened, we are taking action to ensure the safety of our diplomats," Canada's mission said in a statement. "As a result, and out of an abundance of caution, we have decided to temporarily adjust staff presence in India."

The mission did not give further details of the number of people leaving but said its offices were "open and operational", while calling for the safety of its staff to be ensured.

"We expect India to provide for the security of our accredited diplomats and consular officers in India, just as we are for theirs," it said. On Monday, Ottawa expelled a diplomat it described as the head of India's foreign intelligence service in Canada, prompting New Delhi to order a Canadian diplomat to leave.

The suspension of visas comes a day after India's foreign ministry said it was concerned for the safety of its citizens in Canada because of "politically-condoned hate crimes and criminal violence". "Threats have particularly targeted Indian diplomats and sections of the Indian community who oppose the anti-India agenda," a ministry statement said Wednesday.

Nijjar was shot dead by two masked assailants outside the Sikh temple he presided over in Surrey, a suburb of Vancouver. An activist for the creation of a Sikh state known as Khalistan, Nijjar was wanted by Indian authorities for alleged terrorism and conspiracy to commit murder. He had denied those charges, according to the World Sikh Organization of Canada, a nonprofit organization that says it defends the interests of Canadian Sikhs.

The Indian government accuses Ottawa of turning a blind eye to the activities of radical Sikh nationalists who advocate the creation of an independent state to be carved out of northern India. There were signs of a brewing crisis before Trudeau revealed the probe into Nijjar's death on Monday. India Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed "strong concerns about continuing anti-India activities of extremist elements in Canada" in his meeting with Trudeau at the G20 earlier this month.

Canada had also suspended negotiations for a free-trade agreement with India, and last week its trade minister cancelled a trip to the country planned for October. The affair could complicate US government overtures to India, which have seen both countries steadily upgrade their relations over recent years. Washington views New Delhi as a key ally in countering Chinese influence in the Asia-Pacific region. — AFP

## Abbas: No peace in Mideast without Palestinians' rights

UNITED NATIONS: Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas said Thursday there could be no peace in the Middle East without a two-state solution, sending a warning as Saudi Arabia considers recognizing the Zionist entity. "Those who think that peace can prevail in the Middle East without the Palestinian people enjoying their full, legitimate national rights would be mistaken," Abbas told the UN General Assembly.

The veteran 87-year-old leader made a new appeal to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to call an international conference on creating a

Palestinian state. The United States, historically the peace broker between the two sides, has all but given up on serious negotiations with Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-right government, which has pushed forward controversial settlements in the occupied West Bank.

A UN conference "may be the last opportunity to salvage the two-state solution and to prevent the situation from deteriorating more seriously and threatening the security and stability of our region and the entire world," Abbas said. His address came a day after Netanyahu discussed Saudi normalization in a meeting with US President Joe Biden and as Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, said that the process was getting "closer". The Zionist entity and the United States believe that Israeli relations with Saudi Arabia — guardian of Islam's two holiest sites — would be a game-changer for the Middle East. — AFP

## MBS: Palestinian issue key for...

### Continued from Page 1

In the interview, the crown prince, most commonly known by his initials MBS, renewed warnings that Saudi Arabia would seek nuclear weapons if Iran does. "If they get one, we have to get one," he said.

Saudi Arabia has also been seeking security guarantees, including reportedly a treaty, with the United States in return for normalizing with the Zionist entity, the region's only nuclear weapons state — even if an undeclared one. MBS commented on the possible security pact, saying that Saudi-US ties go back eight decades and that an accord would "strengthen" military and economic cooperation. However, he went into little detail about what this might look like.

Iran denies seeking a nuclear weapon but has breached agreed limits on uranium enrichment since former president Donald Trump left a 2015 interna-

tional agreement to put curbs on Tehran's nuclear program in return for lifting sanctions. But MBS said it would be futile, in any case, for Iran to try and get the bomb because any use would immediately trigger "war with the rest of the world".

President Joe Biden also discussed Saudi Arabia during a meeting with Netanyahu on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The Biden administration's diplomatic plans in the Middle East have been rocked by tense relations with Netanyahu, who is accused at home by opponents of undermining Israeli democracy through far-reaching reforms of the judiciary.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in an interview with ABC News on Wednesday, said that normalization between Saudi Arabia and the Zionist entity would be a "transformative event". "To bring these two countries together in particular would have a powerful effect in stabilizing the region, in integrating the region, in bringing people together, not having them at each other's throats," Blinken said. But he acknowledged it was "hard to get there". — AFP

International

# Pakistan to hold national election in January 2024

## Business community hopeful announcement would end instability

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will hold delayed national polls in January next year, the election commission announced Thursday, as the country grapples with overlapping political, economic and security crises. A caretaker government has been running the South Asian country since parliament was dissolved on August 9, days after former prime minister Imran Khan was imprisoned for graft and barred from contesting elections for five years.

His successor, Shehbaz Sharif, is currently in London consulting with his brother Nawaz Sharif, a three-time former premier who is expected to return to Pakistan next month following four years in exile after being granted medical bail from his own jail sentence. Polls were supposed to have taken place within 90 days of parliament's dissolution but the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) said it needed time to redraw constituency boundaries following the latest census. The ECP announcement Thursday cheered political analysts and the business community. "The announcement of a date is a positive and significant sign, however Pakistani politics is so unstable that one can't predict what will happen after three months," political analyst Hasan Askari Rizvi told AFP. "But all the sufferings of the common people due to inflation and price hikes will have a direct bearing — provided all parties are allowed to campaign and contest elections," he said.

### Political drama

Pakistan Business Forum official Ahmad Jawad told AFP the announcement came as a relief. "It's

been a demand of the business community to announce the election date to overcome the instability which is eating us like a termite," he told AFP. "Pakistan's economy needs complete political stability."

Khan's ouster as prime minister in April last year sparked months of political drama, with the former international cricket star staging a defiant campaign against the powerful military culminating in a major crackdown on his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. Two normally feuding dynastic parties — the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) — teamed up to form the next government, but cracks are already showing in their shaky alliance and they are likely to be bitter opponents in the next election.

With much of Khan's PTI leadership in jail, in hiding, or having abandoned the party, it remains unclear how much of a threat they will pose. Teacher Ijaz Ahmad, 25, said it was vital all parties were allowed to contest the election. "It is also important to release all political leaders and let everyone be given a chance to participate in the elections," he told AFP in the northwestern city of Peshawar. "Let the people decide which party they want to see in power next time."

Pakistan is struggling through a biting economic downturn, with business leaders crying out for authorities to bring political stability to a cash-strapped nation that has seen a record devaluation of the rupee and soaring inflation. It has also witnessed a dramatic spike in militant attacks, mainly in its border regions with Afghanistan since the



ISLAMABAD: A security personnel stands guard at the headquarters of Election Commission of Pakistan in Islamabad on Sept 21, 2023. -- AFP

Taliban returned to power in Kabul in 2021. Election campaigns in Pakistan are generally feisty affairs, with huge rallies held across the country and frequent clashes between supporters of rival parties. The election commission said Thursday an official campaign period would last nearly two months. "The final list of constituencies will be published on No-

vember 30. After that, the elections will be held in the last week of January 2024, after a 54-day election program," it said in a statement. Information Minister Murtaza Solangi told private TV channel Dunya: "We will provide all the resources to the Election Commission and ensure that all registered political parties have equal opportunities." — AFP



MANILA: Protesters raise placards and light candles as they join a protest commemorating the 51st anniversary of the imposition of Martial Law on Sept 21, 2023. -- AFP

## Filipino activists accuse Marcos of 'witch-hunt'

MANILA: Filipino activists accused President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's government of carrying out a "witch-hunt" against rights defenders as they held rallies for the 51st anniversary of the imposition of martial law on Thursday.

Hundreds of people marched in Manila calling for the release of victims of forced disappearances and the abolishment of an anti-communist task force, set up by former president Rodrigo Duterte, that has been accused of targeting government critics. Rights group Karapatan said the Marcos Jr administration was using the task force to "witch-hunt activists, human rights defenders and other dissenters", while enabling the military and police to "perpetuate repression reminiscent of the martial law era".

Marcos Jr's dictator father, Ferdinand Marcos, imposed martial law in 1972, unleashing his security forces on rivals, critics and dissidents. Amnesty International estimates thousands of people were killed and tens of thousands tortured and imprisoned in the brutal crackdown. Activists said rampant human rights abuses have continued under Marcos Jr, who has kept up Duterte's deadly war on drugs, as well as his National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict.

Rights groups say eight activists have been "disappeared" since Marcos Jr became president in June 2022. There have been more than 400 drug-related killings during the same period, according to a monitoring group. "It's like we're still living in the shadows of 1972. This regime doesn't care about human rights," Renato Reyes, secretary general of the leftist alliance Bayan, told protesters.

### 'Like martial law'

The rallies come after the release on Tuesday of two environmental activists who had accused the military of abducting them. Jonila Castro, 21, and Jhed Tamano, 22, had been working with coastal communities opposed to reclamation activities in Manila Bay when they disappeared on September 2 in Bataan province, near the capital.

Authorities rejected the allegation, saying the women were part of a communist insurgency seeking to overthrow the government and had sought their help after voluntarily leaving the movement. Around a thousand protesters marched through Manila on Thursday to Mendiola Street, which leads to the presidential palace and has previously been the scene of deadly protests. About 500 police were waiting for the marchers, but there were no clashes. Rights defender John Garcia, 23, said he had been "red-tagged" — labelled a communist sympathizer — and accused Marcos Jr of overseeing a "de facto martial law". "We fear for our lives, security, the lives of our loved ones because we have endured attacks, state-sponsored attacks," Garcia told AFP at the rally. — AFP

## Tough winter ahead as Russia targets energy sites: Kyiv

KYIV: Ukraine on Thursday warned that difficult winter months lay ahead after a massive Russian missile barrage targeted civilian infrastructure, killing three in the south and wounding many across the country. Russia launched the strikes as Ukraine prepares for a third winter during Moscow's 19-month long invasion and as President Volodymyr Zelensky made his second wartime trip to Washington.

"Most of the missiles were shot down. But only the majority. Not all," Zelensky said, calling for the West to provide Kyiv with more anti-missile systems. The fresh attack came as Poland said it would honor pre-existing commitments of weapons supplies to Kyiv, a day after saying it would no longer arm its neighbor in a mounting row between the two allies.

Moscow hit cities from Rivne in western Ukraine to Kherson in the south, the capital Kyiv and cities in the center and northeast of the country. Kyiv also reported power cuts across the country — in

almost 400 cities, towns and villages — as Russia targeted energy sites, but said it was "too early" to tell if this was the start of a new Russian campaign against its energy sites.

Last winter many Ukrainians had to go without electricity and heating in freezing temperatures as Russia hit Kyiv's energy facilities. "Difficult months are ahead: Russia will attack energy and critically important facilities," said Oleksiy Kuleba, the deputy head of Kyiv's presidential office. Ukraine also said that it had struck a military airfield in Moscow-annexed Crimea, a claim denied by Russian-installed authorities.

### Energy fears

Tensions over Ukraine's grain exports have built since Russia ended a deal that allowed for cargo ships' safe passage on the Black Sea. The European Commission — the EU's executive arm — last week said it was ending an import ban on Ukraine grain, arguing that "the market distortions in the five member states bordering Ukraine have disappeared".

Poland, Hungary and Slovakia immediately announced they would defy the move. In a quickly escalating row, Poland said it wouldn't arm Ukraine anymore, but would honor existing commitments. Slovakia announced, however, that it had reached an agreement on how to handle grain exports. — AFP



KYIV: Firefighters push out a fire as police experts look for fragments of missile at a crater on an industrial area of Kyiv, after a massive overnight missile attack on Sept 21, 2023. -- AFP

## Venezuela regains control of gang-run jail with pool, zoo

MARACAY: Venezuela said Wednesday it had seized control of a prison from the hands of a powerful gang with international reach, in a major operation involving 11,000 members of its security forces. The Tocoron prison had served as the Tren de Aragua gang's headquarters, where it had installed amenities such as a zoo, a pool and gambling rooms, according to an investigative journalist recently interviewed by AFP.



TOCORON: Relatives of inmates wait for news after authorities seized control of the Tocoron prison in Venezuela, on Sept 20, 2023. -- AFP

In a statement, the government congratulated law enforcement officers for regaining "total control" of the prison in the northern state of Aragua, adding the operation had "dismantled a center of conspiracy and crime." And in an official proclamation, President Nicolas Maduro praised "today's great success in the fight against criminal organizations."

After the government announced a complete evacuation of the jail, Interior Minister Remigio Ceballos told state broadcaster VTV that the inmates were being transferred to another facility. Dozens of relatives who had been living inside the prison with sentenced inmates gathered outside for news. "I am waiting to hear where they are taking my husband ... I was living in there, but they kicked us out," said Gladys Hernandez. An AFP team saw security officers carrying motorcycles, televisions, air conditioners and microwaves out of the jail. "That's ours!" shouted one of the women outside. It appeared some inmates escaped during the operation, as a later government statement announced a "second phase" of the operation for the "search and capture" of "fugitive criminals."

Tren de Aragua, Venezuela's most powerful local gang, is involved in crime countrywide and has spread its tentacles to neighboring nations. According to an investigation by Venezuelan journalist Ronna Riquez, the gang has some 5,000 members. It emerged a decade ago, and is involved in kidnappings, robberies, drug trafficking, prostitution and extortion. Tren de Aragua is also connected to illegal gold mining. The InSight Crime think tank says the gang is also a major player in migrant smuggling. Riquez told AFP the gang "took advantage" of Venezuela's economic and political crises over the past decade to expand operations and is now present in at least eight other Latin American countries. She said Tocoron had been entirely in the hands of the gang. — AFP

## 'Like a grave': Syrians shelter underground in rebel bastion

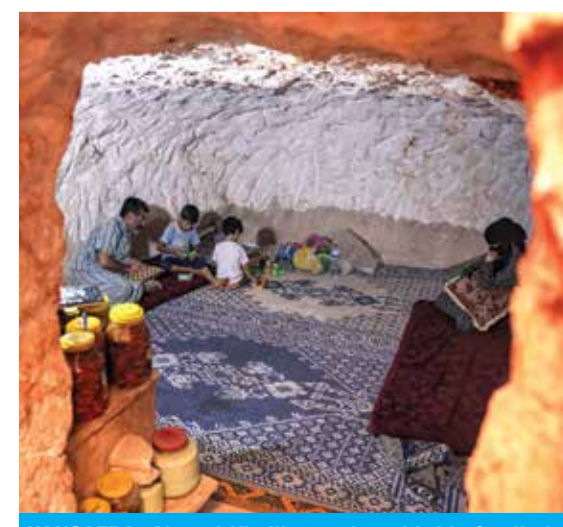
KANSAFRA: In a battered village in Syria's last main opposition bastion, one resident has hewn a bomb shelter out of rock to stay on his land and protect his family from attacks. Kansafra, in the south of Idlib province, often comes under Syrian army fire targeting jihadists who control the area, while Russian warplanes circle above and carry out air strikes in support of ally Damascus. Many families have fled the village, located less than two kilometers (1.2 miles) from the front lines. Now, just a few shops remain open, while heavily damaged buildings line the streets. But Ahmad Khalil, 53, would not leave.

"People keep telling us to go to a camp for displaced people, but these camps are a thousand times worse," he said. Khalil carved out the shelter next to his house in 2017. Winding, narrow steps lead down to a small room with a low, curved roof, illuminated with sunlight from a shaft and a dim lamp. "I prefer to stay here under the bombs," he said, even though the shelter is "like a grave". The rebel-held Idlib region in Syria's northwest is home to about three million people, around half of them displaced from other parts of the country during more than a decade of conflict. Many live in impoverished tented settlements, dependent on international aid. Jihadist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, controls swathes of Idlib, as well as parts of the adjacent provinces of Aleppo, Hama and Latakia. Fighting has intensified in recent weeks, so Khalil's family has been spending more time underground.

### 'Never stops'

Whenever they hear shelling or warplanes, they run to the shelter. "There are always aircraft flying over the village and the area, it never stops. The life we lead is worse than death," said Khalil, who has two wives and seven children. Mostly bereft of furniture, the shelter is covered with basic floor mats. Jars of vine leaves and other fermented vegetables are stored in the cool of the underground cave. Buying bread means a walk to the nearest shop, at constant risk of attack.

Syria's civil war broke out in 2011 after the government's repression of peaceful demonstrations escalated into a deadly conflict that pulled in foreign powers and global jihadists. The war has killed more than 500,000 people and battered the country's infrastructure and industry. With Russian and Iranian support, Damascus has clawed back much of the territory it lost to rebels early in the conflict. In the family's somber shelter, two of Khalil's young sons played with toys on the ground. "My children dream of living like any other children — of going out and playing outside," said the father. But here, "there are no other children for them to play with ... and the entire region is in ruins," he added. "This is no life." — AFP



KANSAFRA: Ahmad Khalil, 53, sits with his family in a cave he carved manually with his children near his original home in the mostly abandoned village of Kansafra in Idlib. -- AFP

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2023

# US Federal Reserve pauses rate hikes

## Powell predicts long fight against inflation

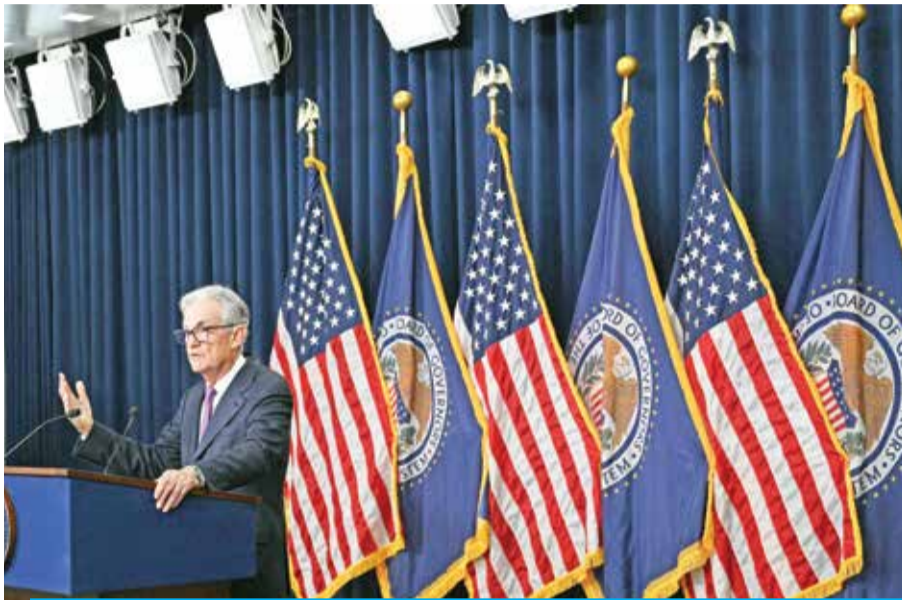
WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve voted Wednesday to hold interest rates at a 22-year high while predicting that lending rates will need to remain higher for longer to definitively cool inflation. "We are prepared to raise rates further, if appropriate, and we intend to hold policy at a restrictive level until we're confident that inflation is moving sustainably toward our objective," Fed Chair Jerome Powell said in a press conference after the decision.

After 11 interest rate increases since March last year, inflation has fallen sharply but remains stuck stubbornly above the Fed's long-run target of two percent per year—keeping pressure on officials to consider further policy action. The Fed's decision to keep its key lending rate between 5.25 and 5.50 percent gives policymakers more time to assess the health of the US economy amid signs of robust economic growth and a strong labor market.

The move, which was in line with expectations, postpones additional pain for millions of Americans already struggling with the impact of the Fed's existing hikes on mortgages and other loans. "We are highly attentive to the risks that high inflation poses to both sides of our mandate," Powell said, referring to the Fed's twin mandate to tackle both inflation and unemployment.

### Revision to growth

On Wednesday, the Fed said economic activity had been expanding at a solid pace, while noting strong job gains and a low unemployment rate. The recent



WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell speaks during a press conference on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

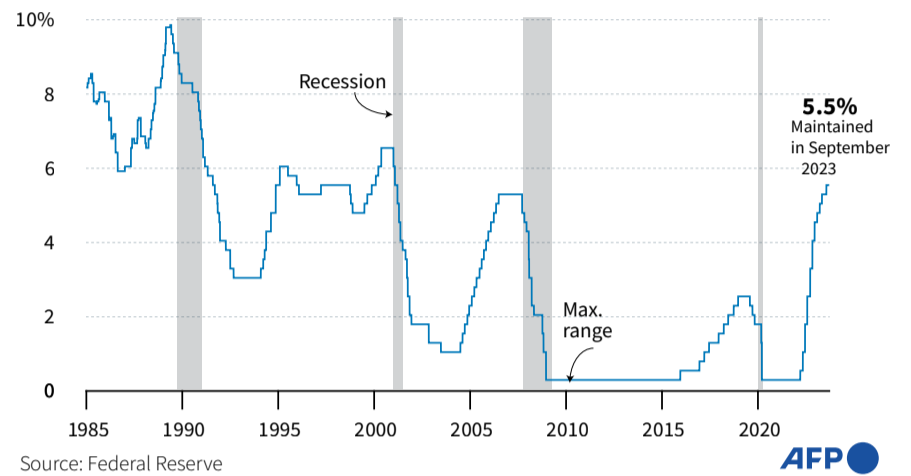
string of positive economic data has raised hopes that the Fed can slow price increases without triggering a damaging recession. Through updated economic forecasts, the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) indicated it believes the economy will fare far better than previously hoped, with knock-on effects for Fed policy. FOMC members left the median projection for interest rates at the end of this year between 5.50 and 5.75 percent, keeping alive the possibility of another quarter percentage point hike be-

fore the end of the year to tackle inflation. At the same time, they raised their forecast for where interest rates will be next year by half a percentage point — a significant increase that indicates a slower pace of rate cuts than previously anticipated.

"The overall message is unambiguously hawkish," Citi economists wrote in a note to clients after the Fed decision was published. FOMC members also more than doubled the median projection for economic growth this year to 2.1 percent from 1.0 percent in June, and sharply raised their forecast

## Fed's benchmark interest rate

Maximum target in %



for next year as well. "Stronger economic activity means we have to do more with rates," Powell said during his press conference. The forecast for the unemployment rate in 2023 was lowered slightly from June, suggesting the jobs market is faring better than hoped, while the expectation for headline inflation was raised slightly.

### On the 'golden path'

Policymakers are looking to keep the country on what Chicago Fed President Austan Goolsbee calls the "golden path," attempting to slow down inflation while averting a surge in unemployment and a

major economic slowdown. On Wednesday, Powell reiterated previous comments suggesting a data-dependent approach to monetary policy. "Given how far we've come, we are in a position to proceed carefully as we assess the incoming data and the evolving outlooks and risks," he told reporters.

Analysts at Goldman Sachs recently cut their expectation of a recession in the United States from 20 percent down to 15 percent, while other economists — including those in the Fed's research team — say they no longer expect the US economy to contract this year. — AFP

## BoE freezes rates after 14 straight hikes

LONDON: The Bank of England on Thursday held interest rates steady, snapping 14 straight hikes following a shock slowdown to UK inflation and one day after the US Federal Reserve also hit pause. The BoE's monetary policy committee decided in a tight 5-4 vote to maintain its key rate at 5.25 percent, the highest level in more than 15 years. It cautioned that the rates outlook hinged on inflation staying elevated, echoing the views of its US and European peers.

UK policymakers had been tipped to raise borrowing costs again heading into this week's gathering — until shock official data Wednesday on consumer prices clouded the picture. Thursday's decision comes toward the end of a busy week for global central banks, which have carried out numerous rate hikes to tame inflation

that surged following Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

### 'Finely balanced'

"The decision on whether to increase or to maintain Bank Rate at this meeting had become more finely balanced," read minutes from the meeting. "Further tightening in monetary policy would be required if there were evidence of more persistent inflationary pressures," they added. Five policymakers, including governor Andrew Bailey, voted not to hike for the first time since December 2021. A minority of four urged a quarter-point hike "to address the risks of more deeply embedded inflation persistence". The Fed on Wednesday held rates but indicated another hike was likely this year should inflation remain high. It hinted also that there would be fewer cuts than anticipated in 2024. Also Thursday, Sweden's Riksbank and Norway's Norges Bank each raised their key interest rates by a quarter-point. But the Swiss National Bank unexpectedly left its rate unchanged, confounding expectations for an increase. All three said more rate increases may be necessary if inflation remains too high.—AFP

## Turkey hikes interest rate to 20-year high

ISTANBUL: Turkey's central bank on Thursday raised its key lending rate to a 20-year high following a sudden turn towards conventional economics by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The bank lifted its policy rate to 30 percent from 25 percent and promised more belt-tightening measures in the future. It followed a new surge in inflation that came in partial response to tax increases that Erdogan's government imposed to help pay for the promises of his May re-election campaign.

"Inflation was above expectations in July and August," the bank said in statement. "Inflation will remain close to the upper limit of the forecast range," it warned. The mercurial Turkish leader performed one of his trademark policy reversals after winning the May campaign. The vote came during Turkey's worst economic crisis in decades — one that analysts universally blamed on Erdogan's unorthodox conviction that high interest rates contribute to inflation. Erdogan called high rates "the mother and father of all evil" and spent years pushing the central bank to lower borrowing costs to speed up economic growth. He also made low rates the mantra of his re-election campaign. But the annual inflation rate is again rising after officially peaking at 85 percent 11 months ago. It approached 60 percent in August and is climbing much faster than projected by Erdogan's new economic team of former Wall Street executives and respected technocrats.

That team has been widely applauded for convincing Erdogan that Turkey would enter a systemic crisis unless rates were immediately and substantially raised. The policy rate has now moved up from 8.5 percent at the time of Erdogan's re-election, and now stands at its highest level in two decades — a move Erdogan effectively blessed by pledging support for "tight monetary policy" earlier this month.

Economists still worry that Turkey is flirting with disaster because interest rates remain far below levels at which consumer prices are going up. This gives Turks the incentive to spend their savings before they lose value and is making the economy overheat. "Turkey's economy isn't slowing anywhere near as quickly as we thought it would a few months ago," Capital Economics consultancy analyst Liam Peach wrote this month.

Fitch Ratings this month improved Turkey's outlook from "negative" to "stable" thanks to the policy U-turn. But it also warned that "there is still uncertainty regarding the magnitude, longevity and success of the policy adjustment to bring down inflation, partly due to political considerations". —AFP



BEIJING: Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad and First Lady Asma Al-Assad are welcomed upon their arrival at the airport on Sept 21, 2023. — AFP

## Assad visits China seeking financial support

HANGZHOU, China: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad on Thursday began his first official trip to China in almost two decades, with Beijing saying the visit will take ties to a "new level" as the Arab leader seeks financial support to help rebuild his devastated country. China is one of only a handful of countries outside the Middle East that Assad has visited since the 2011 start of a civil war that has killed more than half a million people, displaced millions more, and battered Syria's infrastructure and industry. Assad is the latest in a string of leaders ostracized by the West to be feted by Beijing, with Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro and Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi visiting this year, as well as top Russian officials. He arrived Thursday in the eastern city of Hangzhou, where he will attend the opening ceremony of the Asian Games on Saturday.

The Syrian president's Air China plane was greeted on the tarmac by jubilant music and rows of performers wearing colorful costumes, as Chinese and Syrian flags flapped in the sky, footage from state broadcaster CCTV showed. He and other foreign leaders will meet Xi in Hangzhou, CCTV said. According to the Syrian presidency, Assad will also travel to Beijing. The visit is his first to China since 2004.

China's foreign ministry said the visit will serve to take ties to a "new level". "China and Syria have a traditional and deep friendship," foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a regular briefing. "We believe that President Bashar Al-Assad's visit will further deepen mutual political trust and cooperation in various fields between the two countries," she added.

Beijing has long provided Damascus with diplomatic support, particularly at

the UN Security Council where it is a permanent member. "This visit represents an important rupture in the diplomatic isolation and the political siege imposed on Syria," Damascus-based political scientist Oussama Dannoura told AFP. "China has been breaking Western taboos that seek to prevent a number of states from dealing with countries that Washington considers isolated," he added.

### Growing presence

The visit comes as China expands its engagement in the Middle East. This year Beijing brokered a deal that saw longtime regional rivals Saudi Arabia and Damascus-backed Iran agree to restore ties and reopen their respective embassies. The detente was followed by Syria's return to the Arab fold at a summit in Saudi Arabia in May, ending more than a decade of regional isolation.

Syria's war began after Assad's repression of peaceful pro-democracy protests escalated into a deadly conflict that pulled in foreign powers and jihadists. Assad's regime has branded all opponents — from non-violent activists to armed rebels and jihadists — as "terrorists". "Assad intends for his trip to China to convey a sense of international legitimacy for his regime and paint a picture of looming Chinese support for reconstruction in Syria," said Lina Khatib, director of the Middle East Institute at SOAS university in London. Khatib noted that the timing is significant, with Assad now facing protests calling for regime change in southern Syria. "It is unlikely that either (intention) will be convincing to an increasingly restive population in Sweida," added Khatib, referring to a Syrian city where protests are ongoing.

Recent months have seen Beijing roll out the red carpet for a string of autocrats, from Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko to a delegation of officials from Afghanistan's Taliban government. And foreign minister Wang is this week in Moscow, which faces a raft of Western sanctions over its war in Ukraine. —AFP



TOKYO: The logo of Japanese industrial group Toshiba is seen on top of a building at its headquarters on Aug 7, 2023. — AFP

## End of era as Toshiba seals \$13.5bn offer

TOKYO: Japanese industrial giant Toshiba marked the end of an era as a listed company on Thursday as it announced that a private consortium had bought almost 80 percent of its shares. Remaining shareholders will be "squeezed out" after the \$13.5-billion tender offer and Toshiba shares will be delisted after more than 70 years on the stock market, Toshiba said.

Toshiba traces its roots back to 1875 and evolved into a vast conglomerate in the 20th century synonymous with Japan's postwar economic revival and its technological innovation. The firm became a household name in Japan and

beyond, making everything from early laptop computers, elevators and nuclear power stations to microchips.

But it has lurched from crisis to crisis in recent years, including a huge accounting scandal in 2015 and billions of dollars in losses from US nuclear subsidiary Westinghouse. Pressure from activist shareholders and a takeover offer from private equity group CVC prompted aborted attempts to split the company first into three, and then into two.

Finally, Toshiba's board accepted in March the takeover bid by the consortium that includes more than 20 Japanese banks and other firms. "Toshiba Group will now take a major step toward a new future with a new shareholder," CEO Taro Shimada said in a statement Thursday. The saga has been closely watched in business circles for clues about what could become of other huge, diversified conglomerates in Japan and elsewhere. —AFP



Business

High seas treaty moves closer to reality with first signatures

Each country must still ratify the treaty under its own domestic process

UNITED NATIONS: Nearly 70 countries at the United Nations on Wednesday signed a first-ever treaty on protecting the international high seas...

ter 15 years of discussion, the United Nations sealed the first treaty on the high seas in June by consensus, although Russia said it had reservations.

The start of signatures marks "a new chapter" of "establishing meaningful protections" for the oceans, said Nichola Clark of the Ocean Governance Project at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

A key tool in the treaty will be the ability to create protected marine areas in international waters — only around one percent of which are now protected by any sort of conservation measures.



NEW YORK: Chilean Foreign Minister Alberto van Klaveren signs the High Seas Treaty at the Regis Hotel on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

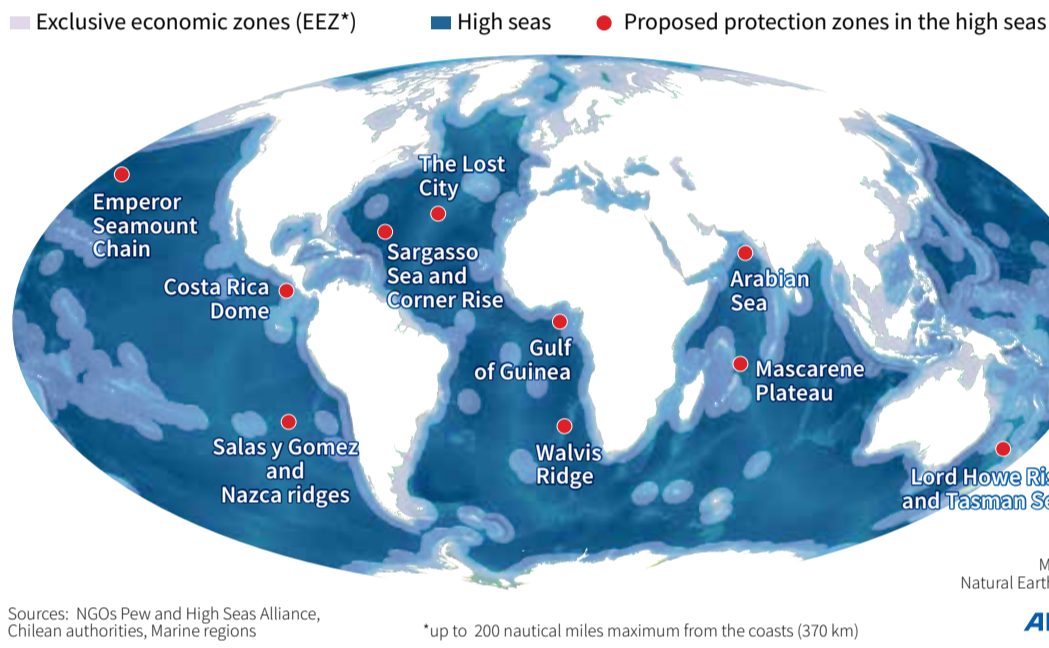
Murdoch hands leadership of media empire to son

NEW YORK: Rupert Murdoch will step down as chairman of his media empire, a conservative behemoth that helped shape politics around the world...

'Race to ratification' Mads Christensen, interim executive director of Greenpeace International, voiced hope that the treaty would come into force in 2025...

But even if the treaty draws the 60 ratifications needed to come into force, it would still be well below the universal support for action sought by environmental defenders...

Proposed marine protection areas



Sources: NGOs Pew and High Seas Alliance, Chilean authorities, Marine regions

Map data: Natural Earth, Gebcos

Advertisement for Al Safat Investment Company featuring 'KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT' and company contact information.

Table with 13 columns: No., Ticker, Sector, Open Price, Close Price, Week High, Week Low, Range, Volume, WTD Change, WTD %, YTD %, Support Level, Resistance Level, P/E, P/B, Yield, Beta. Lists various companies like National Bank of Kuwait, Gulf Bank, etc.

# All new Toyota Crown 2023: Toyota's premium sedan

- Bold, breathtaking exterior that exudes luxury
- Available exclusively with two hybrid electric powertrains to accelerate the realization of a carbon-neutral society



- Spacious interior that guarantees premium comfort for all on board
- State-of-the-art safety technologies including the latest Toyota Safety Sense for greater peace of mind for drivers and passengers



**KUWAIT:** Building on the legacy of one of the world's best-loved vehicles since the 1950s, Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons EST Co and Toyota have launched the 16th generation Toyota Crown in Kuwait. The highly-anticipated flagship vehicle is ready to turn heads and inspire car enthusiasts with its unique combination of bold design, powerful acceleration, and premium comfort. The Crown has been built to provide an intuitive driving experience that will exceed expectations and establish a new benchmark in the premium segment throughout the region.

The Crown first debuted in 1955 as the "Toyopet Crown," Toyota's first mass-produced passenger vehicle. When the first generation was launched, Crown came to symbolize "innovation" and "pushing the limit" within Toyota. Since then, it has gained recognition in Japan as Toyota's premium sedan. It was also the first Japanese sedan to hit Middle East shores back in 1960, last being sold in the region in 2000.

Akihiro Sarada, Chief Engineer in charge of development, said: "We are delighted to introduce the new Toyota Crown. With 'innovation,' 'challenge,' and uncompromising passion built into its DNA, this vehicle embodies our commitment to surpassing the ever-evolving expectations of our customers. With a rich history dating back to its debut in 1955, the Crown has always held a special place as Toyota's flagship model, captivating customers worldwide. Drawing inspiration from its illustrious heritage, we infused this new model with cutting-edge

technology and advanced features, all while upholding the highest standards of ride comfort, safety, maneuverability, and driving performance. We eagerly anticipate bringing this vehicle to customers across the Middle East."

Kei Fujita, Chief Representative, Middle East and Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, commented: "We are thrilled to announce the return of the legend and introduce the highly-anticipated new Toyota Crown in the Middle East. Built to deliver an intuitive driving experience, this new premium vehicle brings powerful acceleration and confident handling, along with supreme comfort for a sophisticated ride, all wrapped in a bold new design. Introducing the Crown with hybrid electric powertrains further demonstrates our wholehearted dedication to achieving carbon neutrality. We extend our gratitude to our customers in the region and beyond for continuously inspiring us as we strive to innovate and create 'ever-better cars' that surpass their expectations."

The new Toyota Crown is built around the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) platform. This delivers excellent body rigidity and a low center of gravity, guaranteeing a more rewarding driving experience. The vehicle features a new MacPherson strut-type suspension at the front and a new multi-link suspension system at the rear, contributing to outstanding stability and handling to create exceptional ride comfort.

To achieve a more exciting driving

style, the new Toyota Crown comes exclusively with a choice of two environmentally friendly powertrains. The first hybrid electric powertrain consists of a front electric motor and Toyota's first-ever 2.4-liter inline four-cylinder turbo engine, mated with direct shift six-speed automatic transmission. A rear wheel eAxle that includes a high output water-cooled electric motor is coupled with the hybrid electric system to directly transmit force to the four wheels. These ensure a thrilling throttle response and linear acceleration throughout the power band, along with a combined power of 343 hp and 550.8 nm of torque.

The second hybrid electric powertrain consists of two electric motors and a 2.5-liter four-cylinder petrol engine, generating a total power of 218 hp. The hybrid-electric system, paired with an Electric Continuously Variable Transmission (e-CVT), achieves the lowest fuel efficiency, with a consumption rate of 21.6 km/l, while elevating the driving experience to new levels.

Striking a seamless connection between stylish design, exquisite luxury, and enhanced convenience and comfort, the new Crown's cabin is accentuated by a range of advanced features. These include a 12.3-inch touchscreen multimedia system with Apple CarPlay® and Android Auto™ compatibility, a 12.3-inch TFT color meter that allows users to choose from 12 patterns to suit their tastes, a color head-up display (HUD), a dual-zone automatic air conditioning system with rear AC vents, a 11-speaker JBL surround sound system,

a panoramic roof, multi-adjustable power and ventilated front seats, and power reclining rear seats.

For added convenience, the new Crown is equipped with a hands-free, electrically powered trunk that can be activated using a foot-operated system when the user's hands or arms are full. Toyota Crown has passengers plugged-in when it comes to charging devices. On the driver's side, a vertical-type wireless Qi charger with enhanced space efficiency comes standard.

As with any Toyota vehicle, safety is a top priority for the new Crown. Drivers can enjoy complete peace of mind, thanks to the Toyota Safety Sense, an advanced safety and driver assistance system that includes a Pre-Collision System (PCS) with an expanded detection range for vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcycles, together with new features such as Automatic Emergency Brake, Emergency Steering Assist, and Acceleration Suppression at Low Speed.

The system also includes all-speed range Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC) with a multitude of features. Among these is Turn Signal Control (TSC), which enhances highway overtaking safety and smoothness by providing an initial increase in acceleration when the driver engages the turn signal. Additionally, Curve Speed Reduction (RSR) suppresses the vehicle's speed when entering a bend and offers additional acceleration upon exiting. Drivers can also benefit from Lane Tracing Alert (LTA), Lane Departure Alert (LDA),

and Adaptive High-beam System (AHS).

Furthermore, the new Crown also features Toyota's first-ever Safe Exit Assist (SEA), which uses the Blind Spot Monitor (BSM) to help prevent accidents. This system detects approaching traffic or cyclists from the rear and automatically cancels door opening to avoid potential collisions. Additionally, the vehicle features eight SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Traction Control (TRC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD), Brake Assist (BA), Parking Assist Monitor (PAM), Parking Support Brake (PKSB), Drive-Start Control (DSC), Panoramic View Monitor (PVM), Rear Camera Cleaning System, and Hill-start Assist Control (HAC), among many others.

The new Crown offers a selection of seven captivating exterior hues that complement the vehicle's striking visual appeal, including Precious White Pearl, Precious Silver, Precious Metal, Massive Gray, Black, Emotional Red II, and Precious Bronze. Further personalization is made possible with the addition of several dual-tone variants. Black can be combined with Precious White Pearl, Precious Silver, Precious Metal, Massive Gray, Emotional Red II, or Precious Bronze. The vehicle's interior features an equally stylish color scheme, with two options either fromage or black. The new Toyota Crown also offers a choice of three aluminum wheel designs: a 19 and 21-inch machine-finished black and a 21-inch dark premium metallic, further enhancing its luxurious appearance.

## Ford reaches Canada labor deal as US auto strike continues

**DETROIT:** The Canadian auto workers union has reached a tentative agreement with Ford, averting a strike as negotiations continued Wednesday in Detroit where US labor leaders have threatened to expand a stoppage at three major automakers. Unifor, which represents Canadian auto workers, said late Tuesday its deal covers more than 5,600 employees at Canadian Ford facilities who were poised for a potential walkout. The tentative agreement still must be ratified by Unifor members, but the accord contrasts the situation in the United States.

About 12,700 United Auto Workers (UAW) members are on strike at three US plants after failing to agree on a new contract with the "Big Three" automakers — Ford, General Motors and Stellantis. But the automakers have now sent thousands of additional employees home through temporary layoffs they characterize as a ripple effect from the strikes.

GM said Wednesday it "idled" the Fairfax Assembly plant in Kansas City, Kansas following the strike at its Wentzville, Missouri facility, saying Fairfax relied on "critical stampings" from the Missouri site. "Most" of Fairfax's 2,000 UAW members are being sent home, GM said. "We have said repeatedly that nobody wins in a strike," GM added. "We will continue to bargain in good faith with the union to reach an agreement as quickly as possible."

Earlier Wednesday, Stellantis announced layoffs potentially involving more than 350 workers in Perrysburg, Ohio and Kokomo, Indiana due to effects of the UAW strike at its Toledo, Ohio factory. Ford has also temporarily laid off 600 workers impacted by the strike at a Wayne, Michigan plant. Union officials have said their goal has been a strong contract for workers and that they hoped to avoid a strike. But the stoppage has been a necessary tool to achieve a stronger package as workers struggle with elevated inflation.

In Canada, the collective agreement between Unifor and Ford expired on September 18 at 11:59 p.m. but Unifor agreed to a 24-hour extension. "We believe that this agreement will solidify the foundations on which we will continue to bargain gains for generations of auto workers in Canada," said Unifor National President Lana Payne in a statement. Unifor said it was withholding details about the agreement, pending ratification meetings with union members. But Payne earlier this week said Unifor was looking for substantial increases in pensions and wages. — AFP

## Biden, Lula launch workers' rights pact

**UNITED NATIONS:** President Joe Biden and his Brazilian counterpart Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva unveiled a pact on workers' rights Wednesday, as the pro-union US leader grapples with a major auto employees' strike at home. "The two largest democracies in the western hemisphere are standing up for human rights around the world," Biden said as he met Lula on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York. "That includes workers' rights, and I'm honored we're going to launch a new partnership for workers' rights."

The US-Brazil Partnership for Workers' Rights calls for ending forced and child labor and discrimination against women and LGBTQ people, and dealing with the effect on workers as economies transition to clean energy,

US officials said. Lula said that Brazil and the United States were "friends seeking a common objective: development and improving the lives of everyone."

Relations between the United States and Brazil have warmed since the return to power of veteran leftist Lula, who unseated right-wing president Jair Bolsonaro in elections last year. Biden received Lula at the White House earlier this year. During the visit both leaders portrayed themselves as defenders of democracy — in Biden's case after the Jan 6, 2021 Capitol attack by supporters of former president Donald Trump, and Lula when a crowd loyal to Bolsonaro stormed institutions in Brasilia on Jan 8, 2023.

The workers' pact is also politically significant for Biden as the Democrat seeks to win reelection



**NEW YORK:** US President Joe Biden meets Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on the sidelines of the 78th United Nations General Assembly on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

next year, most likely facing off again versus Republican Trump. Biden, who said he led the "most pro-union administration in American history," is facing an unprecedented strike hitting all "Big Three" US automakers that threatens to harm the US econ-

omy. Wearing a red tie in what White House officials said was a show of support for the car unions, Biden said that "whether it's the auto workers or any other union worker, record corporation profits should mean record contracts for union workers". — AFP

## Amazon empowers Alexa voice assistant with generative AI

**ARLINGTON:** Amazon's popular Alexa digital assistant is about to be supercharged with the powers of generative artificial intelligence, the company said on Wednesday, as the tech giant steps into the AI race dominated by ChatGPT, Google and Microsoft. Voice assistants like Alexa or Apple's Siri are often designated as perfect candidates to have their sometimes-glitchy and robot-like technology streamlined with capabilities of generative AI.

Generative AI, such as used in the ChatGPT chatbot, delivers content as complex as a poem or scholarly essay in just seconds, and Amazon's goal is that Alexa could do that and even more with verbal commands from a user's living room or kitchen. At an event at the company's offices near Washington, the company said that an English-language version of Alexa AI would be made available as an opt-in on all its devices

in the United States in the coming months.

"It's going to take some time to integrate these technologies into the surface area that is Alexa. But I am super optimistic that we are off to a wonderful an excellent start," said Dave Limp, Amazon's senior vice president of devices and services. With the change, Alexa will be able to converse with a more personable style and drop its robotic tone, the company said. Alexa would also tap into real-time information and create the semblance of a personal rapport with users that would include an awareness of their habits or favorite sports teams. "For example, you could say 'Alexa every morning at 8 am turn on the coffee machine, open the blinds, dim the lights in the study and play my morning news,' and boom — it creates the routine," Limp said. While widely plugged as the next stage of consumer technology, in the past decade Alexa and its connected smart home devices have yet to become big money spinners for Amazon, with Google and Apple also struggling to make traction in the space.

Daniel Rausch, the executive in charge of Alexa, told reporters that the AI would put an extra emphasis on accuracy and that its efforts in AI were not comparable with chatbots that have been shown to output inaccuracies or go off the rails. "Accuracy in smart home means yes, we did turn on the right light, we did



**ARLINGTON, Virginia:** An attendee looks on during a media tour of the new Amazon headquarters on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

lock the right door, we are sure about the state of the security system," he said.

At the launch event, Amazon also introduced its latest Echo 8 smart home hub as well as a soundbar for televisions and new AI-fueled search capabilities on its FireTV service. Limp, Amazon's longtime device chief, is retiring after more than a decade in the role amid reports he will be replaced by a senior executive from Microsoft. — AFP

Lifestyle



Karim Vahed, a professor of entomology and England Manager at invertebrate conservation charity Buglife, inspects a signal crayfish he found in the waterway 'Markeaton Brook' in Markeaton Park in Derby, central England. — AFP photos



Karim Vahed holds a juvenile signal crayfish he found in the waterway 'Markeaton Brook' in Markeaton Park in Derby.



Crayfish are prepared at Silo, a zero-waste restaurant, in London.



A signal crayfish rests in a net after being caught by Karim Vahed.

# Invasive species on the menu at London restaurant



Karim Vahed inspects a signal crayfish he found in the waterway 'Markeaton Brook' in Markeaton Park in Derby.



A chef prepares a Crayfish dish in the kitchen at Silo.



Karim Vahed poses for a photograph as he explores the waterway 'Markeaton Brook' in Markeaton Park looking for signal crayfish, in Derby.

A London restaurant is exploring whether eating invasive species such as grey squirrel, American Signal crayfish and Japanese knotweed could help fight their spread, but scientists remain skeptical. The idea behind several "invasive species supper clubs", the last of which was served on Tuesday at "zero waste" Silo restaurant in east London, is to "creatively popularize species that are detrimental to the environment", chef Douglas McMaster, who runs the establishment, told AFP.

The omnipresent grey squirrels, signal crayfish and Japanese knotweed are all "forces of destruction" that squeeze out local populations, but all are edible and "delicious", he added. The invaders are the subject of a recently published report under the aegis of the UN, which gave rise to calls from experts to "wake up" to the "scourge".

McMaster would like a legitimate supply chain and for the species to become "an accessible resource" for chefs. But the idea "isn't to popularize these invasive species so there's so much of a demand that we allow them to become more invasive", he stressed. "That would be a terrible thing to occur." He hopes instead to "bring back balance within the ecosystem and then we stop eating them".



A prepared Crayfish dish is pictured at Silo, a zero-waste restaurant.

**'Out of control'**

But experts fear that the remedy will simply aggravate the problem. "Consuming invasive non-native species isn't something that I would encourage," Karim Vahed, professor of entomology at the University of Derby, told AFP. For Signal crayfish, which were imported in the 1970s for human consumption before escaping to colonize waterways - to the detriment of the native white-clawed crayfish - "there's a potential that people will even introduce them themselves



A chef prepares a Crayfish dish in the kitchen at Silo, a zero-waste restaurant, in London.

if they think that they can then be collected as food". The invasive specimens also transmit a fungal infection, "crayfish plague", to which the American species are immune.

And their few predators - otters and herons - are too few to stem their spread. "At the moment, the Signal is just spreading out of control," warned Vahed. The smaller, native crayfish, which have seen an 80-90 percent decline, are now at risk of extinction.

In a small stream flowing through a park in Derby, central England, visitors

can easily see the swarms of American crayfish. One of Vahed's students found the first specimen there 16 years ago and within five years the invasive species had completely replaced the native one. Simply taking the largest ones does not help contain the spread. "You're just helping the young American Signal crayfish to survive," explained Vahed. "So removing them and eating them isn't a solution."

**'Very human response'**

The picture is more nuanced for Japanese knotweed, an invasive plant which can be eaten or used to brew beer. "It could potentially be a good idea," said knotweed specialist Karen Bacon, who found humor in the "very human response" of thinking "this plant is causing a problem, it is edible... let's eat it!".

"But on the other hand, there are risks," added the professor, who is based at the University of Galway, western Ireland. Disturbing the plant can actually enhance its growth, she told AFP, adding that any project would need to be undertaken with experts "who understand the plant". "There is some potential in there, but it needs to be done carefully," she said. — AFP

## Marshes, mills and Michelin stars: Spain's 'chef of the sea'

As a child, Angel Leon spent hours fishing in the marshes of Cadiz in southwestern Spain - and today the chef draws inspiration from this terrain for his three-star Michelin restaurant. Leon, 46, has pushed the boundaries of seafood at Aponiente, serving up plankton rice, squid cheese and mussel pudding at the avant-garde eatery in El Puerto de Santa Maria, a fishing town in the heart of the Bay of Cadiz. The sea is "an extraordinary pantry" that cooks often overlook, Leon told AFP, sporting a tattoo of a turtle on his forearm.

"The problem is that human beings are always selective" in the products they chose to eat, said the energetic chef, who believes in steering away from the latest fashions and suggesting "everything we find" in the ocean is likely to be edible. The chef, who is also experimenting with new sustainable ingredients and innovations, is known in Spain as "el chef del mar" or "the chef of the sea".

Born in Jerez de la Frontera, Leon spent his childhood in the Bay of Cadiz where he would go fishing with his brother and father, a doctor, on weekends. A poor student, Leon was passionate about fish and how to cook them, and decided to turn this passion into his profession. As a teenager he enrolled at a Seville hotel and catering school, then



Spanish chef Angel Leon gestures during an AFP interview at his Aponiente restaurant in El Puerto de Santa Maria.

earned his stripes in France at the acclaimed Le Chapon Fin restaurant in the southwestern city of Bordeaux.

**Tide mill restoration**

After spending time in Madrid and Toledo, in 2007 Leon returned to the Cadiz region and opened his own restaurant, Aponiente, aged 30. His aim was to use the ingredients found in the bay for his menus.

The bet was risky, and the eatery struggled to draw customers - until his efforts to use little-known marine ingredients were recognized in 2010 with his first Michelin star. He was also ranked by the Wall Street Journal as one of the 10 best restaurants in Europe. In 2015 Leon moved his restaurant to a tide mill dating from 1815, which he said he fell in love with immediately.

The 1,800-square-metre building, located on the heart of the salt pan and exposed to the ebb and flow of the ocean, was then in a state of ruin and the adjoining land was being used as a garbage dump. Leon invested 2.5 million euros (\$2.7 million) to fix up the

building, which now features a contemporary decor that blends into the salt marsh landscapes that surround it.

Being in the heart of the marshes "allows people to understand why we cook the way we do," said Leon, who employs 70 people at his restaurant, located in a region with one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe.

**Open minds**

The restaurant's success has inspired others. Since Aponiente opened, three other chefs from the province of Cadiz have been awarded a Michelin star, including its former head chef, Juanlu Fernandez. Leon says he is now determined to open the "minds" of other gourmets. He has embarked on new experiments to combine the protection of the environment with the search for new ingredients, exploring ways to adapt diets to the reality of global warming.

Leon is trying to domesticate eelgrass - a plant with bright green ribbon-like leaves that grows in coastal marshlands, which produce edible grains dubbed "sea rice". The grains are packed with protein as well as fibre and omega fatty acids, while the plant captures huge amounts of carbon dioxide.

Working with academics, Leon has so far succeeded in growing this "superfood" in the marshes of Cadiz, and is exploring its culinary uses. It is not the first of his marine innovations to bear fruit. In 2008 he invented, along with researchers of Cadiz's marine research centre, a machine called "Clarimax", which uses seaweed to remove fat from broths. — AFP



Spanish chef Angel Leon (left) speaks with team members in his kitchen during an AFP interview at his Aponiente restaurant in El Puerto de Santa Maria. - AFP photos

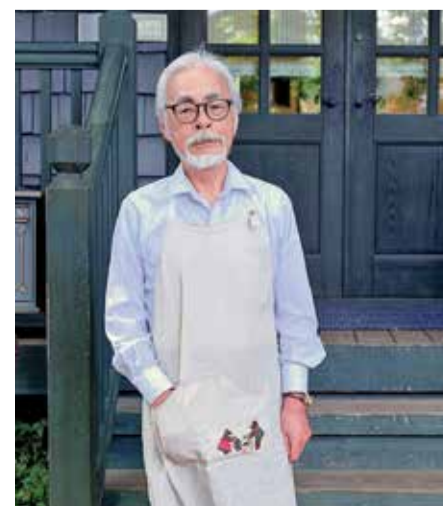


Spanish chef Angel Leon poses for a picture.

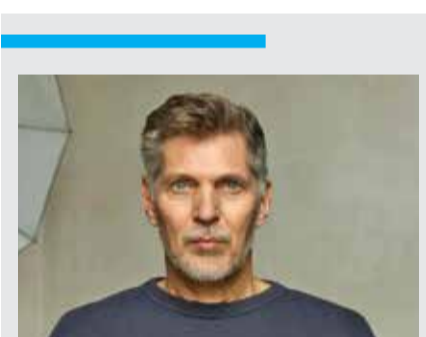
## Japan's Nippon TV to acquire Hayao Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli

Hayao Miyazaki's celebrated Japanese animation house Studio Ghibli said Thursday it will be acquired by private broadcaster Nippon TV, citing his old age. Miyazaki, widely considered one of the world's greatest animators, founded Studio Ghibli in 1985, and it went on to produce the Oscar-winning "Spirited Away" and the fan-favorite "My Neighbor Totoro". Miyazaki is now 82 years old, and the studio's top producer is 75. "We have long struggled with the question: who will be the successor," Studio Ghibli said in a joint statement with NTV. Miyazaki's son and anime director Goro was repeatedly suggested as a possible successor.

But he has "firmly rejected" the idea because "it's difficult to shoulder Ghibli all by myself", according to the statement. This left the studio looking for other candidates to handle business management. "It is against this backdrop that the negotiation started between Studio Ghibli and Nippon TV," they said. NTV described Ghibli as a studio that "we can be proud of before the world", and said its autonomy would be respected following the acquisition. The broadcaster said it will get 42.3 percent of the voting rights in the studio, which will become its subsidiary. — AFP



Hayao Miyazaki



Dutch photographer Erwin Olaf

## Dutch portrait artist Erwin Olaf dies at 64

World-renowned Dutch photographer Erwin Olaf has died after a long fight with lung disease, Dutch media reported Wednesday. He was 64. Known for his still-life portraits - often depicting life's seedier side, the taboo, or even the bizarre, Olaf's pictures have drawn crowds around the world from Spain to Shanghai. "The world-famous photographer Erwin Olaf has died. His family released the news," the NOS public broadcaster said. Olaf had suffered from emphysema since 1996 and recently undergone a lung transplant.

"He was getting better, but suddenly became unwell. Efforts to resuscitate him failed," the NOS said, quoting a person close to Olaf's family. "Olaf had a great reputation worldwide and was perhaps the best-known photographer in the Netherlands," it added. He first gained fame in the 1980s with a series of extreme nudes and in 2000 he riled fans of the British monarchy by depicting various royals through history in bloody death scenes - including one portrait entitled "Lady Di", the late Princess of Wales.

An Amsterdam native, Olaf's later works became more introspective, but his eye for the nude remained and it was a recurring theme in his work. His pictures commented on the human condition, with black and whites depicting nudes of all sizes - or dulled colors, recalling pictures taken in the 1960s. — AFP

## Lifestyle



## EGYPT ANNOUNCES DISCOVERY OF APHRODITE TEMPLE

The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities announced on Tuesday an important archaeological discovery of the temple of the "goddess Aphrodite" in the sunken city of Thonis Heracleion, which was

built 2,400 years ago. In a statement, the ministry stated that the joint Egyptian-French archaeological mission between the Supreme Council of Antiquities and the European Institute of Marine Archeology uncovered a temple

to the "goddess Aphrodite" from the fifth century BC during underwater excavations in the sunken city of Thonis Heracleion in Abu Qir Bay in Alexandria.

According to the statement, the head of the European Institute of Ma-

rine Archeology, Frank Goddio, indicated that the mission also found the area in which offerings, vows and precious items were stored in the Western Temple of Amun. The sunken city of Thonis Heracleion is located 7 kilometers

from the coast of the sea city of Abu Qir. It was considered the largest port of Egypt on the Mediterranean coast before Alexander the Great founded the city of Alexandria in 331 BC.—KUNA

## Iran submits 'The Night Guardian' for 2024 Oscars

Iran has submitted director Reza Mirkarimi's movie "The Night Guardian" for the 2024 Oscars in the Best International Film category. The movie, released last year, is about the tough life of Rasoul, a rural worker trying to make a living in the capital Tehran.

"The selection committee has chosen the movie Negahban-e Shab, or The Night Guardian, directed by Reza Mirkarimi to represent the Iranian cinema at the 2024 Oscars," the Farabi Cinema Foundation said late Tuesday. Mirkarimi, 56, won the best film prize at the 2005 Fajr film festival in Tehran for "So Close, So Far", and his movie "Today" was nominated at the 2015 Academy Awards.

The Farabi Cinema Foundation has almost exclusively selected Iran's Oscar picks since 1994. Iran has long had a thriving cinema scene, with figures including Jafar Panahi and Asghar Farhadi scooping awards around the world. Farhadi has twice won the Oscar for best foreign film, for "A Separation" in 2012 and "The Salesman" in 2017.—AFP



## AI both a risk and opportunity for journalism: Study

AI is both a threat and an opportunity for journalism, with more than half of those surveyed for a new report saying they had concerns about its ethical implications on their work. While 85 percent of respondents had experimented with generative AI such as ChatGPT or Google Bard for tasks including writing summaries and generating headlines, 60 percent said they also had reservations.

The study, carried out by the London School of Economic's JournalismAI initiative, surveyed over 100 news organizations from 46 countries about their use of AI and associated technologies between April and July. "More than 60 percent of respondents noted their concern about the ethical implications of AI on journalistic values includ-



## Indie rocker Sufjan Stevens recovering from Guillain-Barre syndrome

US indie singer-songwriter Sufjan Stevens on Wednesday said he is recovering from Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare neurological disorder that left him immobile. "Last month I woke up one morning and couldn't walk," Stevens said on his website. "My hands, arms and legs were numb and tingling and I had no strength, no feeling, no mobility."

The 48-year-old artist said his brother drove him to the emergency room and that after a barrage of tests doctors diagnosed him with Guillain-Barre, an auto-immune disorder in which the immune system damages nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis. "Luckily there's treatment for this—they administer immuno-hemoglobin infusions for five days and pray that the disease doesn't spread to the lungs, heart and brain," he said. "Very scary, but it worked."

"I spent about two weeks in Med/Surg, stuck in a bed, while my doctors did all the things to keep me alive and stabilize my condition. I owe them my life." Stevens said he is now in rehab, but his condition has prevented him from promoting his new album, "Javelin," which is due next month.

"I'm only in my second week of rehab but it is going really well and I am working really hard to get back on my feet," he said. "I'm committed to getting better, I'm in good spirits, and I'm surrounded by a really great team." Stevens is among the best-known figures in the US indie music scene. In 2018 he nabbed an Oscar nomination for best original song, for "Mystery of Love," which featured in the Luca Guadagnino drama "Call Me By Your Name."—AFP

ing accuracy, fairness and transparency and other aspects of journalism," the researchers said in a statement.

"Journalism around the world is going through another period of exciting and scary technological change," added report co-author and project director Charlie Beckett. He said the study showed that the new generative AI tools were both a "potential threat to the integrity of information and the news media" but also an "incredible opportunity to make journalism more efficient, effective and trustworthy".

Journalists recognized the time-saving benefits of AI with tasks such as interview transcription. But they also noted the need for AI generated content to be checked by a human "to mitigate potential harms like bias and inaccuracy", the authors said. Challenges surrounding AI integration were "more pronounced for newsrooms in the global south" they added.—AFP

## 'Game of Thrones' author, other writers sue ChatGPT creator over copyrights

"Game of Thrones" author George RR Martin and other best-selling fiction writers have filed a class-action lawsuit against OpenAI, accusing the tech startup of violating their copyrights to fuel its generative AI chatbot ChatGPT. The Authors Guild, an organization representing writers, and several novelists including Martin, John Grisham and Jodi Picoult, accused the California-based company of using their books "without permission" to train ChatGPT's "large language models," algorithms capable of producing human-sounding text responses based on simple queries, according to the lawsuit.

"And at the heart of these algorithms is systematic theft on a massive scale," said the complaint, filed Tuesday in a New York federal court. Numerous other lawsuits have been filed by artists, organizations and coders against OpenAI and its competitors, with the plaintiffs claiming their work has been ripped off.

OpenAI did not immediately respond to a request for comment from AFP. The firm's language models "endanger fiction writers' ability to make a living, in that the (models) allow anyone to generate—automatically and freely (or very cheaply) -- texts that they would otherwise pay writers to create," Tuesday's complaint read.

ChatGPT can be used to produce "derivative works," imitating the style of writers, it added. "Unfairly, and perversely, without Plaintiffs' copyrighted works on which to 'train' their (language models), Defendants would have no commercial product with which to damage—if not usurp—the market for these professional authors' works," the complaint said.

"Defendants' willful copying thus makes Plaintiffs' works into engines of their own destruction." The Authors Guild and the writers are seeking a ban on the use of copyrighted books



to develop language models "without express authorization," as well as damages. OpenAI has relied on mountains of texts found online to power its chatbot but has not specified exactly which sites and writings have been used.

OpenAI has been the subject of several complaints since the success of ChatGPT last year, including one from computer engineers who also sued Microsoft, its main investor, and the GitHub platform. In January, artists filed a class-action lawsuit against DreamUp, Midjourney and Stable Diffusion, three image-generating AI models programmed with art found online. Microsoft announced this month that it would provide legal protection for customers sued for copyright infringement over content generated by its AI tools.—AFP

## Mexican singer Peso Pluma cancels concert after death threats



Mexican singer Peso Pluma.

Mexican singer Peso Pluma on Wednesday canceled a planned upcoming concert in Tijuana after a drug cartel allegedly threatened to kill him if he performed in the crime-plagued border city. "Our goal is to protect the fans and the team. For the safety of everyone involved we will cancel our show in Tijuana," the artist said in a message on his production company's Instagram account.

"Thank you very much to all our fans for understanding. We love you," added the 24-year-old behind the hit "Ella Baila Sola," who admits to having written songs at the request of drug traffickers. Tijuana authorities said last week that four signs had

been put up in the city just south of San Diego, in the US state of California, threatening to murder the singer if he performed there on October 14.

One was signed with the initials "CJNG"—the Jalisco New Generation drug cartel -- according to images published by local media. In at least one of his songs, Peso Pluma shouts out a different gang—infamous drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's Sinaloa Cartel. Tijuana Mayor Monserrat Caballero told local media Tuesday that a person detained over the threats had been released and there was no proof that it was the work of organized crime.—AFP



Models walk the runway at the Antonio Marras fashion show during the Milan Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2024 in Milan. — AFP photos

# FENDI, ANTONIO MARRAS AND CAVALLI KICK OFF DAY ONE OF MILAN FASHION WEEK



Fendi



Fendi



Fendi

**M**ilan Fashion Week autumn/winter 2023 began on Wednesday and, as expected of the Italian city, things were both stylish and provocative. At Fendi, creative director Kim Jones continued with the clothes-as-armor theme, as well as the underwear-as-outerwear idea he set in motion at his recent haute couture show. For this autumn/winter ready-to-wear collection, Jones offered contrasting options for the modern woman. There was sharp suiting with complex, layered looks that were strong and powerful, while other designs were soft, almost flimsy, in lace and silk.

Antonio Marras wove a wintry gothic tale, with knitted cable jumpers featuring lace and dense flowers creeping across the garments. There was even a tailored tartan suit, a nod to Vivienne Westwood, who died last year.

At Weekend Max Mara, British stylist Kate Phelan brought some androgynous London cool to Milan, via her capsule collection for the brand, which was simply called 24. Inspired by a December 1982 Vogue fashion shoot by Bruce Weber and Grace Coddington that Phelan saw as a teenager, she explains that as soon as she was invited to collaborate on a collection, she knew this shoot would be the foundation of it. "I have been obsessed with these images ever since and, in a way, they made me fall in love with fashion," she explained.

Translated into high-waisted, pleat-fronted trousers, oversized Harris Tweed blazers and herringbone coats that all leaned into Max Mara know-how, the collection also included pleated black denim skirts and Dr Martens for a dash of early 1980s street style.

Over at Marina Rinaldi, Mary Katrantzou presented a collaboration collection centered on a swirled psychedelic pat-



Actress Marisa Berenson (right) and designer Antonio Marras wave from the runway at the Antonio Marras fashion show during the Milan Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2024.

tern akin to the marbled paper found in old books. Offered in teal and pink, the swirly shapes arrived across dresses, split-front trousers, sock boots and even capes. Displayed in a mirrored hall, with the fabric glued on the floor and pillars, it was a hypnotic show. Elsewhere, Vogue fashion director Anna Dello Russo staged a pop-up in Max & Co to show her capsule collection of bright pastel suits and miniskirts. Rounding off day one was Cavalli. Against a background of lush greenery, Fausto Puglisi presented his version of a tropical Cavalli. The collection is all about movement. Long chiffon dresses and caftans catch the air. Just about everywhere, something flutters: leaf-

shaped cutouts, feathery details, trailing strips on sleeves or hems. Colors are strong; pinks and green; and prints bold, enlarged from the archives. It is a collection for the body confident. Long printed caftans are sheer, showing while covering; necklines plunge to the bellybutton. Crocheted bra tops are worn with hip-hugging trousers, recalling the 1970s. "It's a declaration of freedom for women," Puglisi said backstage. "Women don't need to show anybody (for approval), not to men, to fathers, to brothers. They just want to be happy. They want to be free." —www.thenationalnews.com



Roberto Cavalli



## Sports

# South Africa World Cup blow

## Nortje and Magala ruled out

**JOHANNESBURG:** Fast bowlers Anrich Nortje and Sisanda Magala have both been ruled out of the Cricket World Cup because of injury. Cricket South Africa announced on Thursday. They will be replaced by all-rounder Andile Phehlukwayo and fast bowler Lizaad Williams. The loss of Nortje is a particularly heavy blow for South Africa's chances because of his ability to bowl match-changing spells at high pace. One of the fastest bowlers in the world, capable of speeds of 150km an hour and more, he was named Cricketer of the Year at CSA's awards function in July.

Nortje had to leave the field because of back spasms after bowling five overs in his only appearance in South Africa's recent five-match series against Australia. Ac-

ording to a CSA statement he has a suspected lower back stress fracture. It is the second successive World Cup that Nortje will miss because of injury. A broken right thumb ruled him out of the 2019 tournament in England.

The heavily-built Magala also played in only one game against Australia and has not fully recovered from a left knee injury. Williams, 29, has only played in a single one-day international, against Ireland in 2021, although he played in the recent Twenty20 international series against Australia. Phehlukwayo, 27, has played in 76 one-day internationals. He had not been a regular member of the team in the past two seasons but was added to the squad against Australia because of the injury to Magala. The

injuries could affect South Africa's tactics for the World Cup.

Coach Rob Walter said when the squad was announced on September 5: "Our strength has been in fast bowling and we want to be able to have four high-quality fast bowlers on the park in most situations." The injuries leave Kagiso Rabada and Lungi Ngidi as the only experienced fast bowlers in the squad. South Africa depart for India on Saturday. Revised squad: Temba Bavuma (capt), Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock (wkt), Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Andile Phehlukwayo, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, Lizaad Williams. — AFP



Anrich Nortje

## News in Brief

### Kuwait draw with Bahrain

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Olympic football team on Thursday drew with Bahrain Olympic team (1-1) in group five of the Asian Games men's tournament 2023 held in China. Salman Al-Awadi scored Kuwait's only goal in the match in the 74th minute via a free-kick while Bahrain scored theirs at the 53rd minute. The draw gives Kuwait one point in the tournament thus enhancing its chances to qualify for the second round only if Thailand loses to South Korea in their upcoming game. Both first and second place winners of the group qualify to the second round in addition to the best four teams to win third place. The Kuwaiti team will play against Thailand next Sunday in the group final game. — KUNA

### Hunt rejoining NFL Browns

**LOS ANGELES:** Former Cleveland Browns running back Kareem Hunt rejoined the NFL franchise on Wednesday as the team looked to bolster its ranks after a season-ending injury to Nick Chubb. Hunt has signed a one-year deal worth \$4 million, according to US reports. The 28-year-old played 49 times for Cleveland between 2019 and 2022, amassing 1,874 rushing yards and 23 total touchdowns. Hunt left the team at the end of last season after requesting a trade when the Browns declined to extend his contract. However, despite being linked to the New Orleans Saints and Indianapolis Colts, Hunt remained a free agent when the new season got under way earlier this month. "I know what I bring to the table, I'm willing to come in and do whatever it takes just to help win," Hunt said on Wednesday. "It's exciting. I still want to bring a championship here and contribute, that was my goal for the last four years. — AFP

### Leicester win at Norwich

**LONDON:** Leicester moved to within a point of Championship leaders Preston with a 2-0 win at Norwich as Neil Warnock bowed out as Huddersfield boss in a 2-2 draw against Stoke on Wednesday. The Foxes have won six of their first seven games back in the second tier as they look to bounce straight back to the Premier League. Kelechi Iheanacho fired Leicester in front from the penalty spot before Kasey McAteer added his fifth goal of the season in the closing stages to seal the three points. Jack Rudoni salvaged a point for Huddersfield as the 74-year-old Warnock brought the curtain down on his second spell in charge of the club. Daniel Johnson and Ben Wilmot had turned the game around for Stoke after Matty Pearson gave the home side a first-half lead. Warnock departs with Huddersfield 16th, five points above the relegation zone, after inspiring a remarkable revival to survive last season. — AFP

### Verstappen to bounce back

**SUZUKA:** Runaway Formula One leader Max Verstappen said Thursday he felt "no emotion" at seeing his record winning streak end as he looks to bounce back at this week's Japanese Grand Prix. Verstappen failed to extend his run of 10 straight wins at last weekend's Singapore Grand Prix, finishing fifth behind winner Carlos Sainz of Ferrari. The flying Dutchman, who has won 12 of 15 races this season, is still a nailed-on certainty to win his third straight championship even though he can't seal the deal this week in Suzuka. Verstappen was in no mood to dwell on last weekend's rare failure, telling reporters he was ready to "move on and try again". "No emotion, we stopped winning for one race - we won 10 in a row before that," he said. "Of course, I would have liked to have won there as well but we also know that there is always going to be a day where you have that weekend where you are not winning or things go wrong." Verstappen holds a whopping 151-point lead over Red Bull teammate and nearest championship challenger Sergio Perez with seven races to go. — AFP

### Petterson eyes Solheim glory

**CASARES:** Suzann Petterson, one of the Solheim Cup's greatest players, believes her European team are more than capable of beating the United States this week and giving her victory as captain. Europe are aiming for an unprecedented third straight win and go into the event in Spain as marginal favorites. "We are all very ready to go," said Norwegian Petterson who retired from playing after holing the winning putt in 2019 at Gleneagles. "We have the strongest team that I've ever been part of, and that's based on great performances over the last few years. "But with good results, there's also expectations. But these girls are up for it and we can't wait." Europe have three rookies - Linn Grant, Maja Stark and Gemma Dryburgh - while the USA have five, albeit world number two Lilia Vu is a double major winner this year and Allisen Corpus is the reigning US Open champion. The other three newcomers are Cheyenne Knight, Andrea Lee and the charismatic Rose Zhang. — AFP

## Federer eyes future captaincy for Europe at Laver Cup

**VANCOUVER:** Retired tennis legend Roger Federer, who helped Europe win three Laver Cups, hinted he might one day want to take on the captaincy at the team event. The 42-year-old Swiss star will be the subject of a tribute Friday at Rogers Arena to celebrate the first anniversary of his final match in doubles alongside Rafael Nadal at the 2022 Laver Cup in London. The World Team, with John McEnroe as captain, will try to defend the trophy it first captured last year when the sixth Laver Cup begins Friday at Rogers Arena.

"There's something in me that's Team Europe," Federer said. "I'm happy if World wins, don't get me wrong, but somehow, I can feel it deep inside - I want Europe to win. "I like being in the tennis sphere. Maybe one day, I'll be the captain of the team. There's no plans as of now, but I think that could be quite nice." Bjorn Borg serves as Team Europe captain as a new generation of talent replaces Federer, Nadal and Serbia's Novak Djokovic.

## Top seed Jabeur crashes out of WTA Guadalajara Open

**GUADALAJARA:** Top seed Ons Jabeur was sent crashing out of the WTA 1000 Guadalajara Open on Wednesday, losing a grueling three-hour battle to Italy's Martina Trevisan. Tunisian star Jabeur, the losing finalist at Wimbledon for the past two years, was downed 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-3 by the unseeded Trevisan, currently ranked 54th in the world. Jabeur looked to have taken a grip on the match after taking the first set on a tie-break and then surging into a 30-0 lead as she served for the match at 5-4 in the second set.

But the world number seven was left stunned after Trevisan battled back to break twice in quick succession to take the set and level the match. The 29-year-old Italian, who is chasing only the second WTA title of her career this week in Mexico, then broke

for a 5-3 lead in the decider before holding to clinch victory.

Trevisan will face unseeded American Caroline Dolehide in the quarter-finals. Dolehide advanced with a 6-1, 6-2 thrashing of Russian eighth seed Ekaterina Alexandrova. In other matches on Wednesday, Sofia Kenin's impressive return to form continued as the unseeded American upset sixth seed Jelena Ostapenko to reach the last eight. Former Australian Open champion Kenin, who last reached the quarter-finals of a WTA 1000 event in 2019, booked her place in the last eight with a 6-4, 7-5 win in her 44min.

The Moscow-born Kenin, whose ranking plunged to 426th last year, will face Canada's 2021 US Open finalist Leylah Fernandez in the last eight. Fernandez defeated unseeded American



**HANGZHOU:** People gather in front of Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium ahead of the Hangzhou 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province on September 21, 2023. — AFP

## At-a-glance guide to the Hangzhou Asian Games

**HANGZHOU:** The 19th Asian Games take place in the Chinese city of Hangzhou from Saturday after a delay of a year caused by China's strict zero-COVID rules. Here is everything you need to know about the multisports extravaganza - bigger than the Olympic Games in terms of number of participants:

### Location

Hangzhou, a modern city of about 12 million people, lies 160 kilometers southwest of Shanghai, in Zhejiang province. It sits on the Qiantang River and is the southern terminus of the Grand Canal, the longest canal in the world, which runs 1,800 kilometers from Beijing and is regarded as the second ancient wonder of China after the Great Wall. Hangzhou is one of China's ancient capitals, known in the past as both Hangchow and Hangchow before settling for the current name in the year 589.

### Sports

40 sports, including 31 of the 32 Olympic sports that will be staged at the Paris 2024 Games with surfing the one missing from Hangzhou. The nine non-Olympic sports in Hangzhou includes eSports, which will be an Asian Games medal event for the first time after being a demonstration sport

### Participation

About 12,000 athletes from 45 countries and territories across Asia and the Middle East will be in action, making it the largest Asian Games ever. By comparison, there were 11,420 athletes at the Olympic Games in Tokyo two years ago.

### Competition venues

54 with 14 newly constructed. The Hangzhou Olympic Sports complex is the centrepiece with venues for athletics, basketball, football, squash, swimming and tennis. The opening and closing ceremonies will be hosted at the Olympic Sports Centre Stadium, also known as "the Big Lotus". The majority of events will take place in Hangzhou city but some will be held elsewhere. The cities of Shaoxing and Ningbo will also host events, as will Wenzhou, a port city 300km to the south which will stage dragon boat racing and football.

### History

The first Asiad was held in New Delhi in 1951 and featured athletics, aquatics, basketball, cycling, football and weightlifting. China has hosted twice previously: Beijing in 1990 and Guangzhou in 2010. The 2018 Games took place in Jakarta and the 2026 edition will be hosted by Aichi and Nagoya in Japan. — AFP

players at 26.

Team Europe's highest-ranked players were Denmark's fourth-rated Holger Rune and Greece's fifth-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas but both withdrew from Borg's side due to injuries. That leaves sixth-ranked Andrey Rublev and Norway's ninth-ranked Casper Ruud as the veterans of a Europe squad that also includes Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, French youngster Arthur Fils, veteran Gael Monfils and Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

### 'Not huge underdogs'

"It feels like the first time when we're not the huge underdog going in," US vice-captain Patrick McEnroe said. "It adds a little different wrinkle this time that both teams go in thinking OK it's not completely one-sided when you look at the rankings." The latest match-up in Vancouver features three singles matches and a doubles match on Friday and Saturday with wins on day one worth one point and triumphs on day two worth two points. Victories on Sunday are worth three points with a doubles match followed by as many singles matches as needed to decide a champion. The first team to 13 total points takes the trophy. — AFP



**ZAPOPAN:** Italy's Martina Trevisan plays a backhand return against Tunisia's Ons Jabeur during the WTA Guadalajara Open women's singles round of 16 tennis match in Zapopan. — AFP

Emma Navarro 6-2, 6-3 in her last 16 clash. Third seed Caroline Garcia of France sailed into the quarter-finals with a 7-5, 6-4 victory over Hailey Baptiste of the United States. Garcia will face 10th seed Victoria Azarenka in the last eight. Azarenka cruised into

the quarter-finals with a 6-2, 6-1 defeat of seventh seed Veronika Kudermetova. Second seed Maria Sakkari of Greece, meanwhile, romped into a quarter-final meeting with unseeded Colombian Emiliana Arango after a 6-2, 6-2 dismissal of Italy's Camila Giorgi. — AFP

## Ronaldo's Man Utd return 'turned out wrong': Solskjaer

**LONDON:** Former Manchester United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer has admitted the club's re-signing of Cristiano Ronaldo "turned out wrong". Solskjaer was in charge when United brought the five-time Ballon d'Or winner back to Old Trafford in a much-hyped move in August 2021. At the time the transfer was viewed as a coup that could potentially fuel a Premier League title challenge for the Red Devils, who had finished second the previous season. But things soon unraveled as the team struggled and Solskjaer was sacked in November that year. Ronaldo left the club in acrimonious fashion 12 months later and currently plays his football in the Saudi Pro League with Al Nassr.

"It was about taking the next step to challenge for the title. And, unfortunately, it just didn't work out," Solskjaer told the Athletic. "It was a de-

cision that was very difficult to turn down and I felt we had to take it, but it turned out wrong. "It felt so right when he signed and the fans felt that at that Newcastle game (when he scored twice), when Old Trafford was rocking. He was still one of the best goalscorers in the world, he was looking strong." But the Norwegian added: "When you have a group you need everyone to pull in the same direction. When things didn't go right, you could see certain players and egos came out."

Solskjaer was also the manager when the club signed England defender Harry Maguire in 2019. The Norwegian feels the recent criticism, and even ridiculing of Maguire, has been unfair. He said: "Harry Maguire - it's a disgrace that he's getting so much abuse. I feel sorry for him, but he's a strong lad and I hope it turns for him. "He raised our defense big time when he arrived and lifted the mood around the place." United, with Dutchman Erik ten Hag now at the helm, have not won the Premier League since 2013 and are currently 13th in the table after three defeats in their first five matches. — AFP

## India and Pakistan reach Asian Games cricket semi-finals

**HANGZHOU:** India and Pakistan's women's cricket teams both reached the last four of the Asian Games on Thursday despite their matches being washed out in Hangzhou. India batted first in the Twenty20 encounter against Malaysia and piled up 173-2 in their rain-interrupted 15 overs. Malaysia faced just two balls and were 1-0 in reply when the rain returned and the match was abandoned with no result. India progressed to the semi-final because of their higher world ranking. The incessant showers meant Pakistan went through for the same reason

against Indonesia in the later game without a ball being bowled as the covers remained on at the Zhejiang University of Technology Pingfeng Cricket Field.

India will face the winner of Friday's quarter-final between Bangladesh and Hong Kong for a place in the final. Pakistan will play either Sri Lanka or Thailand in the last four. Jemimah Jessica Rodrigues scored an unbeaten 47 off 29 balls for India and star batter Shafali Verma smashed 67 off just 39 with five sixes and four fours as Malaysia were given the run-around in the field before the wash-out. "The partnerships we had with everyone ticked off at the right time," said Rodrigues. "It gives us a lot of confidence. And we take it from here into the semi-finals. So it's a big, big plus point for us." — AFP

Sports

# Bayern beat United; Real Madrid, Arsenal win in Champions League

## Napoli squeeze past Braga after late own goal drama

PARIS: Harry Kane was among the scorers as Bayern Munich beat Manchester United 4-3 in their heavyweight Champions League clash on Wednesday, while Jude Bellingham snatched a dramatic late winner for Real Madrid and Arsenal began their campaign with a big victory. The meeting between German champions Bayern and a struggling United side, a repeat of the 1999 final, was the biggest game of the opening round of matches in this season's competition and it did not disappoint.

Leroy Sane gave Bayern the lead at the Allianz Arena with a shot that squirmed through the grasp of United goalkeeper Andre Onana, and Jamal Musiala set up Serge Gnabry to make it 2-0 just after the half-hour mark. Rasmus Hojlund pulled one back early in the second half with his first United goal, but shortly after Christian Eriksen was penalized for a handball in the box and Kane blasted in the resulting penalty.

Sane hit the post for the hosts before a crazy finish saw Casemiro reduce the deficit again, substitute Mathys Tel score Bayern's fourth, and Casemiro nod in another at the death to make it 4-3. "A crazy finish," Kane told British broadcaster TNT Sports after netting his fifth goal in six games for his new club. "We lost a bit of concentration there in the last five minutes. Thankfully we were able to hold onto the lead. "Overall it's a really good start to the campaign against a tough side."

Erik ten Hag's United team have now suffered three consecutive defeats in all competitions and lost four of their last five matches. "After my mistake we lost control of the game. It's a difficult situation for us, for me," said Onana in reference to Bayern's first goal. Thomas Tuchel's side are already in control of Group A, in which the other game saw Galatasaray come from two goals down to draw 2-2 with FC Copenhagen. Goals from Mohamed Elyounoussi and Diogo Goncalves had the visitors in control in Istanbul but they then had Elias Jelert sent off and Galatasaray struck twice in the last four minutes of regulation time through Sacha Boey and Tete to earn a point.

### Bellingham strikes again

In Madrid, Bellingham popped up from close range to score a 94th-minute winner as record 14-time European champions Real beat tournament debutants Union Berlin 1-0 in Group C. The England international has started his Madrid career in stunning goalscoring form with six goals in six games for the club across all competitions.

"He has great qualities, it seems he's got luck too, because the goal is a rebound, but he was there, he arrives from deep, and he's more switched on than others, he's got that quality and he's taking advantage of it," said Real coach Carlo Ancelotti. Madrid's next game is away to Napoli, who won 2-1 against Braga in Portugal with Sikou Niakate's late own goal giving the Italian team victory. Giovanni Di Lorenzo had put Napoli ahead but Bruma looked to have earned Braga a draw when he struck with six minutes left.

### Arsenal cruise

Arsenal cruised to a 4-0 win over PSV Eindhoven in their first Champions League game since the 2016/17 season. Bukayo Saka, Leandro Trossard and Gabriel Jesus all scored first-half goals in the rain in London and Martin Odegaard wrapped up the win after the break.

"It was a beautiful night after such a long time. It was great to see the atmosphere, the Champions League music. It was emotional before the game," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. Their Group B rivals Sevilla and Lens drew 1-1 in Spain,



MUNICH: Manchester United's Portuguese midfielder #08 Bruno Fernandes (left) and Bayern Munich's South Korean defender #03 Kim Min-jae vie for the ball during the UEFA Champions League Group A football match FC Bayern Munich v Manchester United in Munich on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

with Angelo Fulgini's free-kick earning the French side a draw after Lucas Ocampos headed the hosts in front. Last season's beaten finalists Inter Milan needed an 87th-minute Lautaro Martinez equaliser as they came from behind to draw 1-1 at Real Sociedad in Group D.

Brais Mendez had given the home team an early lead in San Sebastian. In the same group Red Bull

Salzburg missed one penalty but scored another in a 2-0 win away to Benfica in Lisbon. Karim Konate blazed the Austrian team's first spot-kick over the bar in the third minute but home defender Antonio Silva was sent off on 13 minutes for a handball on the line and Salzburg's second penalty was converted by Roko Simic. Oscar Gloukh scored their second goal just after the break. — AFP

## Despite Messi early exit, Miami put four past Toronto

FORT LAUDERDALE: Inter Miami shrugged off an injury concern to Lionel Messi to boost their Major League Soccer playoff hopes with a 4-0 thrashing of Toronto FC 4-0 on Wednesday. Messi returned to the starting line-up after skipping Saturday's 5-2 defeat at Atlanta due to muscle fatigue but left the field in the 38th minute looking uncomfortable. His former Barcelona team-mate, Spaniard Jordi Alba who had also sat out the trip to Atlanta, also limped off three minutes earlier in the game.

Miami coach Gerardo Martino said the pair are now ruled out for Sunday's Florida derby with Orlando City and was uncertain about their involvement in next week's US Open Cup final. "We have to go day by day, see the doctor's report, what they tell us and we will decide. Obviously, there is no 'chance' that they will be there on Sunday," he said. "I don't think it's anything new or bigger than what they had been having. It's just fatigue, I don't think there is a muscular injury," he said, defending the decision to play them.

"Everything was in place for the

players to play ... There is no possibility (that they were pressured to play). If we made them play it was because they were fit to play." "After talking to them, I don't have the same pessimism I had when I had to take them out," he said. Despite the blow of losing their star and one of their most influential players, Miami swept aside the Eastern Conference's bottom club with ease. Messi's replacement Robert Taylor scoring twice after coming on. Facundo Farias opened the scoring on the stroke of half-time with a blistering volley after Toronto keeper Tomas Romero had meekly palmed out a Noah Allen cross.

### Impactful performance

Taylor then made it 2-0 in the 54th minute with an outstanding individual strike, dribbling across the box from the left before unleashing a sharply angled drive back into the bottom corner. Taylor then turned provider, releasing another substitute Benjamin Cremaschi who fired through the legs of Romero to make it 3-0.

Finland international Taylor completed his impactful performance with the fourth, bringing down a floated pass



FLORIDA: Toronto's US goalkeeper #30 Tomas Romero defends as Inter Miami's Argentine forward #10 Lionel Messi drives to the goal during the Major League Soccer (MLS) football match between Inter Miami CF and Toronto FC on Sept 20, 2023. — AFP

over the top from Farias and blasting home from close range. Miami move up to 13th in the Eastern Conference and are now just five points off Wayne Rooney's DC United who occupy ninth spot, the final playoff position. Miami have two games in hand. DC United were held to a 1-1 draw at home to Atlanta while other results were also favorable for Miami.

Charlotte, who Miami have to play twice, are now just two points ahead of

the Florida side after they let a two-goal lead slip in a 2-2 draw at home to Philadelphia, conceding a stoppage time penalty which was converted by Daniel Gazdag. The draw guaranteed Philadelphia a place in the playoffs. The Columbus Crew also secured their place in the playoffs beating the Chicago Fire 3-0 with Colombian Cucho Hernandez scoring all three inside 23 minutes—the second fastest hat-trick from the start in MLS history. — AFP

## King Charles III given PSG jersey on visit to France

SAINT-DENIS: King Charles III was presented with a number three Paris Saint-Germain jersey by the president of the Qatari-owned football club during his visit to France on Thursday. Charles and Queen Camilla met Nasser Al-Khelaifi during a walkabout in Saint-Denis, the working-class town to the north of Paris, where France's national stadium is located. Khelaifi, whose club has won the Ligue 1 title nine times in the last 11 seasons, gave Charles a PSG jersey

with "Charles" and the number three on the back. The king also met PSG's French international defender Presnel Kimpembe and a member of the club's women's team, Marie-Antoinette Katot, who also plays for the national team.

The royal couple also briefly chatted with former Ivorian footballer Didier Drogba, who knows Britain well from his highly successful years playing for Chelsea. Earlier the royal couple met schoolchildren from Saint-Denis and Camilla and French President Emmanuel Macron's wife Brigitte had a brief table tennis rally. "I thought it was great that they spent a little time with the children and discussed with the coaches. It was a lovely moment for all of us," 19-year-old Prithika Pavade, who won the European under-21 table tennis title in 2020 said. — AFP



SAINT-DENIS: Paris Saint Germain's Qatari president Nasser Al-Khelaifi offers Britain's King Charles III a Paris Saint Germain's jersey during a visit in Saint-Denis. — AFP

## Marseille coach Marcelino departs with club in crisis

MARSEILLE: Marseille have been plunged into crisis just six weeks into the new season as coach Marcelino Garcia Toral left the French giants on Wednesday while the club's president was reportedly considering walking away too after an angry encounter with supporters. The club said in a statement that the confrontation on Monday "prevents Marcelino and his coaching staff from being able to do their job in good conditions". "As a consequence of this deplorable situation, Marcelino and his staff will not pursue their work at Olympique de Marseille," the statement added.

The former Sevilla, Villarreal, Valencia and Athletic Bilbao coach, aged 58, was only appointed in June to succeed Igor Tudor, who had led the 1993 Champions League winners to a third-place finish in Ligue 1 last season. Marseille are unbeaten five games into the new domestic season but supporters were furious with their insipid performance in drawing 0-0 with Toulouse at the weekend. They went out of the Champions League in the third qualifying round, losing on penalties to Panathinaikos and dropping into the Europa League instead.

Marcelino's departure comes after a meeting on Monday at the club's training centre between management and supporters groups. "Supporters' representatives expressed their wish to see the club's current management team resign," Marseille said in an earlier statement, claiming that the fan groups threatened "war" if that did not happen. "The management of OM cannot accept personal threats", the club said, or "a relationship based on intimidation".

Marcelino referred to those alleged threats in a statement of his own published on Wednesday evening. "The intimidation and attacks against the president and directors, when the season is only five games old, suggest the future is uncertain," he said. Club president Pablo Longoria and three of his closest colleagues all decided late on Tuesday "to step back" from their roles and would "consider their positions", a source with knowledge of the situation told AFP. Longoria has a close relationship with his fellow Spaniard Marcelino, both of whom come from the northern region of Asturias. — 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, **Ahamd Khan Nausheen Shakil**, holder of Passport No. S0582766 (full name as per present passport) do hereby, change my name to Nausheen Shakeel (as given name) Khan (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name Nausheen Shakeel Khan (full name as changed now) and I also undertake

to carry out this name change in all my documents. (#4232) 22/9/2023

I, **Yannabhathula Abhinash** holder of Indian Passport No P5748086 having permanent address Telangana, India - 500068 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Abhinash (given name) and Yan-

nabhathula (surname) (#4231) 21/9/2023

I, **Geja** (current name in passport) Gurmej Singh holder of Indian Passport No. P7110431 having permanent address Punjab State, India 144620 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as (given name) Gurmej and Singh (surname) (#4230) 20/9/2023

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19th Asian Games  
Hangzhou 2022



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2023

# Biggest-ever Asian Games ready for liftoff in China

12,000 competitors to participate - more than Olympics



HANGZHOU: (Left to right) The official mascots of the 2022 Asian Games Chenchen, Congcong and Lianlian are pictured in Hangzhou, China's eastern Zhejiang province on September 21, 2023. — AFP

HANGZHOU: The biggest Asian Games in history, boasting about 12,000 competitors - more than the Olympics - will open on Saturday in the Chinese city of Hangzhou after a year's delay because of COVID. Athletes including world and Olympic champions will fight for medals in 40 sports from athletics, swimming and football to eSports and bridge. Nine sports, among them boxing, break dancing and tennis, will serve as qualifiers for next year's Paris Olympics. The Games were supposed to take place last September but were postponed because of China's strict zero-COVID rules, before China's ruling Communist Party abruptly abandoned the policy.

The 19th edition of the Games, which were first held in New Delhi in 1951, throws together competitors from 45 countries and territories across Asia and the Middle East. For China, which hosted the 2022 Winter Olympics in a COVID-secure "bubble" in Beijing, it is a chance to show off its organizational, sporting and technological prowess after the pandemic years cut the country off from the sporting

world. "We have overcome a lot of challenges but we are now fully conditioned to hold a successful Games," Chen Weiqiang, chief spokesperson for the Games, said on Wednesday.

#### Sport meets politics

The Games will be staged at 54 venues - 14 newly constructed - mostly in Hangzhou but also extending to cities as far afield as Wenzhou, 300 kilometers (180 miles) south. The centerpiece is the "Big Lotus" Olympic stadium with a capacity of up to 80,000 where athletics and the opening and closing ceremonies will be staged. President Xi Jinping will attend the opening ceremony and meet Syrian counterpart Bashar Al-Assad there, along with other visiting leaders, Chinese state media says. Assad is making his first visit to ally China since the war erupted in Syria in 2011.

Russian President Vladimir Putin likewise attended the opening ceremony of the Beijing Winter Olympics, along with Xi, and weeks later launched the invasion of Ukraine. Hangzhou, a city of 12 mil-

lion people an hour's bullet train from Shanghai, is famed in China for its ancient temples, gardens and its beloved West Lake. It is also the unofficial home of China's tech industry, notably the birth place of Jack Ma's Alibaba. The Games will showcase some of the latest tech to come out of the city, including driverless buses, robot dogs and facial recognition.

#### China medal dash

Hosts China have topped the medals table at every Asian Games since 1982 and are expected to do so again by the time the curtain comes down on October 8. They should reign in swimming, with Qin Haiyang fresh from his heroics at the world championships, where he announced himself as the new undisputed breaststroke king. The 24-year-old swept all three men's events and set a new world record in the 200m. In athletics, another of the most closely watched sports, India's Olympic and world champion Neeraj Chopra will defend his Asian Games javelin crown.

His nearest competitor should be world silver

medalist Arshad Nadeem from arch-rivals Pakistan and the countries are also on a collision course in cricket and hockey. ESports, in what is seen as a step towards Olympic inclusion one day, will make its full Asian Games debut having been a demonstration sport five years ago. Lee Sang-hyeok, better known as "Faker", has god-like status in League of Legends and will lead the South Korean charge at the futuristic-looking China Hangzhou Esports Centre.

There is an added incentive which has caused controversy in South Korea - winning gold will exempt them from having to do military service. A feature of the Asian Games is that it includes sports that are a little more quirky than the Olympics. Xiangqi - also known as "Chinese chess" - the card game bridge and the ancient wrestling discipline of kurash are all on the menu. Although the Games officially open on Saturday, the sporting action began on Tuesday, when North Korea returned to major international competition for the first time since the pandemic with a 2-0 win over Taiwan in men's football. — AFP

## Kuwait flag hoisted in China Sport City

HANGZHOU: Kuwaiti sport officials hoisted their country's flag in the sport city in the Chinese city of Hangzhou, which would be hosting the 19th Asian Games between September 23 and October 8. Hoisting the flag marks the participation of the Gulf country in the Asian games, Sheikh Jaber Thamer Al-Sabah, member of the Kuwait National Olympic Committee Board, said in a statement. He said the Kuwaiti players would do their utmost to represent their country in the best way possible.

The flag-hoisting ceremony was also attended by NOC member Fatma Hayat and Assistant Secretary General Ali Al-Marri. Hayat said the ceremony was attended by 40 athletes, part of a bigger group that has been training in preparation for the competitions. She said Abdulrahman Al-Fadhil, from the rowing team, qualified for the semi-finals after achieving third place in the qualifying competitions.

Mohammad Al-Sabti and Yusuf Abdulhadi, rowing team players, said they aspire to achieve the best results amidst fierce competitions with Asia's top rowing athletes. Al-Sabti said the organization of the events was very good and transportation was smooth. — KUNA



Kuwait flag hoisted in Sport City in China's Hangzhou. — KUNA photos



## From Chopra to Faker: Competitors to watch at Asian Games

HANGZHOU: Some of the finest competitors on the planet will be in action at the Asian Games from Saturday until October 8. AFP Sports picks out eight athletes to watch in Hangzhou.

#### Mutaz Essa Barshim (high jump, QAT)

High jumper Barshim is the reigning Olympic champion - he famously shared gold with Italy's Gianmarco Tamberi at the Tokyo Games - and is chasing a third Asian Games gold. The Doha-born 32-year-old has also won every medal at the World Championships, three of them gold. Also holds the Asian high-jump record.

#### Neeraj Chopra (javelin, IND)

The 25-year-old made history at the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 when his victory in javelin made him the first Indian in history to win an athletics gold. He followed that up with gold at the recent World Championships in Budapest and so became the undisputed master of men's javelin. Also the reigning Asian Games champion.

#### Faker (eSports, KOR)

Lee "Faker" Sang-hyeok is a legendary figure in eSports and widely acknowledged to be the best League of Legends player of all time. Added to the incentive to win Games gold for him and his South Korean teammates is the fact that doing so will also exempt them from having to do military service back home.

#### Rikako Ikee (swimming, JPN)

Ikee became the first swimmer to win six golds at a

single Asian Games at Jakarta 2018, but months later revealed that she had leukaemia. Now 23, she overcame her illness to race for Japan's relay team at her home Tokyo Olympics in 2021 and has also competed at world championships since her return.

#### Qin Haiyang (swimming, CHN)

Qin announced himself as the new undisputed breaststroke king at the recent world championships, sweeping all three distances - 50m, 100m and 200m - and setting a new world record in the 200m. The 24-year-old was competing in his first international event but he blew the competition away, setting new Asian records in each of his three races.

#### Zheng Qinwen (tennis, CHN)

Fresh from reaching the quarter-finals of the US Open, the 20-year-old Zheng is now strongly fancied for Asian Games gold to add to her fast-growing global reputation. At 22nd in the world, Zheng is the high-

est-ranked women's tennis player in Hangzhou and won her maiden WTA Tour title this year. Named WTA Newcomer of the Year in 2022.

#### Yin Ruoning (golf, CHN)

The 20-year-old Yin earlier this month became only the second Chinese golfer in history, after Feng Shan-shan, to reach number one in the world. Yin will team up with trailblazer Feng in Hangzhou because the now-retired Feng, who topped the rankings from November 2017 to April 2018, is head coach of the Chinese team.

#### An Se-young (badminton, KOR)

The 21-year-old has had a startling year, winning nine titles and rising to world number one for the first time. In August she became world champion. The competition at the Asian Games will be fierce, however, with deposed former world number one Akane Yamaguchi of Japan and a clutch of Chinese players all challenging. — AFP