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## Kuwait halts celebrations in solidarity with Palestinians

Government expresses deep concern over dangerous escalation



GAZA: Photo shows the destruction in a ravaged neighborhood in the Gaza Strip Jabalia refugee camp, following overnight airstrikes amid continuing battles between Zionists and the Hamas movement. — AFP

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait government announced on Thursday that it would halt all celebrations and concerts in solidarity with the brotherly Palestinians and the blessed martyrs. The government Communication Center said on its X website that the decision came to affirm Kuwait's permanent stand in support of the Palestinian cause. It is intended to demonstrate solidarity with the brotherly Palestinians who are subject to deadly Zionist aggression.

Kuwait expressed its deep concern over the dangerous developments and continuous violations against Palestine, reasserting its firm stance with the Palestinian people and their right to an independent sovereign state. Kuwait's Minister Plenipotentiary and deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, Faisal Al-Enezi, made these remarks on Wednesday to the fourth UN General Assembly committee.

Al-Enezi called on the international community, namely the Security Council, to put an end to this cycle of aggression and to provide Palestinians with ample protection. He also urged them to take action against provocative Zionist occupation practices, especially in relation to continuous infringements upon the sanctity of the Al-Aqsa compound and the occupation's heinous expansion policies.

On the Moroccan initiative regarding autonomic rule in the Sahara, Al-Enezi renewed Kuwait's support for this solution, widely recognized as the route to a lasting political solution, and reaffirmed Kuwait's respect for Morocco's territorial unity. Al-Enezi also underlined the significance of the resumption of the UN-led roundtable discussions on the matter, calling it a viable solution to the territorial dispute.

The Kuwaiti official took the opportunity to take note of the Iranian occupation of UAE islands despite the fact that it was not on the agenda, affirming the UAE's sovereignty over the three islands and its regional waters. Al-Enezi called on Iran to respond to Emirati efforts to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or by taking matters up with the International Court of Justice. — KUNA

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### 27 ministry staff to retire

**KUWAIT:** Finance Minister Fahad Al-Jarallah issued a ministerial decision on Thursday to refer to the retirement of 27 employees at Kuwait Investment Authority who have met the criteria to retire in accordance with government regulations. The decision is in line with state efforts to create job opportunities for young national manpower and give them the chance to contribute to improving work at state departments, the ministry said in a statement, adding that the minister instructed officials to put hiring ads for the vacant posts as soon as possible.

#### Scholz meets Qatar Amir

**BERLIN:** Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Thursday Germany would use "all contacts" it has in the region to prevent a worsening of the conflict between Zionists and Hamas militants. In parliament, Scholz addressed "critics of such contacts", saying it would be "irresponsible in this dramatic situation not to use all contacts who could help". Scholz's comments came ahead of talks later in Berlin with Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, seen as a potential broker. — AFP

### Traffic department to review licenses

**KUWAIT:** The Traffic Department in the six governorates received directives to review all driving licenses of expatriates after the department completed the cancellation of driving licenses, sources said. The department has revoked the licenses of hundreds of expats who forfeited the conditions for obtaining them and those who did surrender the licenses they possessed to the administration. The sources said they are still driving their vehicles under the cancelled licenses which is in vio-

lation of the traffic laws.

The department clarified that some licenses issued to academics were conditional and was issued to them after two years of coming to the country after checking their files. Such exceptions will be reviewed now, the department clarified. The instructions received by the six traffic departments will make sure the withdrawal of driving licenses which are being used in contravention of the rules and conditions taking into account the segments that were excluded from the salary and university qualification conditions.

The instructions stipulated that the audit will be more, especially for driving licenses signed by the Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior

for Traffic Affairs. In the event of auditing, new documents will also be required, such as a work permit, in which the salary, qualification and job capacity must be mentioned. The instructions that were issued have taken effect and the traffic department has refused to renew a number of these licenses. The new decision has been taken after reports and information confirmed that there are thousands of licenses have been issued with an undue exception.

In the same context, the traffic department continues to audit driving licenses, and the next step is to review the files of the perpetrators of traffic violations so that the violator is audited and if it turns out that the driving license was issued to them, the exception will also be withdrawn.

### Iran calls on Arab, Islamic nations to confront Zionists

**TEHRAN:** Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has called on Islamic and Arab countries to cooperate in confronting Zionists as it wages a deadly war triggered by a surprise attack by Palestinian militant group Hamas. Hamas's weekend onslaught saw hundreds of fighters cross into the border in vehicles, by air and by sea, killing 1,200 people and seizing 150 hostages under the cover of a deluge of rockets.

About another 1,200 people have been killed in thousands of airstrikes on Gaza, while a "complete siege" has been imposed on the impoverished Palestinian enclave of over 2.4 million people. "Today, all the Islamic and Arab countries and all the free people of the world must reach a serious convergence and cooperation in the path of stopping the crimes of the Zionist regime against the oppressed



GAZA: Smoke plumes billow during Zionist air strikes in Gaza City on October 12, 2023 as raging battles between Zionists and the Hamas movement continue for the sixth consecutive day. — AFP



## Local

# Indian Embassy hosts event to spotlight India tourism sector

## Six-month multiple entry visa for Kuwaitis to be issued in one day

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: Embassy of India, Kuwait hosted a business-to-business (B2B) event on Wednesday titled 'Exploring Incredible India', spotlighting the complete tourism experience that India can offer to Kuwaiti visitors. The event held at the Millennium Hotel & Convention Centre consisted of a symposium on tourism involving presentations by leading destination management companies and renowned hoteliers from India in addition to representatives of over 150 travel agencies from Kuwait.

"India offers a complete tourism experience", said Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika in his opening remarks. He highlighted six specific points—abundant natural beauty and varied tourist destinations in India; world-class tourism infrastructure; Indian cultural ethos and cuisine; ease of travel through digital applications; and economically cheap compared to similar facilities in other countries. The Ambassador also highlighted the ease of obtaining a six-month multiple entry tourist visa which is being issued by the Indian Embassy in Kuwait within one day.

"India is home to as many as 42 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and many more are yet to be included," the ambassador added. He said India is an important and growing tourist destination in the 'map



Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika delivers his opening remarks.

of world tourism'. The international tourist arrivals in India during 2018 and 2019 were around 18 million. Since last year, the International tourist arrivals are picking up momentum. Augmenting tourism infrastructure, easing of visa regime, assurance of quality standards in services of tourism service providers, promotion of sustainable tourism etc have been a strong focus of India government, he stated.

"Our endeavor through this event, and through future activities and social media, is to systematically work towards encouraging awareness about India's tourism opportunities to our Kuwaiti friends and



Participants during the B2B event titled 'Exploring Incredible India'.

foster connections between all stakeholders," Dr Swaika pointed out. Tourist facilitation and information counters are available at nine international airports in India catering to non-English speaking tourists where the tourists can speak directly with the foreign language agents and get guidance, including in Arabic, he added.

The representatives of Indian travel and hotel industry gave a vivid description about tourism options, luxury destinations, different theme-based circuits such as summer, winter, adventure, spa and wellness, nature, culture and shopping,

and end-to-end travel solutions and packages. Eminent travel bloggers and travelers from Kuwait shared their India experiences during the occasion. The event also included a lively and information-rich interaction through panel discussions, presentations, and videos along with dedicated sessions for B2B networking.

The event was also live-streamed on Embassy social media platforms. An e-brochure on different facets of Indian tourism was unveiled by the Ambassador which is available on the Embassy's website and social media platforms.

### News in Brief

#### KUNA concludes course

KUWAIT: The KUNA Center for Development of Media Skills on Thursday concluded a training course themed "Preparing the Correspondent," a program that involved KUNA personnel, the Public Authority for Youth, and the Qatari News Agency. The program, presented by the editorial secretary at the vision of economic affairs, Mahmoud Boushehri, addressed the basic tasks of the press correspondent, work mechanisms between the correspondent and the headquarters, challenges in desk and field work, general journalistic guidelines, news sources, and factors. The program blended theoretical and practical lessons. — KUNA

#### Weather 'will be tolerable'

KUWAIT: The weather in Kuwait will be tolerably hot over the weekend amid relative humidity prevailing across coastal regions, with a moderate temperature at night, the meteorology department reported on Thursday. The department director, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, said in a statement that the low depression would continue to taper off, coupled with hot air blows and unsteady southeasterly winds. The heat today will peak at 39–42 degrees, as well as on Saturday, but at night it will drop to 28–22 degrees. — KUNA

## 'Winter Wonderland Kuwait' opens Sunday

Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The CEO of the Tourism Enterprises Company (TEC), Fadel Al-Dosari, announced the opening of the "Winter Wonderland Kuwait" next Sunday in its new remarkable addition, revealing that tickets will be available through TEC's application. During his remarks at a press conference that was held on Thursday, Dosari emphasized the outstanding success achieved during the project's debut season. He revealed that the attraction had become nothing short of a sensation, drawing in an astonishing 600,000 visitors within a mere four-month span.

"This extraordinary accomplishment quickly earned Winter Wonderland Kuwait a reputation as a must-visit destination, demonstrating the immense appeal of this winter wonderland to the people of Kuwait and beyond. The announcement left no doubt that the project had set a new standard for seasonal attractions, setting the stage for an exciting future in Kuwait's tourism industry," he added.

He affirmed Winter Wonderland's return in a new season and with a new look to present the project after all its facilities have been developed by the hands of national cadres, knowing that the project will continue for the next three years and with an operational capacity exceeding 3 million visitors annually. Dosari pointed out that the capacity has increased to 15,000 visitors per day, in addition



Fadel Al-Dosari CEO of TEC

to increasing the operational area from 75,000 square meters to 130,000 square meters, which is an increase of 70 percent.

He said that there will be cooperation with the Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center through special gates linking the two facilities, which will allow entertainment and cultural diversity for visitors, in addition to the use of smart entry gates and a fast track for games and activities, which will be increased to 80 activities. "Throughout the season, there will be daily entertainment and shows, involving over 200 commercial opportunities. The facility will be overseen by national professionals, with more than 200 of them being trained and empowered to contribute to the project," he noted.

He stressed that the Tourism Enterprises Company, in its new era, aspires to provide the highest levels of entertainment and emulate the tremendous development in the field of entertainment globally



Khaled Al-Shamlan CEO of KFH, Fadel Al-Dosari CEO of TEC, and Maziad Bin Nasser Al-Harbi CEO of Kuwait Telecommunications Company (STC) pose for a group photo. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

because of this sector's great social and economic importance, adding that "small projects will have the opportunity to use Winter Wonderland's facilities and financial resources, in addition to TEC's goal of engaging and developing national cadres to work in this vital sector." The CEO of TEC, Dosari, thanked Telecommunications Company (stc) and Kuwait Finance House (KFH) for their sponsorship of the Winter Wonderland Kuwait project, which will ensure visitors enjoy a memorable and enchanting season.



Group photo of ABS's students and Kuwait Times' team. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## ABS students visit Kuwait Times and Kuwait News

Faten Omar

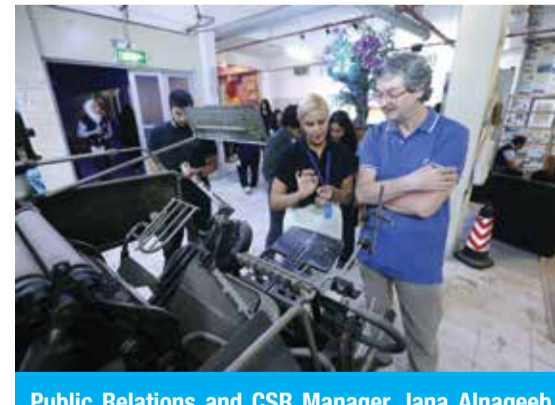
KUWAIT: The American Baccalaureate School (ABS) students visited Kuwait Times and Kuwait News on Thursday on a field trip to learn more about the history of the newspaper as the first English daily in the Arabian Gulf since 1961 and about the different sections of the newspaper, such as editorial, studio, print and circulation departments.

During their visit, the students were warmly welcomed by Public Relations and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeb who took the students on a tour around the building and its departments. The students were informed about the work in each section, explaining the process of news gathering, writing and editing, and how a newspaper is produced on a daily basis.

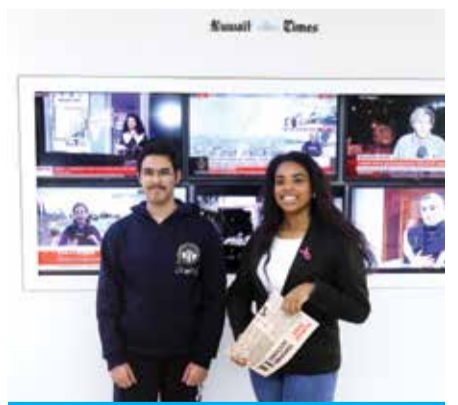
The tour provided students with a real-world glimpse into the world of journalism. The participating students, primarily consisting of young females from the Journalism club and their male counterparts from the film studies program, were given the unique opportunity to witness the working activities of the Kuwait Times.



ABS's students at the Archive room.



Public Relations and CSR Manager Jana Alnaqeb explains the history of the old printing machines.



Students pose in the newsroom.



Students hold the first edition of Kuwait Times at the printing house.



Student plays basketball.

## Local

# Zain drives change through digitization, empowering women leaders and DE&I

## Company joined panel at National Leadership Institute's Breaking Barriers conference



Mohammad Al Khulaifi honors Waleed Al Khashti in recognition of Zain's support.

KUWAIT: Zain has recently joined the National Leadership Institute (NLI)'s Breaking Barriers conference, which featured a group of inspiring speakers and notable experts from local, regional, and international levels, covering key topics like digital transformation, emerging technologies, and diversity & inclusion. The company sponsored the event, which came under the patronage of Minister of Finance Fahad Aljarallah.

The conference's opening ceremony was attended by the representative of the event's patron, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance Aseel Al Munaifi, as well as Zain Kuwait Chief Enterprise and Business Officer Hamad Al Marzouq, Zain Kuwait Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti, General Manager of National Leaders Company Mohammad Al Khulaifi, and many executives and officials from the public and private sectors.

Zain's participation in this distinguished event stemmed from its strong belief in the key role such insightful gatherings play in promoting innovation and the growth of people in the community. And so, the company was keen on being among the first to support NLI and its mission since its first conference back in 2021.

Zain joined one of the event's main panels, where Zain Group Diversity & Inclusion Senior Manager Aysha Al Mudhaf shared some of the company's most notable insights, initiatives, and achievements in the topics discussed by the conference. The event's core themes were well-aligned with Zain's own corporate goals, like the impact of digital transformation and emerging technologies on the economy, women in leadership, and diversity & inclusion in the workplace.



Aysha Al Mudhaf speaking at the panel discussion.

Today, Zain continues to enjoy the leadership position in the local market. This is true thanks to the company's long-term strategic vision and early investment in digital transformation applications, which empowered tens of state-level institutions to push forward their digital journeys, helping them bring better services and keep up with the fast-paced world of technology. In addition, Zain, being a national company, is part of Kuwait's wider Women Empowerment strategy, and the company takes special pride in reflecting the mature stage it has reached and the steps it has taken to translate its vision into objectives and achievements to empower more women in top executive management roles.

Zain is also proud of the fact that it is the first digital service provider and telecom operator in MENA to establish a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) department, where the company launches several awareness programs and initiatives and adopts new workplace policies to serve its strategic goals to become one of the most inclusive workplaces in the



Aseel Al Munaifi, Hamad Al Marzouq and top executives during the event.

region. The Breaking Barriers conference is the third annual event from the National Leadership Institute and has offered guests invaluable opportunities to attend keynotes, panel discussions, and workshops facilitated by a unique set of notable speakers, experts, and specialists in entrepreneurship, business, innovation, and technology.

This year's conference had a diverse set of international and local speakers. Among them was Tom Bilyeu, co-founder of Quest Nutrition; Jo Malone, a successful entrepreneur who turned a small venture into a globally recognized brand; Calum Chace, a specialist in artificial intelligence; Daniel Hulme, a leading expert in AI, emerging technologies, and the Metaverse; Sara Sabry, the first female Arab astronaut; and Graeme Codrington, who specializes in the Future of Work, and much more.

The National Leadership Institute (NLI) is an institute fully owned by the National Company for Educational Services and Training (NEST), a subsidiary of the National Technology Enterprises Company (NTEC). The NLI Conference Series was launched in 2021 to offer organizations in Kuwait an innovative training solution. In 2022 the conference was attended by over 1,100 participants from various international and local industries and corporations.

By supporting this conference, Zain aspires to reflect its growing commitment to pursue its corporate sustainability strategy and serve the community's most vibrant sectors, including entrepreneurship, innovation, and youth. The company is keen on empowering intellectual growth by actively participating in academic forums and gatherings that bring about rich experiences and allow a constructive exchange of information for entrepreneurs, leaders and community members.

In my view

## Who can support United Nations?

By Azzah Al-Ghamdi

The world was once plagued by bloody conflicts and devastating wars until the United Nations (UN) was established. Its founding mission was to establish binding rules for countries to ensure international peace, respect borders, and uphold international agreements. The UN was established with the support of the United States and successfully maintained global stability for some time. However, in recent years, UN decisions have been disregarded by certain countries, leading to violations of international law. Recent events have made it clear that the UN needs support to reclaim its leadership role.

Today, the world faces grave dangers, particularly in the wake of recent wars. There is an urgent need for a unified alliance among world powers to determine an agreed-upon approach that most nations can follow. The primary focus of these world powers should be to support the United Nations, as it plays a crucial role in resolving disputes between countries. The International Court of Justice also shares this responsibility. These institutions serve as destinations for countries to peacefully resolve disputes. If these institutions are marginalized or weakened, global peace will be at risk, and we may return to the turbulent scenes of the first and second world wars, with innocent populations suffering the consequences.

Most conflicts begin with violations of agreements between countries, which can be addressed either through the United Nations or the International Court of Justice, avoiding resorting to military solutions. Supporting public international law is now an urgent necessity. Public international law governs agreements and regulates the conduct of disputes between nations. Compliance with public international law is crucial, and decisions based on it must be binding.

Addressing prominent issues currently on the world stage, the violation of the Khor Abdullah agreement by Iraq is a clear example of a country unilaterally violating an agreement without justifiable reasons. Iraq's disregard for general international law governing agreements is evident, and it raises concerns about Iraq's commitment to peaceful diplomacy.

We should not ignore the fact that if Iraq resorts to orchestrating public demonstrations to create a political crisis before the United Nations, with the aim of vetoing the agreement with Kuwait, it would reflect poorly on Iraq's adherence to international law.

Instead of resorting to threats of invasion or military action, it's crucial to remember that Kuwait is part of a unified security system with other Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Iraq should reconsider any belief that it can confront all these nations collectively, given the Gulf's numerical strength, military capabilities and regional influence. Dismissive attitudes toward Kuwait from Iraq must be met with a strong response from the United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. He must address this international issue firmly, setting a successful precedent for the UN to handle conflicts worldwide.

To ensure Guterres' success in this role, the world's major powers should lend their support. The United States, in particular, should collaborate with other influential nations to bolster the UN's authority, making its decisions binding and respected by all countries. It's widely acknowledged that countries are increasingly disregarding UN statements, especially following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Therefore, revitalizing the UN's leadership role is imperative. The UN is also responsible for overseeing the implementation of International Court of Justice rulings and imposing sanctions when necessary.

The visionary founders of the United Nations were political scientists, thinkers and innovators who devised a sophisticated mechanism to combat global evils. Their vision aimed to prevent another world war, a scenario we must work diligently to avoid, for the sake of the innocent and the children who have no connection to the reckless actions of some world leaders.

## Kuwait pushes for multilateral action on disarmament

NEW YORK: Kuwait said that multilateral action is the best way to address the challenges related to disarmament and non-proliferation and to enhance international cooperation under the umbrella of the UN and multiple disarmament mechanisms. This came in Kuwait's speech delivered by the Second Secretary, Fahad Al-Ajmi, of Kuwait's permanent delegation to the UN on Wednesday evening, before the UN General Assembly First Committee concerned with disarmament and international security.

The ideal common goal of complete disarmament is the human aspiration to achieve true peace and security as well as remove the danger of war, Al-Ajmi underscored. He pointed to the many challenges and geopolitical changes that have begun to become a threat to international peace and security, saying that an alarming pace of the arms race is witnessed, the consequences of which will extend to all parts of the earth.

They are concerned about any failure to comply with agreed-upon obligations and the deliberate and continuous ignoring of the international community's repeated appeals calling for the implementation of global treaties and multiple agreements in this field, most notably the treaties on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT) and the ban on nuclear tests, he said. The only way and best path to ensure that nuclear weapons are not used again is to get rid of them completely, he added, while expressing Kuwait's welcome for any progress made in the field of disarmament.

He called on member states to combine efforts, not politicize the process, and to work hard on the challenges faced in an effort to find common solutions that will reach a final document during the 11th NPT Review Conference. He highlighted Kuwait's successful experience in assuming the presidency of the second session of the conference entitled "Establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East," through which they adopted the rules of procedure of the conference and established an informal working committee concerned with continuing consultations between the formal sessions of the conference.

The UN's efforts in disarmament have been continuing since 1946; however, progress in this field is minimal, he stated, stressing that with combined efforts, cooperation, and joint work, they can achieve progress in this regard.

### Kuwait supports Morocco

In another development, Kuwait renewed its support for the Moroccan initiative for self-rule in the Moroccan Sahara, as it aims to reach a solution among



Second Secretary of Kuwait's permanent delegation to the UN Fahad Al-Ajmi



Minister Plenipotentiary and UN's Deputy Permanent Representative Faisal Al-Enezi

all parties. This came during Kuwait's speech, delivered by Minister Plenipotentiary and UN's Deputy Permanent Representative Faisal Al-Enezi on Wednesday at a session of the fourth Committee of the UN General Assembly, where he stressed the need to respect the unity and sovereignty of Morocco. Al-Enezi praised the UN's efforts in holding meetings to discuss all parties' concerns regarding the Sahara issue and reach a consensual political solution.

He added, "We realize the importance of resuming meetings in the same format and with the same four participants, namely Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania, and the Polisario, in accordance with Security Council Resolution 2654." Al-Enezi added, "An important issue that is not addressed in the discussion related to decolonization" is Iran's seizure of the UAE's three islands, Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs.

Al-Enezi considered any practices or actions carried out by Iran on the three islands to be "null and void and have no effect on the right of the UAE's sovereignty," reiterating Kuwait's call on Iran to respond to the UAE's efforts to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or resorting to the International Court of Justice.

Regarding Palestine, Al-Enezi expressed Kuwait's concern about the escalation in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, which resulted from the continuous violations and attacks by the Zionist occupation forces on the Palestinian people. He called on the international community to take responsibility for stopping the violence and providing protection to the Palestinian people, as well as ending the "provocative" practices of the occupation forces. — KUNA



Diplomatic attache Fatema Al-Mezayad

## Kuwait calls for joint efforts to tackle poverty

NEW YORK: Kuwait called on the international community to combine efforts and enhance joint action to address poverty in light of the challenges the world is witnessing in the global food and economic crises. This came in Kuwait's speech delivered by diplomatic attache Fatema Al-Mezayad of the Kuwait permanent delegation to the United Nations on Wednesday evening before the General Assembly Second Committee.

Kuwait has made great efforts to eradicate poverty by providing government support based on justice aimed at enhancing social cohesion and focusing in particular on reaching all those in need in all segments of society, she said. The country's constitution emphasized social solidarity and guaranteed the right to well-being for all, which made the country keen to play an effective role in the field of social care and protection, Al-Mezayad added.

In this regard, Al-Mezayad brought up the work of the Kuwait Ministry of Social Affairs, as it is the body responsible for ensuring social care and development within the national program to reduce poverty, which includes providing grants and monthly social assistance, which reflects the country's efforts to achieve "a world free of poverty." Kuwait has spared no effort in providing assistance to developing countries through its official and unofficial institutions to alleviate human suffering in various parts of the world, she said.

Al-Mezayad added that the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development, which for six decades has been providing aid and grants that have benefited more than 100 countries through soft loans worth more than \$21 billion, reflects Kuwait's humanitarian history of providing development aid. The indicators of decline in implementing the sustainable development goals for 2030 require concerted international efforts and enhanced joint action among countries to eliminate poverty, she said. — KUNA

## 40 Kuwait's NGOs voice support to Palestinians

KUWAIT: 40 Kuwaiti civil society organizations expressed solidarity with the Palestinians on Wednesday and urged the international community to act to stop the ongoing Zionist aggression on the Gaza Strip. In a joint statement, the organizations called on the international community to assume its responsibilities towards the protection of the Palestinians and stop the brutal attacks committed by the occupation army against them.

They called for ending provocative Zionist practices against Palestinian people and properties, especially the discretion of Islamic and Christian holy places, demolishing the homes of Palestinians, and expanding the illegal settlement activities on the occupied Palestinian lands. The NGOs recalled that the besieged Gaza Strip has witnessed, in the last two decades, a series of Zionist ferocious attacks resulting in huge losses of life and property.

"We cannot forget or forgive the brutality and barbarism of the colonial regime towards the Palestinian people, from confiscating lands, demolishing homes, killing civilian demonstrators, including children, conducting night raids on Palestinian homes and arresting hundreds of civilians indefinitely without the slightest regard for all the international humanitarian conventions and norms," they said.

Occupation forces have waged a violent and unprecedented aggression against the Gaza Strip, which has so far claimed the lives of over 1,100 Palestinians and wounded 5,339 others in the wake of the Al-Aqsa Flood Operation launched by the Palestinian resistance movements in the besieged Gaza Strip at dawn last Saturday in response to the continuing attacks by the occupation forces and settlers on the Palestinian people, their property and their sanctities. — KUNA

# ARCC fosters cybersecurity industry in Arab countries

## Kuwait welcomes Saudi proposal



A group picture of cybersecurity members and officials. — KUNA photos

ABU DHABI: Head of Kuwait's National Center for Cybersecurity, Major General Mohammad Bouarki, has welcomed the proposal of Saudi Arabia to establish a specialized Arab ministerial council in light of the increase in cyber threats worldwide. In remarks to KUNA during his participation in the Regional Cybersecurity Week held in Abu Dhabi, Bouarki stressed the importance of Kuwait's participation and representation in this important forum, as it is one of the most important international platforms to unify joint Arab efforts in this field.

Bouarki affirmed that establishing an Arab Ministerial Council for Cybersecurity is an important step to enhance the efforts of Arab states to reach a secure cyberspace. Further, he said that the National Center seeks, through its strategy, which is in line with Kuwait Vision 2035, to provide a secure cyberspace that supports and protects national interests from online attacks and piracy operations.

The Regional Cybersecurity Week kicked off in Abu Dhabi on

Monday, organized by the UAE Government Cybersecurity Council, with the participation of 100 experts and speakers from 70 countries, including member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in addition to 10 international organizations, in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Arab Regional Center for Cybersecurity (ARCC).

Meanwhile, the chairman of the Arab Regional Cybersecurity Center (ARCC), Badr Al-Salehi, underscored the importance of upgrading the cybersecurity industry to protect Arab countries against cyberattacks and hacking. The center encourages cooperation among the Arab countries to utilize the latest technologies in the field of cybersecurity, he said in statements on the sidelines of the Regional Cybersecurity Week.

The regional event reached recommendations for collective action to address the trans-border threats of cyberattacks, including conducting drills to simulate responses to such attacks,



Part of the discussion seminar where the Chairman of ARCC participated.

he pointed out. Al-Salehi noted that it is unlikely for any country to tackle the trans-border cyber threat individually without international cooperation. He urged the Arab countries to build the capacity of national cadres and develop their own cybersecurity systems with a view to alleviating reliance on imported technologies.

Since its establishment in 2012, the ARCC has developed more than 190 cybersecurity projects and

initiatives in 50 countries, including 22 Arab countries. The center works out plans for upgrading the cybersecurity infrastructure, detecting possible hacker attacks and introducing the latest technologies, Al-Salehi added. The Regional Cybersecurity Week, hosted by the UAE Cybersecurity Council, gathered 100 experts from 70 countries, including Kuwait and 10 international organizations. — KUNA



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## LuLu hypermarket organizes 'Taste of Spain' promotion

KUWAIT: To mark Spain's National Day, LuLu hypermarket, the prominent retail chain in the region, organized an enticing 'Taste of Spain' promotion, running from October 11th to 17th across all its branches in Kuwait. The week-long promotion was inaugurated on 11 October at the LuLu Qurain outlet by the Spanish Ambassador, Miguel Moro Aguilar, along with LuLu Kuwait's top management. A major draw of the event was the amazing offers on all Spanish-branded products.

The inauguration also witnessed a lively performance by a talented Spanish music band, and an energetic display of traditional dances by a special dance troupe. Attractive displays and cutouts of traditional Spanish monuments, and large creative displays of Spanish products, as well as a decor that reflected Spanish themes, added to the promotional atmosphere.

Other highlights of the seven-day Spanish product festival included food stalls selling delicious Spanish street-food, and free food sampling booths that offered a taste of various Spanish dishes. Among the prime products offered at very special prices



were items from leading Spanish brands, including Acanto Botanical Olive Oil, Mueloliva Olive Oil, and Hutesa Olive that showcased the variety and richness of Spanish olive cultivation. Along with the superb olive oils, other exemplary items were the Cludem sparkling beverages that offered a refreshingly fizzy touch to any occasion, as well as the renowned Spanish Gullon Biscuits.

And, from the realm of spices was the Taj Mahal Saffron, which stands as a symbol of Spain's culinary heritage, with its exquisite aroma and vibrant color elevating dishes to new heights. The 'Taste of Spain' promotion, which left shoppers with a new-found appreciation for Spanish products, once again highlighted LuLu hypermarket's commitment to stocking its shelves with some of the finest products from around the world at very competitive prices.





At Polish border, German police crack down on illegal crossings

## Red Cross says in contact with Hamas, Zionists over hostages

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A Zionist army self-propelled howitzer fires rounds towards the Gaza Strip from southern Zionist territory. — AFP

# Abbas urges 'immediate end to aggression' against Palestinians

## Zionist entity prepares 'ground assault' on Gaza

**RAMALLAH, Palestinian Territories:** Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas called Thursday for "an immediate end to the comprehensive aggression against the Palestinian people", his office said following a meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II. In his first public remarks since a massive Hamas onslaught on southern Zionist entity communities early Saturday that spiraled into deadly war, Abbas rejected "practices related to killing civilians or abusing them on both sides", according to a statement.

The two leaders met in Amman and discussed "ways to stop the Zionist entity's aggression against the Palestinian people and deliver aid and relief" to Hamas-controlled Gaza, the statement said.

The targeting of civilians by both Zionist entity forces and Palestinian fighters "contravenes mor-

als, religion and international law", Abbas said. According to the statement, he stressed Palestinians "renounce violence and adhere to international legitimacy, peaceful popular resistance, and political action as a path to achieving our national goals".

Abbas also "warned of the danger of the only power plant in the Gaza Strip stopping working due to running out of fuel" and urged action to secure the supply of electricity and water as well as "opening urgent humanitarian corridors". With dozens of Zionists and security personnel believed to be held captive in Gaza and Palestinian militants captured by the Zionist entity, Abbas called "for the release of civilians, prisoners and detainees".

The Palestinian Authority which Abbas heads is based in the occupied West Bank, while his Islamist rival Hamas controls the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, the Zionist army said Thursday it was preparing for a ground assault on Hamas fighters in the Gaza Strip but that the country's political leaders had not yet taken a decision. It said the military's campaign against the Islamists was also aimed at "taking out" the group's senior leadership including top government officials.

"We are waiting to see what our political leadership decides about a potential ground" incursion, army spokesman Richard Hecht told journalists. "This has not been decided yet... But we are preparing for a ground maneuver if it is decided."

The army has deployed tens of thousands of troops to the border with the Gaza Strip as it continues a withering air campaign it says targets Hamas infrastructure, commanders and operating centers in the enclave. The air strikes came in re-

sponse to a surprise air, land and sea assault on Saturday by Hamas fighters that left more than 1,200 people killed in Zionist entity.

Until now Hamas has fired more than 5,000 rockets at Zionist entity, according to the army. Zionist entity's air campaign has also so far left at least 1,354 people dead in the Gaza Strip, according to the latest toll from the Hamas-affiliated health ministry.

"We are preparing ourselves for the next stages of war... to prepare for multiple operative contingency plans," Hecht said. He said the possible operation "could be from the air, it could be combined from the sea (and) air". Zionist entity's assault is targeting senior leaders of Hamas, Hecht said, including the group's chief in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar. — AFP



GAZA: Palestinians drive amid the rubble of buildings destroyed in a Zionist airstrike in Rafah, on the southern Gaza Strip on October 12, 2023. — AFP

## Over 338,000 displaced in Gaza: UN

**GENEVA:** More than 338,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in the Gaza Strip, the United Nations said, as heavy the Zionist entity bombardments continue to hit the Palestinian enclave. "Mass displacement across the Gaza Strip continues," the UN humanitarian agency OCHA said in a statement sent on Thursday.

By late Wednesday, the number of displaced people in Gaza had risen by an additional 75,000 people from the figure given 24 hours earlier, reaching 338,934, it said. The announcement came as Zionist entity pounded Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip—a densely populated enclave of 2.3 million people—in response to the militants' surprise Saturday attack.

Zionist entity forces said 1,200 people, most of them civilians, were killed in the onslaught—the worst in the country's history. In Gaza, officials reported more than 1,000 people have been killed in Zionist entity's sustained campaign of air and artillery strikes. OCHA said nearly 220,000 people, or two-thirds of

the displaced people, have sought shelter in schools run by the UN agency supporting Palestinian refugees, UNRWA.

Another nearly 15,000 people fled to schools run by the Palestinian Authority, while more than 100,000 were being sheltered by relatives, neighbors and a church and other facilities in Gaza City.

OCHA said that around 3,000 people had already been displaced within the enclave prior to Saturday's attack. The bombing campaign has destroyed or rendered uninhabitable at least 2,540 housing units in Gaza, OCHA said, citing numbers from the Gaza Ministry of Public Works and Housing. Another 22,850 housing units sustained moderate to minor damage, it said. The UN agency also voiced alarm at the significant destruction of civilian infrastructure damaged in the shelling. Among other things, it said sewage facilities serving more than a million people had been hit by air strikes, leaving solid waste accumulating in the streets, posing a health threat.

Meanwhile, NATO countries on Thursday told Zionist entity's defense minister they stood by his country after the attack by Hamas, but urged his forces to respond with "proportionality". Zionist entity Defense Minister Yoav Gallant briefed counterparts from the US-led military alliance via videolink as his country carries out a bombing campaign after Islamist militants killed over 1,200 people, mostly civilians. — AFP

## 'Raining bullets' in Ecuador city in throes of narcos

**GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador:** On a normally quiet street, two men lie dead surrounded by blood and bullet casings, the latest victims of a series of executions that have become a daily affair in Ecuador's port city of Guayaquil.

Police reports and security camera footage seen by AFP reveal a group of men chatting on a street corner when a white van, door flung open, swings around the corner, and gunmen jump out and open fire. "It was raining bullets," a neighbor told an AFP team that arrived after the Sunday murder on Machala Avenue. The previous day, elsewhere, "two people were killed in a shooting, including a policeman," said military officer Alex Merchan, running a checkpoint with a handful of soldiers in Duran, across the river from Guayaquil.

However, security forces describe the weekend as relatively calm compared to most in the city dubbed "Guayakil" on social media. One weekend in September saw 30 murders, another, 24. The explosion of insecurity in Ecuador—once a haven of peace wedged

between cocaine-producing nations Colombia and Peru—is the main concern as voters head to the polls Sunday in a run-off election.

Guayaquil, a city of almost three million people, has borne the brunt of Ecuador's descent into drug violence, with foreign cartels using the port to flood the world with cocaine from its neighbors.

The business has brought with it often barbaric bloodshed. Hundreds have been killed in prison gang fights, the streets have been hit by car bombs and kidnapping victims have had their fingers cut off to boost ransom demands. According to Ecuador's Observatory of Organized Crime, there were almost 1,500 murders in the first six months of 2023, almost double that in the same period of 2022.

It was on a pedestrian bridge crossing the ten-lane highway close to where Merchan and a handful of soldiers have set up their checkpoint that two decapitated bodies were left dangling from a bridge in February. His men search passing vehicles for drugs, weapons and explosives, in what he calls a "game of cat and mouse" with criminals. Guayaquil offers a contrasting landscape between gleaming modern buildings and luxurious villas, ensconced behind barbed wire, and crime-ridden poor neighborhoods.

"Crime here is now a mixture of petty crime, drug trafficking, and mafia" activities, said a local journalist speaking on condition of anonymity of a violence that was almost "non-existent two years ago". — AFP



GUAYAQUIL, Ecuador: Relatives of homicide victim mourn by the body in Guayaquil, Guayas Province, Ecuador. — AFP

## International

# Red Cross says in contact with Hamas, Zionists over hostages

## Egypt receives humanitarian aid bound for Gaza

GENEVA: The International Committee of the Red Cross is in contact with Hamas and Zionist entity to try to facilitate the release of hostages taken into Gaza, the organization said Thursday.

The ICRC also believes that the humanitarian situation inside the Gaza Strip will very quickly become "unmanageable" without a way to get supplies into the besieged territory and distribute them. "As a neutral intermediary we stand ready to conduct humanitarian visits; facilitate communication between hostages and family members; and to facilitate any eventual release," Fabrizio Carboni, the ICRC's regional director for the Near and Middle East, said in a statement.

At least 150 Zionists and foreigners—including soldiers, civilians, children and women—have been held hostage in the Gaza Strip since Hamas's surprise Saturday attack on Zionist entity. In a press briefing, Carboni said the ICRC was in sustained, daily contact with Hamas.

However, he declined to go into details as to whether the organization knew the whereabouts of those being held, respecting the ICRC's tradition of discretion. Hostage-taking is forbidden under international humanitarian law, and anyone detained must be released immediately, Carboni added.

"We've called on all parties who have an influence on this case, and especially Hamas, to treat people humanely, respect their dignity, allow them to contact their family and inform them about their situation," he said. "We should be allowed to visit them."

"There are many people who shouldn't be de-

tained and captured and who need to be released."

He said the ICRC could not negotiate over hostages—for example in an exchange of detainees—as it is not the role of a humanitarian organization and there is a "unilateral obligation" to release them.

Following Hamas's bloody attack, Zionist entity has retaliated by declaring a war to destroy the group's capability, relentlessly pounding the Gaza Strip, which has been under blockade since 2006. Zionist entity has now cut off supplies of water, electricity and food, leaving the enclave in a state of siege. Carboni said the humanitarian situation inside the Gaza Strip would soon become "unmanageable".

He said that while the ICRC had stocks of certain basic necessities such as fuel for electric generators, chlorine for the water distribution network and even technicians, the bombardment was making it tough to distribute supplies. "Besieging areas like Gaza, more than two million people... is just not acceptable," Carboni said. "We also need to be in a position to evacuate the wounded, for people to have access to hospitals, health facilities. We won't be able in a position to sustain this situation without goods coming into Gaza. So there is really a need to make sure that there is a pause or that there are ways for supplies to go into Gaza."

The ICRC urged "both sides to reduce the suffering of civilians". The war has already claimed thousands of lives since Saturday. "The human misery caused by this escalation is abhorrent," Carboni said.

As Gaza is deprived of electricity, "hospitals lose power, putting newborns in incubators and el-



RAFAH, Palestinian Territories: Palestinians drive their carriage amid the rubble of buildings destroyed in a Zionist air strike in Rafah, on the southern Gaza Strip on October 12, 2023. — AFP

derly patients on oxygen at risk. Kidney dialysis stops, and X-rays can't be taken", he added. "Without electricity, hospitals risk turning into morgues."

Meanwhile, the first shipment of humanitarian

aid arrived in Egypt's Sinai Thursday from Jordan, state-affiliated media reported, to be transported into Gaza, which the Zionist entity has been bombarding for days following a surprise Hamas attack.

## Gibraltar votes in closely fought election

GIBRALTAR: Gibraltar votes on Thursday in a tight election which could affect talks on a deal settling the tiny British overseas territory's ties with the European Union following Brexit. Around 25,000 people are eligible to cast ballots for candidates from two parties, as well as an independent, who are vying for representation in the 17-seat parliament in the enclave on Spain's southern tip, dubbed "the Rock" because of its famous cliff-faced mountain.

Polls have consistently put the ruling centre-left Socialist-Liberal alliance neck-and-neck with the opposition centre-right Gibraltar Social Democrats.

At 1 pm (1100 GMT) 24.14 percent of eligible voters had cast their ballots, almost two percentage points more than during the previous election in 2019, authorities said. Fabian Picardo, the incumbent chief minister, who has headed the government of Gibraltar since 2011, has warned that the talks over Gibraltar's post-Brexit future would suffer a setback if his alliance was ousted from power.

"Do you really think that what you want to do on Friday is wake up to a new negotiating team on the most complex negotiation that Gibraltar has been involved in its history?" he asked in one of his final campaign appearances. "We are on the cusp of achieving something very, very special," said the 51-year-old who is seeking a fourth consecutive term in office.

Gibraltar, which has a land border with Spain, has been in limbo since Britain's withdrawal from the EU in 2020 left it outside the bloc's customs union and without guaranteed free movement of people. Under a temporary agreement, Spain has granted free border passage to workers and tourists to avoid disruption, but this could be rescinded at any time.

The talks are aimed at agreeing a common travel area between Gibraltar and the so-called Schengen passport-free zone, which covers most of the EU's member states along with four other European nations. With the protocol on Northern Ireland agreed by London and Brussels earlier this year, Gibraltar now stands in isolation as the last British territory left without a deal that clarifies its future relationship with the EU and with its neighbor Spain. Keith Azopardi, leader of the opposition Gibraltar Social Democrats and a former deputy chief minister of Gibraltar, has blasted Picardo for failing to reach an agreement, vowing his party would deliver a "safe and beneficial" deal.

His campaign has focused on domestic issues, promising to build more public housing, reform public services and reduce debt. "Gibraltar needs a change," the 56-year-old said at the start of the campaign.

The British territory relies on around 15,000 workers—most of them European, making up half of Gibraltar's workforce—who cross the border with EU-member Spain every day.

Fluidity at the border is also key for tourism. Gibraltar, which is strategically located at the western gateway to the Mediterranean Sea, welcomes millions of visitors every year. — AFP

## Putin in Kyrgyzstan to strengthen military ties

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan: Vladimir Putin on Thursday called to strengthen military ties with Kyrgyzstan in a trip to the Central Asian country, his first foreign visit since the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for him in March. President Putin is wanted by the court over the deportation of Ukrainian children. Its ruling requires members of the ICC, which does not include Kyrgyzstan, to make the arrest if he sets foot on their territory.

Televised footage showed Putin greeting Kyrgyz counterpart Sadyr Japarov in the capital Bishkek for a summit of the post-Soviet group Commonwealth of Independent States. "I would like to thank the president for the invitation. We have good reasons (to be here), but even without reasons this visit is long overdue," Putin said in talks with Japarov.

"I expect that military and military-technical cooperation between Russia and Kyrgyzstan... will continue to strengthen and expand," Putin said. Kyrgyzstan is part of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, a NATO-style military alliance of ex-Soviet states led by Russia.

Putin has rarely left Russia since launching the Ukraine offensive in February 2022.

This year, he has travelled only to Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine, with his last foreign trips to Belarus and Kyrgyzstan last December—a far cry



BISHKEK: Russia's President Vladimir Putin and his Kyrgyz counterpart Sadyr Japarov attending a ceremony to mark the 20th anniversary of the Kant Russian aviation military base in Kyrgyzstan, at the Ala-Archa state residence in Bishkek on October 12, 2023. — AFP

from the busy international schedule he had earlier in his rule. He is expected to travel to China next week.

Moscow has likened the prospect of Putin being arrested abroad to an act of war, calling the warrant "illegal". In practice, however, it has taken precautions: in August, Russia sent Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to a BRICS summit in ICC member South Africa, instead of Putin. — AFP

## Iran calls on Arab, Islamic nations to...

Continued from Page 1

Palestinian nation," Raisi told his Syrian counterpart Bashar Al-Assad in a phone call late Wednesday. Raisi stated that in order to stop the "genocide of the Palestinians by the Zionists", Iran will coordinate with Islamic countries "as soon as possible", the Iranian presidency website said on Thursday. Iran, which backs Hamas, on Saturday celebrated the assault, though it insisted it was not involved in it. During his call with Assad, Raisi also lashed out at Arab countries that have recently normalized or are in discussion to establish ties with Zionist entity.

"Today, all those who made public their relations with the Zionist regime under the pretext of defending the rights of the Palestinians were disgraced, and it has been proven to the whole world that the Zionist regime is in its weakest state," Raisi said. During the call, Assad similarly emphasized the "necessity of rapid action at the Arab and Islamic levels to protect the Palestinian people, especially in the Gaza Strip, and to stop the raids targeting children and women".

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler and Iran's president spoke by phone about the war between Zionists and Hamas, Saudi state media said early Thursday, their first call since a surprise rapprochement in March. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman received a call on Wednesday from the Iranian leader, Ebrahim Raisi, during which they discussed "the current military situation in Gaza and its environs", the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said.

Prince Mohammed told Raisi that Riyadh is "communicating with all international and regional parties to stop the ongoing escalation", SPA said. He also stressed "the kingdom's firm position towards supporting the Palestinian cause", it said. Iranian state news agency IRNA also reported on the call, saying the two men discussed the "need to end war crimes against Palestine". Hamas launched a surprise attack on Zionist entity on Saturday that Zionist forces say killed 1,200 people, most of them civilians. In Gaza, officials have reported more than 1,200 people killed in retaliatory campaign of air and artillery strikes.

As war rages on, fears have mounted over the fate of at least 150 hostages—mostly Zionists but also in-



RAMALLAH: Palestinian Presidential guards salute a Jordanian military helicopter carrying the Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas as it leaves the West Bank city of Ramallah to Jordan, for official meetings on October 12, 2023. — AFP

cluding foreign and dual nationals—held in Gaza by Hamas. Analysts say the war has dealt a heavy blow to a possible landmark normalization deal between Saudi Arabia, home to the holiest sites in Islam, and Zionist entity. That process has been driven by US President Joe Biden's administration, with Riyadh bargaining hard for benefits from Washington including security guarantees and help developing a civilian nuclear program.

Iran has long financially and militarily backed Hamas but insists it had no involvement in Saturday's assault. Saudi Arabia and Iran announced in March they had agreed to restore ties, ending a seven-year rupture in a deal brokered by China. Prince Mohammed also spoke by phone on Wednesday with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during which the 38-year-old said he was "exerting unremitting efforts through regional and international communication to achieve coordination that pushes for a halt of the current escalation".

He delivered a similar message in a separate call with French President Emmanuel Macron, saying Riyadh was "working to create conditions to bring stability and restore the path of peace to ensure that the Palestinian people would achieve their fair and legitimate rights", according to a foreign ministry readout published early Thursday on social media. Prince Mohammed also told Macron the kingdom rejected "targeting civilians or disrupting the infrastructure and vital interests that affect their daily lives." — AFP

## Minister of Health inaugurates food examination lab

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi inaugurated on Thursday the preliminary operation of the laboratory for food examination, affiliated with the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, affirming that it is crucial for the health of the citizens and residents of Kuwait. Speaking to journalists, he said it includes many sub-laboratories specializing in the chemical and biochemical examination of bacteria and viruses that live on food supplies such as vegetables and fruits, as well as eggs. It is one of the largest of its kind at the Gulf level, he said. Dr Reem Al-Felaj, the director of the authority, noted the cooperation between the laboratories department and the departments of imported food and examination in the governorates.

The health minister underscored the significance of the cooperation between public and private health institutions in line with the 2023–2024 state development strategy. Speaking to journalists after inaugurating the preliminary operation of the laboratory



Photo shows the laboratory for food examination.

for food examination, she noted the necessity that the private health sector adhere to the regulations and rules issued by the ministry.

In line with the approach to safeguarding the health of the citizens and residents of Kuwait, the department has set up a special division to receive and examine complaints and irregularities, indicating that the penalties against offenders vary according to the scope of the wrongdoing. He indicated that penalties' jurisdictions are restricted to special and independent medical commissions affiliated with diverse state authorities, namely the ministry of justice and faculty of medicine. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Health minister inaugurates laboratory for food examination. — KUNA photos

## International

# At Polish border, German police crack down on illegal crossings

## Surge in arrivals reignites fierce immigration debate in Germany

**FORST, Germany:** It's early morning when 30-year-old Syrian Adem Ahmed walks across a railway bridge that starts in Poland and ends in Germany. Moments later, he and 21 fellow Syrians are detained by German federal police, after the government stepped up border checks to combat a surge in illegal migrant crossings.

"The smuggler who was supposed to drop them off in a lorry on German soil probably fled when he saw the police and left them on their own," said federal police spokesman Jens Schobranski.

The dawn police operation witnessed by AFP took place in the border town of Forst this week, in Germany's former communist east. Berlin announced in early October it was increasing police checks along its borders with Poland and the Czech Republic to crack down on popular smuggling routes.

A surge in arrivals in recent months, mainly from Syria and Afghanistan, has reignited a fierce immigration debate in Germany with local authorities saying they are overwhelmed by the number of asylum seekers. The influx has fuelled support for the far-right, anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, which made major gains in two regional elections this month.

The number of people coming to Germany "is too high at the moment", Chancellor Olaf Scholz said recently, vowing to speed up the deportation of failed asylum seekers.

Last month alone, some 2,000 people illegally crossed into Brandenburg, one of the three German states bordering Poland. "The only time we had a higher monthly figure in this region -- 3,014 people -- was in October 2021" when Belarus' borders were wide open, said Schobranski. Since then, Poland has erected a border fence with Belarus.

Originally from the Syrian city of Idlib, Adem

Ahmed lived in Turkey for the past eight years after leaving his war-torn country. Speaking to journalists near the border, the fatigue etched on his face, Ahmed said it had been "difficult" living alone in Turkey. "I want to be reunited with my family" in Germany, he said. Like his fellow travelers, including a child and a teenager, Ahmed said he "went without food for the last three days" of his journey. Before that, he had been eating "dates and nuts".

Ahmed followed the so-called Balkan route to get to Germany via Poland, travelling through Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and Slovakia. Unlike the checkpoints on the German-Austrian border—prompted by the 2015-2016 migration crisis that brought more than a million asylum seekers into the European Union's largest economy—there are no fixed controls on Germany's frontiers with Poland and the Czech Republic. The latest migrant flows have put renewed pressure on the EU's open-borders Schengen zone, which normally allows for free movement.

Poland, the Czech Republic and Austria also recently introduced checks on their borders with Slovakia. After their mobile phones are temporarily confiscated for analysis, Ahmed and his fellow migrants, most of whom have no papers, are interviewed before being sent to reception centers.

Sometimes the encounters with police are more dramatic. Two weeks ago, a Syrian smuggler "forced his way through a roadblock and caused an accident" while carrying passengers, said Schobranski.

To stop illegal transports, police use road spikes to puncture tires. "Usually, if it's their first arrest, the smugglers are given a suspended sentence of between one and three years," said Forst police commissioner Frank Malack. "What really frightens them is being sent back to their own country," he added, as many are asylum seekers themselves.



**FORST:** An officer of the German Federal Police (Bundespolizei) escorts a group of migrants near Forst, eastern Germany on October 11, 2023, during a patrol near the border with Poland. — AFP

Police have caught as many as 10 smugglers over two days since the checks were stepped up, said Schobranski. Many of them are Ukrainians at the moment, trying to earn money quickly and avoid military service at home, he said.

Georgian nationals make up the second-largest number of smugglers in the area. Like other asylum seekers, they don't have the right to immediately work in Germany, but often still need to pay back the mon-

ey they borrowed for their own passage, according to Schobranski. Migrants pay between 3,000 and 10,000 euros (\$3,200-10,500) to be smuggled into Germany, he added. If they are promised as many attempts as it takes to cross successfully, "it's more expensive". Germany recorded over 250,000 asylum requests in the year to September, more than for the whole of 2022. The country is also hosting more than a million Ukrainian refugees. — AFP

## At least four killed after India express train derails

**NEW DELHI:** At least four people have been killed and an unknown number injured after an express train derailed in India's Bihar state, local media reported Thursday.

The train from Anand Vihar Terminal railway station in Delhi came off the rails late Wednesday as it raced to the Kamakhya Junction in Assam, the Times of India newspaper reported. "Four casualties have been confirmed and rescue operation is underway. Twenty-one coaches have derailed," Tarun Prakash, general manager of the East Central Railway, was quoted by the Times as saying. ANI news agency also put the death toll at four.

Media reports said some wounded were rushed to hospital, but the number of injured was unclear. "Deepest condolences for the irreparable loss," wrote railways minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on X, formerly Twitter. He said an evacuation and rescue operation was "complete" and that passengers were being moved to a different train for their on-



**BUXAR, India:** A general view shows damaged carriages near Raghunathpur railway station some 44 Km from Buxar on October 12, 2023, after an express train derailed late on October 11 in India's Bihar state. — AFP

ward journey. He did not confirm the toll. India has one of the world's largest rail networks and has seen several disasters over the years, the worst in 1981 when a train derailed while crossing a bridge in Bihar state and plunged into a river below, killing 800 peo-

ple. In June, a triple-train collision killed nearly 300 people in Odisha state.

In August at least nine people were killed when a coach parked in southern India caught fire as a passenger tried to make tea. — AFP

## Wife of Gabon's deposed leader Ali Bongo jailed

**LIBREVILLE, Gabon:** The wife of Gabon's deposed president Ali Bongo Ondimba, who has been under house arrest since a late August coup over alleged embezzlement of public funds, was on Thursday put in a Libreville prison.

Sylvia Bongo Ondimba Valentin, who is Franco-Gabonese, was charged on September 28 with money laundering, forgery and falsification of records. The 60-year-old was provisionally imprisoned in the early hours following a long hearing in front of a judge, her lawyer Gisele Eyue-Bekale told AFP.

The lawyer said a request for a hearing in 10 days had been granted, at which she would be able to appeal for her client's release. Sylvia Bongo and one of the couple's sons are under investigation as part of a wider inquiry into alleged massive embezzlement of public money.



**LIBREVILLE:** Gabonese President Ali Bongo (center) and his wife Sylvia (third left) arrive to the Presidential Palace on March 28, 2017 in Libreville. — AFP

Their eldest son, Nouredin Bongo Valentin, has been detained as well as six former cabinet officials, according to legal sources. Sylvia Bongo had been under house arrest in Libreville since an August 30 coup brought the curtain down on 55 years of rule by the Bongo dynasty.

Ali Bongo, 64, who had ruled the central African country since 2009, was overthrown by military leaders moments after being proclaimed the winner in a presidential election.

The election result was branded a fraud by the opposition and the military coup leaders, who have also ac-

cus his regime of widespread corruption and bad governance.

The putschists accuse Sylvia Bongo and Nouredin of having manipulated the former president, who is suffering the after-effects of a serious stroke in 2018. They are accused of having effectively pulled the strings in the oil-rich country for the past five years. Sylvia Bongo had been isolated from her husband, and her French lawyers had complained of what they said "appears to be a hostage-taking".

"We condemned this illegal procedure," her Paris-based lawyer Francois Zimeray said on Thursday following her jailing. "There is a difference between justice and arbitrary actions, between the law and revenge." The public prosecutor in Libreville has yet to respond to an AFP request for comment. Many in Gabon saw the overthrow of the Bongo dynasty as an act of liberation rather than a military coup.

Ali Bongo was elected after his father Omar died in 2009 after nearly 42 years in power. Gabon is Africa's third-richest nation in terms of per-capita GDP but one in three people lives below the poverty line, according to the World Bank. — AFP

## Japan moves to strip Unification Church of recognition

**TOKYO:** The Japanese government said Thursday it was seeking to strip official recognition from the Unification Church, the influential sect under intense scrutiny since the assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida last year ordered a probe into the church after it emerged that Abe's alleged killer was motivated by resentment against the group. It has been accused of pressuring its followers into making hefty donations and blamed for child neglect among its members.

If granted, the court dissolution order sought by the government would see the church lose its tax-exempt status, among other legal privileges, but still be allowed to continue its religious practices.

"In view of the extensive damage caused, we find that it falls under the grounds for ordering dissolution as stated in the religious corporations law," Education Minister Masahito Moriyama told reporters after a panel of experts unanimously agreed with the decision.

The church "forced a number of people to contribute donations and buy items... in a way that restricted their free decision-making and sabotaged their sound judgment", he added.

The minister said the request would be filed to the Tokyo District Court as early as Friday, once "preparations are complete". Kishida said separately that the government's plan was based on facts and a careful review of the matter. "Based on the law and in accordance with the objective facts, careful work was done and the Minister of Education made the decision," he told reporters at his office.

Abe was gunned down in broad daylight last year while giving a campaign speech in the western Nara region. The suspect, Tetsuya Yamagami, is said to have resented the sect over large donations his mother made that bankrupted his family.



**SEOUL:** Members of the Unification Church, known officially as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), attend a rally in Seoul in this file photo. — AFP

He could face the death penalty if convicted. Investigations after Abe's death revealed close ties between the church and many conservative ruling lawmakers in Japan. — AFP

## Jailed former Pakistan PM Imran Khan says 'stronger than ever'

**ISLAMABAD:** Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan said he is "stronger and fitter than ever" since being jailed two months ago, according to a statement released by his family Thursday. Khan was convicted of graft in August and jailed for three years, with the election commission subsequently banning him from contesting polls scheduled for January 2024. "Let it be known that there's a difference of day and night between the Imran Khan of today and Imran Khan who was imprisoned on August 5," he said in the first statement to be released on his behalf since he was jailed.

"Today I am stronger and fitter: spiritually, mentally and physically, than ever before," added the former international cricket superstar. The statement also appeared on Khan's X account.

Khan said he has spent his time in jail reading the Quran, adding that he has "adjusted well to prison conditions". Since being ousted last year Khan has been tangled in a slew of legal cases he says are designed to stop him from contesting elections.

He was briefly detained in May, sparking nationwide protests that turned violent, with anger directed at the military for allegedly interfering in politics. The establishment responded with a fierce crackdown—rounding up thousands of supporters and forcing almost the entire central leadership underground. Many have since abandoned the party. Although Khan's prison term for graft was overturned, he was kept in custody over a fresh arrest for leaking state documents, with his lawyers expecting he will be formally indicted next week. It is a far more serious entanglement than graft and could see him imprisoned for 14 years. — AFP

## China steps up 'military intimidation': Taiwan minister

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan's defense minister said Thursday China has stepped up "military intimidation" this year by flying an increased number of warplanes around the island as well as accelerating the deployment of ballistic missiles.

China claims self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory to be seized one day—by force if necessary—and has ramped up pressure on the island in recent years, staging at least two rounds of massive war games. Beijing has "stepped up the intensity of its military intimidation to strengthen control over our surrounding waters and airspace", Defence Minister Chiu Kuo-cheng said, reading from a report made to parliament's defense and foreign affairs committee on Thursday.

He pointed to the deployment of the Dongfeng-17 missile—a short-to-medium range rocket that is believed to be capable of releasing a "hypersonic glider"—as well as the Chinese navy accelerating sea trials for its third aircraft carrier, the Fujian, which is expected to enter service by 2025.

Chiu also said "the number of Chinese warplanes harassing Taiwan rose to around 380 per month (in 2023), escalating tensions in the Taiwan Strait". In the recent three-day "Joint Sword" military exercise in April—in response to Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with a top US official in California—China had sent "more than 560 sorties" around the island as its military simulated the encirclement of Taiwan, Chiu added.

According to announcements made by the defense ministry from April 8 to 10 -- the days of the "Joint Sword" exercise -- 232 aircraft were detected around Taiwan. Chiu did not elaborate on the discrepancy in numbers, reiterating only that China's "military expansion has seriously threatened the security across the Taiwan Strait and surrounding areas". Beijing flies fighter jets and sorties around Taiwan on a near-daily basis, with the highest recent number coming last month when 103 war planes were detected within a 24-hour window. — AFP

## Business

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2023

## IEA: Risk of oil supply disruptions is limited

## Strikes prompt crude traders to price in higher risk premium

**PARIS:** The International Energy Agency said on Thursday the risk of oil supply disruptions due to the conflict between Zionist entity and Hamas is limited but that it stands ready to intervene in markets if necessary. The Paris-based agency, in addition to its analysis and advisory roles, coordinates the release of emergency stocks held by its 31 mostly advanced-economy member nations. A weekend attack by Hamas on Zionist entity, and Zionist entity's military retaliation, have left thousands dead and rattled oil markets, amid fears that other nations might intervene and possibly disrupt shipments in the Middle East.

The region accounts for more than one-third of the world's seaborne oil shipments. "While the prospect that oil supply flows will be impacted currently remains limited, the deadly strikes prompted traders to price in a higher geopolitical risk premium," the IEA said in its regular monthly report.

"There has been no direct impact on physical supply," it added. But with supply and demand on the oil market currently tightly balanced, the IEA said it "stands ready to act if necessary to ensure markets remain adequately supplied".

Oil prices jumped at the start of the conflict but have since eased as there was no immediate disruption to supply flows and other nations have not intervened. Yet prices remain relatively high as a result of supply cuts by Saudi Arabia and Russia, with the IEA also warning it was beginning to see signs of demand destruction. The oil market has for months been caught in a tug-of-war between concerns about supplies and demand as high energy prices, combined with interest rate hikes in most advanced nations to combat inflation, leave consumers squeezed.



A wider Middle East conflict would constitute a serious risk for the global economy. — AFP

## Fluctuating demand

"There has been some evidence of large-scale demand destruction, especially in lower-income countries, like Nigeria, Pakistan and Egypt, and signs of accelerating declines within some OECD markets including the United States," said the IEA, referring to the OECD club of advanced economies.

Consumers in developing nations have been hit by the sliding value of their currencies relative to dollar—in which crude oil is priced—and often the

removal of gasoline subsidies. But gasoline deliveries in the United States also hit a two-decade low, the IEA noted, with many advanced nations set to begin seeing drops in demand due to the uptake of electric vehicles.

Nevertheless, global oil demand is still expected to grow by 2.3 million barrels per day (mbd) this year thanks to growth in China, India and Brazil, it said. That is unchanged from the IEA's previous forecasts, but the agency lowered its forecast for oil demand

growth next year to 0.9 mbd. The IEA also warned of possible shortages of diesel in Europe this winter.

"Ten months after the EU embargo on Russian crude came into effect, European refiners still struggle to lift processing rates and diesel output," said the agency. Europe will need to maintain high levels of imports, particularly from the Middle East but stringent winter quality specifications could constrain supply, it warned. "It may take another mild winter to avoid shortages," said the IEA. Diesel is a major fuel for passenger vehicles in Europe as well as for trucks.

## Russia oil earnings rise

Meanwhile, Russian oil export revenues surged by \$1.8 billion to \$18.8 billion in September, the highest level since July 2022, the IEA said, as both volumes and prices rose. The European Union, G7 and Australia introduced a price ceiling of \$60 per barrel on Russian oil in December last year, to starve Moscow of much-needed revenue, but with limited success. All Russian crudes traded at more than \$80 per barrel in September, "well above the G7 price cap," said the IEA.

In added that Russian government revenues from oil in US dollars rose 24 percent month-on-month in September, to \$10.6 billion but were down 7.0 percent from their level one year ago. Meanwhile, the OPEC oil cartel in its monthly report revised slightly higher its forecast for Russian crude output in 2023, to an average of 10.5 mbd. That is a drop from around 11 mbd last year. "It is worth noting that the expected contraction takes into account announced voluntary production adjustments to the end of 2023," said OPEC. — AFP

## Hamas-Zionist war a 'new cloud' over world economy: IMF

**MARRAKESH:** The war between the Zionist entity and Hamas has cast a shadow over the IMF-World Bank annual meetings in Morocco, with warnings Thursday that it has darkened the outlook for an already sluggish global economy.

The global lenders are holding their gathering, which brings together finance ministers and central bankers from around the world, in an Arab country for the first time in 20 years. The conflict, which erupted when Palestinian group Hamas launched a bloody attack on Zionist entity from Gaza on Saturday, has raised concerns about its potential impact on the world economy.

Speaking at a press conference in Marrakesh, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the International Monetary Fund was "very closely monitoring how the situation evolves" and how it is affecting oil markets. She said it was "too early" to assess the impact of the conflict, but "this is a new cloud on not the sunniest horizon for the world economy—new cloud, darkening this horizon."

Georgieva noted that the IMF's World Economic Outlook, which was released earlier this week but drafted before the conflict broke out, already showed weak global growth.

The global economy's recovery from the COVID

pandemic has been hit by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, elevated inflation and high interest rates. "Unfortunately, far too many countries and communities are affected by natural disasters, and worse by wars in Ukraine and now in the Middle East that cause tragic loss of civilian lives and tremendous suffering," Georgieva said.

"We mourn the victims," she added. "We are experiencing severe shocks that are now becoming the new normal for a world that is weakened by weak growth and economic fragmentation."

The IMF has kept its growth forecast a 3.0 percent for this year but lowered it to 2.9 percent for 2024, warning that the economy is "limping along, not sprinting." The IMF's growth forecast for the Middle East and North Africa region was cut from 3.1 percent to 2.0 percent for this year, though it is expected to rebound by 3.4 percent in 2024. "Over few months, the world economy has entered into troubled times with the war in Ukraine, conflict in Azerbaijan (and an awful terrorist attack in Zionist entity)," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told reporters. "Geopolitical risks are the most significant risks for the world economy now," Le Maire said.

The conflict between Hamas and Zionist entity has left thousands dead and rattled oil markets amid fears that other nations might intervene and possibly disrupt shipments in the Middle East. Global oil prices have seesawed, jumping at the start of the conflict before easing and rising again on Thursday on concerns about supply flows.

IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourin-

their countries. The court, organized by the activist group Fight Inequality, found the international financial institutions "guilty of fuelling inequality by colluding with the financial sector and powerful multinational corporations".

It said they "pursue an economic model that is entirely flawed and favors political and financial elites" and called on them to "stop working for the richest and start working for the rest". The jury and audience members called the World Bank and International Monetary Fund "the biggest scam of the century" in the verdict read by Bhumika Muchhala, a researcher and analyst who has advised developing nations on sustainable development.

The International Monetary Fund helps governments that find themselves in tough financial situ-

competition in the development of early cancer detection tests," said Commissioner Didier Reynders in a news release outlining "restorative measures" to undo the transaction.

"These tests could represent a breakthrough in our fight against cancer," Reynders said, adding that ordering Illumina to restore GRAIL's independence ensures a "level playing field in this crucial market to the ultimate benefit of European consumers". An Illumina spokesperson said the company "is currently reviewing the divestment order from the European Commission."

Illumina had been anticipating the order since the commission's prior decision in September 2022.

The company has complied with an earlier EU interim order to keep Illumina separate while the legal fight is resolved, according to a person familiar



MARRAKESH: Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva attends the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group (WBG), in Marrakesh on October 12, 2023. — AFP

chas said Tuesday that IMF research shows that a 10 percent increase in oil prices could weigh down on global growth by 0.15 percentage points and increase inflation by 0.4 percentage points. The International Energy Agency said on Thursday the risk of oil supply disruptions due to the war is limited but that it stands ready to intervene in markets if necessary. Jihad Azour, director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia department, said oil prices remain lower than in September.

While it is difficult to have a "clear reading" about the conflict's economic impact, Azour said, the situation is "big, it's an earthquake." — AFP

ations, but requires in exchange economic policies that are often seen as controversial when local social welfare programs are cut and currencies sink in value. The World Bank provides development aid, but is often seen as a slow and cumbersome lender. Both institutions, which underpin the post-WWII global financial system, are holding their first annual meeting in Africa in half a century. Reform to help better serve developing nations is on the agenda.

Zambian farmer Clare Chobela Mukupa said holding the meetings in Africa was an opportunity to promote a movement to combat inequality and promote sustainable development.

"This opportunity has been missed," she told AFP. She complained about the "impossible conditions" they impose on their funding and loans. — AFP

with the situation. In its statement, the EU regulator warned it could impose penalty payments of up to five percent of the group's daily turnover and fines of up to 10 percent of the merged firm's annual global turnover. Illumina has maintained that the commission has no jurisdiction on the matter because GRAIL operates in the United States and Britain and not in EU member states. The company has appealed the matter to the European Court of Justice.

The commission said divestment measures must restore GRAIL's independence prior to the merger; ensure that the company is "as viable and competitive after the divestment" as before the deal; and that the process be executed "within strict deadlines". In July 2023, the commission fined Illumina 432 million euros for having undertaken the deal before its approval "in breach of EU merger control rules". — AFP

## Microsoft fights \$29 billion US back tax claim

**WASHINGTON:** The US Internal Revenue Service is asking that Microsoft pay a whopping \$29 billion in unpaid taxes from 2004 to 2013, the company said in an official filing on Wednesday.

The case puts further focus on the international tax practices of major multinationals that have been accused in recent years of shifting revenue to lower tax jurisdictions in an effort to avoid higher taxes in their major markets. "We disagree with the proposed adjustments and will vigorously contest the (demand) through the IRS's administrative appeals office and, if necessary, judicial proceedings," the company said in its filing to the US markets authority.

In a blog post, Microsoft said the issue with the IRS was with its transferring of revenue across international jurisdictions during the period. The practice, called cost-sharing, is used by "many large multinationals...because it reflects the global nature of their business," the company said.

"We strongly believe we have acted in accordance with IRS rules and regulations and that our position is supported by case law," the blog post added. Reached by AFP, the IRS said it was against US law for it to either confirm or deny an ongoing tax case. Microsoft said that the appeal process with the IRS would take years and if it failed, the company would fight the claim in the courts.

The Windows maker said the demand emerged out of a decade-long discussion with the IRS "about how we allocated our income and expenses for tax years beginning as far back as 2004."

"We have changed our corporate structure and practices since the years covered by the audit, and as a result, the issues raised by the IRS are relevant to the past but not to our current practices," it said.

Microsoft added that "since 2004, we have paid over \$67 billion in taxes to the US." The accounting practices of US big tech companies have long posed a problem for authorities. Governments have accused companies such as Apple, Amazon or Microsoft of shifting revenue through low or zero tax jurisdictions in order to escape taxation in their main markets and maximize profits.

This spurred a major international agreement among 140 countries brokered by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) that is designed to better share and regulate the tax revenue of the giants. The OECD on Wednesday published a draft agreement implementing a major part of that deal with hopes of having it ratified by the end of the year. — AFP



## Activists call IMF, World Bank 'worst scam of the century'

**MARRAKESH:** The IMF and World Bank are responsible for deepening the economic inequality they are meant to address, activists from developing nations said Wednesday as the institutions held their annual meetings. At a "People's Alternative Global Tribunal" organized in the Moroccan city, activists testified about how the policies of the international financial institutions impacted

## EU orders US biotech firm to unwind merger

**BRUSSELS:** The European Commission on Thursday ordered US biotech giant Illumina to unwind its \$7 billion purchase of cancer test pioneer GRAIL, that it argues stifles competition in a key emerging public health domain.

Brussels had previously ordered a halt to the tie-up, but the American firm went ahead with the deal, which has also been challenged by the US Federal Trade Commission. "Today's decision restores



# NBK garlanded with four prestigious awards at Qorus Innovation Awards

Awards in ESG, SME banking, innovation in payments and customer experience categories

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has received four prestigious awards at Qorus Banking Innovation Awards 2023 held in Dubai to spotlight innovations in the field of financial services in the Middle East region. NBK was nominated in 4 categories including Social, Sustainable & Responsible Banking, SME Bank of the Year 2023, Core Offering Innovation, and Reimagining the Customer Experience.

NBK received the Gold Award in Reimagining the Customer Experience category for delivering exceptional banking services and solutions that enable customers to quick and hassle-free banking, through state-of-the-art ITM devices. The bank also received the Bronze Award for its "Bankee" program in the Social, Sustainable & Responsible Banking category, which recognizes the innovations made by institutions to integrate ESG standards into their operations. "Bankee" won this award in appreciation of contribution to promoting financial inclusion and raising financial literacy among government and private school students in Kuwait.



In Core Offering Innovation category, NBK received the Bronze Award for adopting the most advanced technologies and services in payment systems, as well as providing a wide range of cutting-edge digital payment solutions. The fourth recognition was in the SME Banking category as the bank received the Silver Award in "SME Bank of

The Year" for demonstrating exceptional customer support by providing innovative and digital offerings that are designed to meet the unique needs of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Qorus is a global non-profit organization established in 1971 by banks and insurance companies. Headquartered in Paris, Qorus serves financial institutions on all continents, with offices in Brussels, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, London, Milan, Seoul, and Tokyo.

NBK is the largest financial institution in Kuwait with effective market dominance in the commercial banking market and has been consistently awarded one of the highest credit rating of all banks in the region from Moody's, Standard & Poor's, and Fitch Ratings. NBK also stands out in terms of its local and international network, which includes branches and subsidiaries in China, Geneva, London, Paris, New York, and Singapore alongside its regional presence in Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the UAE.

## US Fed agreed to hold rates high 'for some time'

WASHINGTON: US Federal Reserve officials agreed last month they should hold interest rates high "for some time" in their ongoing fight against inflation, according to minutes of the meeting published Wednesday.

Officials also discussed if it was time to signal to financial markets that policymakers were shifting from contemplating future hikes to considering how long to keep monetary policy tight, minutes of the meeting on September 19-20 show. Fed policymakers chose to hold rates steady in that meeting after raising them to a 22-year high to tackle runaway inflation by raising the cost of borrowing.

But while the rate of price increases has slowed markedly since last summer, it remains stuck above the Fed's long-term target of two percent. "All participants agreed that policy should remain restrictive for some time until the Committee is confident that inflation is moving down sustainably toward its objective," the minutes showed. They added that several participants felt the Fed should pivot policy decisions and communications "from how high to raise the policy rate to how long to hold the policy rate at restrictive levels."

"The minutes are consistent with the hawkish immediate post-meeting communications from Chair Powell and others, Pantheon Macroeconomics Chief Economist Ian Shepherdson wrote in a note to clients. But he noted that "the world now looks rather different than on September 20," given a recent surge in yields on long-dated government bonds and the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Members of the Fed's rate-setting committee have remained united on interest rate decisions since the start of an aggressive campaign of monetary tightening back in March 2022. With the bulk of the interest rate hikes now done, policymakers have been arguing for different approaches in between meetings, with some still pushing for more rate hikes, and others calling for a prolonged pause.—AFP



Manal Al-Matar, Ghadeer Al-Awadi, Faisal Al-Fulaj and Anwar Al-Balam receiving the awards.



شركة الصفاة للاستثمار  
AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY

## KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK ENDED ON 12 OCTOBER 2023

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No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	875	854	876	838	38	33,076,751	-21	-2.40%	-16.82%	846	860	12.7	1.62	4.0%	1.04
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	259	254	259	252	7	13,829,800	-5	-1.93%	-15.06%	253	256	12.7	1.18	3.7%	1.30
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	152	152	153	147	6	38,045,457	0	0.00%	-15.15%	151	160	15.7	0.57	2.4%	1.12
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	181	172	181	172	9	3,131,178	-8	-4.44%	-17.53%	172	185	17.6	0.67	4.4%	1.34
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	721	709	726	701	25	61,048,837	-13	-1.80%	-5.24%	705	715	18.4	1.80	2.4%	1.17
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	603	600	606	588	18	11,091,398	-6	-0.99%	-20.30%	593	618	39.4	2.44	1.0%	1.21
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	129	122	129	121	8	3,070,345	-7	-5.43%	-19.74%	119	123	8.9	0.57	4.0%	1.82
204	National Investments	Financial Services	224	213	225	208	17	4,579,922	-10	-4.48%	-10.13%	206	214	166.4	0.97	13.1%	1.99
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	113	114	117	109	8	20,912,361	1	0.88%	1.79%	110	116	28.0	0.65	0.0%	0.99
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	176	165	178	162	16	26,273,195	-12	-6.78%	46.35%	162	172	31.7	1.25	2.3%	1.16
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	165	154	166	152	14	30,901,932	-12	-7.23%	15.79%	151	158	9.2	1.12	4.8%	1.65
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	63.3	59	63.7	59	4.7	2,462,962	-4.3	-6.79%	-21.23%	57.1	60.1	-	0.38	14.8%	1.29
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	168	161	169	160	9	27,678,127	-8	-4.73%	53.55%	158	166	15.0	1.16	1.8%	1.07
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	870	835	872	827	45	2,715,653	-35	-4.02%	4.38%	825	838	17.3	1.85	1.6%	1.06
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	101	98.5	101	97.3	3.7	16,167,499	-1.8	-1.79%	2.58%	97	99	18.2	0.62	2.9%	0.61
501	National Industries	Financial Services	202	202	205	195	10	29,715,023	1	0.50%	-2.26%	200	206	142.6	0.96	2.4%	1.59
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,172	1,105	1,172	1,082	90	3,908,895	-55	-4.74%	-9.05%	1,090	1,149	12.3	1.03	5.4%	1.07
506	HEISCO	Industrials	735	721	743	712	31	492,516	-18	-2.44%	17.62%	720	753	21.6	1.89	2.7%	0.93
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	683	665	685	665	20	3,115,083	-18	-2.64%	-16.88%	665	677	12.5	1.43	9.0%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	537	515	541	512	29	9,446,230	-24	-4.45%	-28.47%	500	533	19.3	0.70	0.0%	1.54
605	Zain	Telecommunications	471	463	475	456	19	17,768,391	-10	-2.11%	-17.76%	459	468	9.4	1.60	7.7%	0.66
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,060	3,150	3,160	2,972	188	1,287,608	90	2.94%	-6.04%	3,100	3,160	8.8	3.65	12.7%	0.66
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	168	167	169	162	7	937,442	-1	-0.60%	-17.73%	162	167	-	0.73	0.0%	1.17
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,489	1,453	1,495	1,440	55	1,115,635	-36	-2.42%	-23.53%	1,440	1,485	16.8	10.07	5.4%	1.48
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	81.4	78	81.4	77.8	3.6	15,112,954	-3.5	-4.29%	2.63%	76.6	79.0	8.7	0.93	6.1%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	186	180	186	179	7	12,645,122	-7	-3.74%	-21.11%	179	188	25.4	0.98	1.6%	1.13
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	500	497	524	496	28	2,767,733	-4	-0.80%	26.46%	490	519	73.7	1.48	2.4%	0.45
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	450	453	473	440	33	5,015,982	-6	-1.31%	22.43%	445	458	36.2	1.86	3.3%	0.68
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	182	178	182	176	6	1,666,396	-5	-2.73%	-5.32%	176	181	14.4	1.61	6.7%	0.42
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,803	1,761	1,803	1,760	43	942,061	-37	-2.06%	-14.18%	1,700	1,770	22.9	6.33	4.7%	0.94
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	1,117	1,060	1,127	1,035	92	2,280,164	-55	-4.93%	31.68%	1,033	1,069	12.0	3.73	6.5%	0.69

\* As of end of week closing

## Business

# Fertile Cuba relies on food imports as farmers lack seeds and fuel

## Govt grappling with tough sanctions and worst economic crisis

ARTEMISA, Cuba: Crop production has plummeted in fertile Cuba as aid for farmers from a government grappling with tough sanctions and the worst economic crisis in decades has dried up.

The country today imports almost all its basic foodstuffs, up from an already high 80 percent before the coronavirus pandemic, according to official figures. In Artemisa, an agricultural province, a farmer in his 60s told AFP his land was "splendid" but a lack of fertilizer and seeds made his task impossible.

The farmer, who asked not to be named in a country where the government does not take kindly to criticism, belongs to a cooperative that used to receive all its basic materials from the state.

But now "we have nothing, they don't give anything," he said. "We have bad tractors. We have no resources. There is no fuel. We are not receiving oil or tires. We have to till the land with a team of oxen," said the farmer. Artemisa was formerly a breadbasket of the island nation, where most sectors are still under the control of the one-party state.

In the past, each of Artemisa's municipalities had a center to store crops and market them, but these are now "all but non-existent. There is no way to market or transport the crops," said the farmer.

According to official figures, Cuban agricultural production fell 35 percent between 2019 and 2023. Production of sugar, once the country's emblematic product, plummeted from 816,000 tons in the 2020-2021 season

to 470,000 in 2021-2022, and most of the rice and beans—Cuban staples—are arriving from abroad.

In September, Economy Minister Alejandro Gil said the government now imports "practically 100 percent of family food essentials." Adding to the structural weaknesses of the Cuban economy is a slow recovery for tourism—the second source of foreign currency earnings before the pandemic—and the tightening of US sanctions since 2021.

The government already distributes much of the food on the island at subsidized prices through a rationing system for Cuba's 11 million people. Elsewhere in Artemisa, small-scale farmer Jesus, who did not want to give his full name either, said the yield of malanga, a tuber highly favored by Cubans, has fallen by half. This plantation "gives four to six bags per furrow, before it was double. But now the harvest is truly a matter of luck," said Jesus, standing barefoot in the field he has worked for 40 years.

World Food Program (WFP) representative Etienne Labande told AFP the threat of food insecurity is real. "There is a shortage of locally-produced food and it is well known that importing to Cuba is very complicated" due to the US embargo in force since 1962. "So there is a risk," he said.

The problems have worsened since a monetary reform in 2021 saw inflation rise to 45.8 percent between January and May that year and 39 percent in 2022, according to official figures.

Some analysts say inflation has likely reached triple digits. A recent WFP report said higher prices of basic



ALQUÍZAR, Cuba: A farmer works in a field of onions in Alquízar, Artemisa Province, Cuba, on September 29, 2023. — AFP

goods and services have increased "households' vulnerability to food insecurity."

According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, "a person is food insecure when they lack regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life." When he took power in 2008, then-president Raul Castro initiated an agricultural reform to stimulate food production.

It allowed farmers to till idle lands that did not belong to them, shuttered unproductive state farms and authorized direct food sales to the tourist sector. But Pavel Vidal, a Cuban economist and academic at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Cali, Colombia, said that if the government "does not rely on market logic (the reforms) will not bear fruit." Official figures show that imports in the first half of 2023 reached

\$4.3 billion, of which \$1.6 billion was for food and a large part of the rest spent on oil. Exports were worth only \$1.28 billion. "We cannot, with available land and the capacity to produce, (wait) for the rice ship to come from abroad, nor the bean ship," Gil, the economy minister, warned in July. In early October, the Cuban agency Prensa Latina announced that eggs and coffee would be arriving soon from Costa Rica. —AFP

## Recriminations fly in Argentina as peso flounders

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's election campaign was marked by heated exchanges Wednesday as the incumbent president pressed charges against frontrunner candidate Javier Milei for ditching the national currency, which subsequently crashed. President Alberto Fernandez announced he had reported Milei for "public intimidation" after the candidate said Monday the Argentine peso "isn't worth excrement."

Milei, who is presenting himself as an anti-establishment candidate, urged people away from investment in the local currency, saying: "never in pesos, never in pesos."

The currency crashed to over 1,000 to the dollar on the informal market, a record low, from 880 before the weekend. The informal or "blue dollar" exchange rate is now almost three times the official rate of 365.50 to the dollar.

In his complaint, published by news agency Telam, Fernando invoked a section of the penal code that punishes acts that "inspire public fear or provoke tumult or disorder" by between two and six years in prison. Fernandez also cited two other leaders of Milei's La Libertad Avanza (LLA) party, saying the trio's actions were directly responsible for the peso's collapse.

Milei retorted that the powers that be were seeking to "ban the most-voted political force" ahead of a first round of presidential elections on October 22. He came out tops in a countrywide primary vote in August, and is ahead in opinion polls. "Let them file all the complaints they want, nothing will prevent the beating we will give them at the polls," Milei said.

He said he had not even been in politics two years, and blaming him for the state of the economy—with inflation at over 120 percent, poverty at 40 percent and a dearth of foreign currency—was disingenuous.

Also Wednesday, the ruling party candidate and Economy Minister Sergio Massa, said he would request "a psychological and psychiatric evaluation of the candidates" before any second voting round. "Being president requires a certain emotional stability," he said, without naming Milei.

The other presidential contender Patricia Bullrich has also expressed concern about Milei's "emotional instability." Milei, an economist who is positioning himself as an outsider, has vowed to dollarize Argentina's economy. He has also said he wants to abolish the Central Bank, ban abortion, liberalize the sale of arms and open up a market for the sale of human organs.

The dollar has long been a safe haven from the peso, and Argentines buy the currency whenever they can as a form of savings and protection from foreign exchange volatility. The "blue dollar" has flourished in recent years as the government has restricted citizens to buying \$200 a month due to diminishing foreign reserves. —AFP

## US consumer inflation holds steady in Sept

WASHINGTON: Consumer inflation held steady in the United States last month, according to government data released Thursday, giving policymakers some reprieve in their battle to tamp down price increases.

The consumer price index (CPI), a closely watched inflation gauge, rose 3.7 percent from a year ago, the same rate as in August, the Labor Department said.

But on a month-to-month basis, inflation slowed from 0.6 percent to 0.4 percent, according to the latest report. In addition, the index with volatile food and energy segments stripped out cooled to 4.1 percent—the lowest in two years.

Slowing inflation will be good news for the Federal Reserve, which has waged an aggressive campaign of interest rate hikes since March last year

to lower demand and in turn, the pace of rising costs.

Although Fed policymakers have left the door open to another rise in the benchmark lending rate this year, lower inflation figures could reduce the need for one at their next meeting. Apart from shelter costs, "an increase in the gasoline index was also a major contributor," to the monthly rise, said the Labor Department. "While the major energy component indexes were mixed in September, the energy index rose 1.5 percent over the month," the department noted. Despite headline inflation being slightly higher than analysts expected, the energy bump is "not necessarily something that will be of key importance for the Fed at this juncture," EY chief economist Gregory Daco told AFP.

"If you look forward to October, the decline in gasoline prices is actually going to weigh quite significantly on the headline CPI print," he added. Meanwhile, with core inflation at 4.1 percent, the United States is "heading back to the period before which inflation started to really ramp up



ALHAMBRA, United States: People pump gas into their vehicles at a Shell petrol station on October 2, 2023, in Alhambra, California. — AFP

aggressively," Daco said. The month-on-month figure for core inflation remained at 0.3 percent, but economists have noted that this does not mean the downward trend is stalling.

"The forces which drove up core inflation—excess demand, the supply chain crunch, rapid wage growth, COVID-driven chaos in the rental prop-

erty market, and soaring food and energy prices—continue to abate," said economists at Pantheon Macroeconomics in a recent report.

Analysts are also keeping an eye on potentially widening unrest in the crude-rich Middle East, after militant group Hamas launched a surprise attack on Zionist entity over the weekend. —AFP

## Egg shortage leaves supermarket shelves empty in S Africa

JOHANNESBURG: Supermarket retailers in South Africa said on Thursday they were grappling with an egg shortage triggered by a major bird flu outbreak that has seen shelves going empty across the country in recent weeks.

Grocery store chains said they have been forced to hike prices and ration eggs, as producers contend with the disease, which has caused the loss of millions of chickens since April.

"We have implemented a limit on whole egg pur-

chases in all... stores and online to 6 eggs per customer," retailer Woolworths said. The company was working with its farmers "to ensure regular supply returns soonest". Only two lonely six-egg cartons were left on the shelves of one of the retailer's stores in an affluent Johannesburg suburb on Thursday morning.

Shoprite, another major supermarket chain, told AFP it had also been affected.

"We continue to work closely with our egg suppliers, securing as much stock as possible and utilizing our supply chain to transport it to regions experiencing shortages," it said.

One of the continent's major poultry producers, South Africa reported the first bird flu cases in commercial farms in April, according to an industry group. In some stores prices have doubled, impacting cafes and restaurants and families.

"(The) cost of eggs has risen to extreme levels,"

## PlayStation unveils controller for disabled gamers

LONDON: With large buttons arranged in a circle and a joystick on one side, Sony is launching a PlayStation controller from December, designed to make gaming easier for people with disabilities. The gaming giant has been under pressure to address an issue seen as long neglected by the industry despite rivals bringing similar products to market in recent years.

"I wouldn't be surprised to see able-bodied people using it" said impressed gamer Jeremy Lecerf, aka Gyzmo. Sitting in a wheelchair, the Frenchman specialising in video games and disability was invited by Sony to London to test its new device, which overturns the design of traditional controllers.

He suffers from myopathy and is an ambassador for the French association HandiGamer, which supports disabled gamers. The new controller "is extremely well thought-out", according to Lecerf, because the company has tried

to make it accessible to people with a range of disabilities.

"It's good to see that the industry is really taking the plunge" on the issue of accessibility, added the 39-year-old, as he tested the "access controller" on "Stray", an adventure video game in which the player takes on the role of a cat. "More and more (video game) publishers are playing the game," he noted. Two-thirds of disabled gamers face barriers to playing games, and 40 percent have bought video games that they were unable to use because of poor accessibility, according to a 2021 report by UK disability equality charity Scope.

But the issue now appears to be in the crosshairs of the major studios, publishers and manufacturers, seemingly driven by both ethical and financial arguments.

"Video games have enabled me to have a life that is closer to normality, to have a social life," said Lecerf. They are an "extremely inclusive tool that opens you up to the world," he added. Taking accessibility issues into account is "an industry-wide trend, not limited to PlayStation," explained Alvin Daniel, Senior Technical Program Manager at PlayStation.

"We wanted not the player to adapt to the controller but the controller to adapt to the player. "No two people experience a disability in exactly the same way," he added. The new device can be placed on a table or fixed to a stand and orientated in any direction.



LONDON: Jeremy Lecerf, also known as Mr Gyzmo, tries out the new PlayStation Access controller at a demonstration event in London. — AFP

Each button can change shape thanks to magnetic caps, making them easier to press or grab, and the user can assign any function to them. "For me it was a bit big, and the buttons are a bit stiff to press, but you can attach external buttons to it, which is a good thing for me to have," said Melanie Eilert, a German game player. She is also an accessibility consultant and suffers from spinal muscular atrophy. —AFP

Lifestyle



Visitors stand next to "Vocabulary of ruin and the divine wound" by Kira Freije during a press preview for the Frieze Masters Art Fair in Regents Park in London.--AFP photos



Artworks by German artist Daniel Richter are pictured during a photocall ahead of the opening of an exhibition entitled 'Stupor' at the Thaddaeus Ropac gallery.

# FRIEZE LONDON CELEBRATES 20TH YEAR OF FAIRS IN UK CAPITAL

Emerging artists and big names in contemporary art will both feature as Frieze London, one of the world's biggest and most prestigious contemporary art fairs, opens to the public on Thursday. Now in its 20th year, the fair has grown in profile and spread to other major global cities since first showcasing an eclectic se-

Kristell Chade, executive director of Frieze Fairs, said this year is its "most international edition to date," with 160 galleries from 40 countries exhibiting at its Regent's Park home. "Obviously we have those incredibly exciting international galleries showing at the fair, but they are showing alongside a strong contingent of London-based exhibitors," she told AFP. VIPs and contemporary art professionals flocked to the site Wednesday for an invitation-only preview, taking selfies or filming themselves in front of paintings.

"I am an architect and come to the fair to find some inspiration for my work, but also because I love watching the people here," confided Victoria Wagner, as she wandered the aisles with a gallery-owning friend. Chinese artist Ai Weiwei, British artist Sarah Lucas and her compatriot Damien Hirst are among the headliners at this year's show, which runs until Sunday.

Hirst is presenting his new series "The Secret Gardens Paintings" at the entrance to the huge white tent hosting the event. Millicent Wilner, one of the directors of the renowned Gagosian galleries, called that a "fitting tribute" for the fair's 20th birthday. "Damien is an artist who's so integral to the boom of contemporary art in London in the last 20 years," she said.

**Galleries galore**  
Following on from his cherry blossom paintings exhibited at the Fonda-



Artworks by German artist Daniel Richter are pictured during a photocall ahead of the opening of an exhibition entitled 'Stupor' at the Thaddaeus Ropac gallery.



A visitor looks at "Facetime (L'Empereur Caligula, de face)" by Theo Mercier during a press preview for the Frieze Masters Art Fair in Regents Park.

lection of modern art in the British capital back in 2003. The fair is now a key date in the art world's calendar and an opportunity for artists, gallery owners, wealthy collectors, enthusiasts and others to view—and buy—new works.

tion Cartier in Paris in 2021, the artist is again unveiling luminous paintings inspired by nature. They are a far cry from the provocative installations and sculptures of his early days, such as the pickled sharks or bisected cow displayed in a tank of formaldehyde. But the artist, who has offered works as NFTs with the original versions burned at Frieze 2022, has continued his innovative digital links by using artificial intelligence to aid creating the latest paintings.

The fair may only be opening Thursday, but the acclaimed British

artist's works on display "have all been acquired by both private collectors and institutions", Wilner told AFP. As well as being a cultural occasion, Frieze is also a major commercial event, with renowned galleries paying considerable sums to showcase the works of their artists. Emerging galleries are also trying to make a name for themselves.

London exhibitors Public are presenting works by British artist Adam Farah-Saad, including a purple soda fountain emanating a cherry scent. A few meters (feet) further on, visitors stop in amazement to see dozens of

larger-than-life snails glued to a box.

Printed in 3D and painted by hand, they were created by artist Patrick Goddard in response to claims by some that Britain faces an "invasion" of migrants, explained Victoria Al-Din, associate director of the Seventeen gallery. Last year, 60,000 visitors and collectors strolled through Regent's Park for Frieze and Frieze Masters, which showcases works created before the 21st century.—AFP



A visitor stands in front of a collage of artworks during a press preview for the Frieze Masters Art Fair in Regents Park.



A visitor looks at "Garden of Expression" and "Beautiful Garden" by Damien Hirst during a press preview for the Frieze Masters Art Fair in Regent's Park.



Visitors look at "Untitled" by Katharina Grosse during a press preview for the Frieze Masters Art Fair in Regent's Park.

## Jada Pinkett Smith says separated from Will Smith since 2016

Actor Jada Pinkett Smith has been separated from husband Will Smith since 2016 -- six years before the infamous "Oscars Slap"—she revealed in an interview that aired Wednesday. The Hollywood power couple's marriage came under intense spotlight at last year's Academy Awards, when Smith struck comedian Chris Rock on stage for making a joke about his wife. But the pair had already been living "totally separate lives" for years before the notorious incident, Pinkett Smith told NBC News.

"By the time we got to 2016 we were just exhausted with trying," she said, in an advance clip from an interview to promote her new memoir, "Worthy." Rumors of affairs and an open marriage were repeatedly denied by the couple for many years. But in 2020, Pinkett Smith openly discussed an extramarital "entanglement" she had with singer August Alsina some years earlier, during a period of separation from her husband.

According to Wednesday's snippet, that separation has endured until the present day, although the pair remain legally married. Asked why the couple had chosen to conceal their separation, Pinkett Smith said they were "just not... ready yet" and "still

trying to figure out between the two of us how to be in partnership."

"We just got deep love for each other and we are going to figure out what that looks like for us," Pinkett Smith told People magazine, in a separate interview. Pinkett Smith also discussed the Oscars ceremony of March 2022, in an excerpt from her memoir published Wednesday.

Rock was presenting on stage when he made a crack about Pinkett Smith's closely cropped head. She has alopecia. Smith mounted the stage and slapped the comedian hard across the face, before returning to his seat and yelling obscenities at the presenter. In the excerpt, Pinkett Smith recalls that she initially thought the slap was a "skit," and even once she realized it wasn't, remained "unclear on the reason why Will is so upset." "We had been living separate

lives and were there as family, not as husband and wife," she writes. Pinkett Smith told People that Rock had once asked her out when he thought she and Smith had separated.

"I think every summer all the reports would come out that me and Will were getting a divorce, and this particular summer, Chris, he thought that we were getting a divorce," she told the magazine. "So he called me and basically he was like, 'I'd love to take you out,'" she said, adding that she had put him straight that there was no divorce in the offing. "He was appalled. And he profusely apologized and that was that," she said.—AFP



US actor Will Smith and US actress Jada Pinkett Smith attend the 94th Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California.

## Rushdie to release book on near-fatal stabbing

British author Salman Rushdie is to release a memoir about the stabbing attack that nearly killed him last year when a knife-wielding assailant jumped on stage at an arts event in New York state. Rushdie, who lost sight in one eye in the attack, has faced death threats since his 1988 novel "The Satanic Verses" was declared blasphemous by Iran's supreme leader. "This was a necessary book for me to write: a way to take charge of what happened, and to answer violence with art," he said in a statement via his publishers, Penguin Random House.

The book, entitled "Knife: Meditations After an Attempted Murder," will be released next April. Rushdie said in May he was working again, having struggled to write for several months. Nihar Malaviya, CEO of Penguin Random House, described it as "a searing book, and a reminder of the power of words to make sense of the unthinkable."

She hailed "Salman's determination to tell his story, and to return to the work he loves." Rushdie was stabbed multiple times in the neck and abdomen at a literary conference in the small town of Chautauqua, before attendees and guards subdued

the attacker. The Booker Prize-winning author, 76, has since worn glasses with a black lens over his right eye at rare public appearances.

Rushdie lived in hiding for years after Iran's first supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ordered his killing. A naturalized American based in New York, he has also been a leading campaigner for free speech. Rushdie's attacker, Hadi Matar, a 24-year-old from New Jersey with roots in Lebanon, has pleaded not guilty to assault charges.—AFP



British author Salman Rushdie

## Lifestyle



Peasant Rebeca Perez, 28, collects the eggs she will later sell, in the municipality of Santa Maria Nebaj, Quiche Department, Guatemala.—AFP photos



Peasant Edwin Lopez reads a book to his four-year-old son Dylan in the municipality of San Juan Cotzal.



Peasant Edwin Lopez feeds his chickens.

## Chickens keep Indigenous Guatemalans from migration agonies, for now

A brood of chickens cluck in the barn as Rebeca Perez collects eggs to sell in her village in western Guatemala—an endeavor she hopes will keep her from emigrating to the United States as her brothers did, driven by poverty. Many of her neighbors in the Mayan settlement of Santa Maria Nebaj have left, but the single mother of two children aged eight and 11 is intent on providing for her family with her feathery flock.

"You can generate income here, not only there" in the United States, the 28-year-old told AFP. With about 250 other farmers from seven municipalities in the Quiche department, Perez is learning agricultural production and marketing techniques thanks to a program created in 2020 by the NGO Save the Children. Run with US and Guatemalan government support, the project seeks to ensure that the children in Quiche—one of the poorest regions of the country—are fed with local food.

Although curbing migration was never the project's main aim, coordinator Lucrecia Mendez said it has lessened the push factor. "Local producers have increased their incomes to cover



Peasant Rebeca Perez collects the eggs she will later sell.

their needs and improve the lives of their families, which has helped reduce irregular migration," she said. Neighbor Jacinto Perez, 27 -- no relation to Rebeca—grows tomatoes and other vegetables in Santa Maria Nebaj, which he delivers to ten schools.

In the nearby municipality of San Juan Cotzal, Edwin Lopez, 38, sells chickens and grows maize and beans with modified seeds provided by the NGO. These two also do not see a

future elsewhere, despite the nation's poverty—which affects 59 percent of Guatemala's 17 million inhabitants—and gang violence, both of which are fueling an ever-growing exodus north. US authorities deported 40,713 Guatemalans in 2022 -- more than double the 2021 figure.

### 'Fight the battle here'

Five years ago, Lopez tried to make the perilous journey via Mexico in the search for a better life in the United States after losing his teaching job. After a nightmarish experience at the hands of smugglers, "hidden, like a slave, without sleeping or eating," he was arrested and spent 27 days in detention before being expelled. "With everything one experiences there... I have no desire to return," he told AFP. "It is better to fight the battle here." The return was not easy. Lopez's home was destroyed by hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020.

He built another, out of wood, where he lives with his wife and two children, aged 13 and four. It is here, in the hills of San Juan Cotzal, that Save The Children approached Lopez, and engaged



Peasant Jacinto Perez checks a tomato plantation in a greenhouse.

him in training about soil conservation, fertilizer and climate change. Rebeca Perez went to study at the ETCAE technical school funded by the NGO in 2023, learning skills to prevent diseases among chickens and increase their egg production.

She started a business in 2016 with a loan from one of her brothers living illegally in Florida. From a handful of hens, she now has 300 and is aiming

for 1,000 by next year. "I already have a market," Perez told AFP, proud to employ six women from her village in the small business. Jacinto Perez, who also trained at ETCAE, employs three people. "Going to the United States is risky... Here on the other hand, we advance bit by bit," he said.—AFP

### Movie Review

## Humans take a back seat in the stunning AI, sci-fi epic 'The Creator'

The artificial intelligence in Gareth Edwards' "The Creator," a visually magnificent if by-the-books epic, is not the AI making headlines at the moment. This is AI in the classic sci-fi mold — the Roy Battys of "Blade Runner," the Avas of "Ex Machina," the ones whose sentience we question and debate endlessly. Will the machines kill us? Take our jobs? Or do something that the movies haven't dreamed possible yet? As the retired special forces guy cleaning up nuclear debris, Joshua (John David Washington), flatly tells a fellow worker when she poses that the AIs were indeed after their jobs: "They can have this one."

Regardless, for now, artificial intelligence is more allegory for the other than aspiring screenwriters, filmmakers or trash collectors. And, for Edwards and his co-writer Chris Weitz, they might even have more capacity for humanity and goodness than humans, which is not exactly part of the ChatGPT conversation either, though that would be an interesting twist.

In the world of "The Creator" they're welcomed by society at first as an unambiguous good — a helpful servant class that have the ability to make our human lives better. But as they so often do in sci-fi dystopias, they turned on us. Actu-



ally, more specifically, they turned on the US when they dropped a nuclear weapon on downtown Los Angeles. Naturally, that means war.

Washington's Joshua lost his family in the attack and when we meet him, he's undercover in New Asia to try to find the creator of these advanced AIs, a shadowy, elusive figure they call Nimrata. Joshua got busy with other pursuits though. He fell in love with, married and is about to welcome a baby with his on-the-ground source Maya (Gemma Chan), taken from him in an unexpected raid by his peers — one of many truly sublime sequences in which a hovering death star-like aircraft called NOMAD scans the lush landscape with ominous blue lasers. Edwards, who had a complicated journey making "Rogue One," does not deny himself the pleasure of

riffing on "Star Wars" iconography. Alison Janney's hardened Colonel later attempts to recruit him for one last shot at finding Nimrata and the ultimate weapon he's suspected of building, but a jaded Joshua demurs that he doesn't care about going extinct: "I've got TV to watch." Of course he eventually says yes and ends up travelling with a Very Special Child, a wide-eyed AI whom he names Alphie (Madeleine Yuna Voyles), who might be able to help him find what he's looking for. Voyles is a captivating presence and undeniably compelling. Unfortunately, the script denies her the edge and nuance that would make her more believable as a person as well as a machine. Even Groggu is a little sassy sometimes.

But this is also a film where the visuals upstage the pretty predictable story and even the actors, including the likes of Washington and Ken Watanabe. The lush landscapes of Southeast Asia are stunningly photographed by Edwards and co-cinematographers Greig Fraser ("Dune") and Oren Soffer, who shot on location in eight countries with an unusually low-cost camera for a Hollywood studio film (the Sony FX3, which goes for under \$4,000).

Speaking of cost — "The Creator"

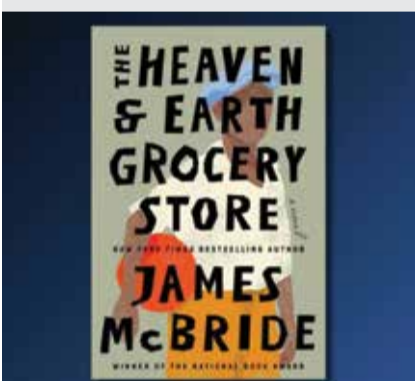
was made for around \$80 million and looks a thousand times better than movies (mainly of the superhero variety) that cost three times as much. This was part of Edwards' design and could be revolutionary for filmmaking. In addition to using a camera any hobbyist could buy at a local store, instead of pre-determining the concept art and visual effects and forcing the actors to look at little silver balls or tracking markers, they added them in after the fact. It makes a huge difference.

"The Creator" is an original movie too, and even if it is a somewhat convoluted and silly mishmash of familiar tropes and sci-fi clichés, it still evokes the feeling of something fresh, something novel, something exciting to experience and behold — which is so much more than you can say about the vast majority of big budget movies these days. And it's worth taking a chance on it at the cinemas.

"The Creator," a 20th Century Studios release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for "strong language, some bloody images, violence." Running time: 132 minutes. Three stars out of four.



Images released by the 20th Century Studios show scenes from "The Creator".



### McBride wins \$50,000 Kirkus Prize for 'The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store'

Three books that explore and celebrate the diversity of American culture were awarded Kirkus Prizes on Wednesday night, with each winner receiving \$50,000. James McBride's "The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store," a novel set in an eclectic Pennsylvania town in the 1930s, won in the fiction category. Héctor Tobar's "Our Migrant Souls: A Meditation on Race and the Meanings and Myths of 'Latino'" received the nonfiction award, and Ariel Aberg-Riger's "America Redux: Visual Stories From Our Dynamic History" won for young reader's literature. The awards were presented by the trade publication Kirkus Reviews.

"History and community emerged as central themes in the most outstanding works of literature published this year. We see these ideas come to life in wildly different ways in all three of this year's winners, each one compelling from beginning to end, begging to be celebrated, discussed, and shared," Meg Kuehn, publisher of Kirkus Reviews, said in a statement. Previous winners of the Kirkus Prize, established in 2014, include Hanya Yanagihara's "A Little Life," Jason Reynolds' "As Brave as You" and Susan Faludi's "In the Darkroom."



Lifestyle



Expo 2023 showcases Qatari traditions.



Sadu weaving in Qatar Expo 2023.



Fishing net is an essential item in traditional jobs.

## Cultural village at Qatar Expo '23: A display of proud heritage

The cultural village at Al-Bidda Park in Rumaila, Qatar, reflects the country's proud heritage and history. As part of the Expo 2023 functions, the village focuses on telling visitors about the history of Qatar and informing them about traditional crafts practiced in the country. Speaking to KUNA on the issue, village supervisor Khaled Al-Ammari said that the facility houses several traditional tents dedicated to certain crafts such as fishing

tools, miniature shipbuilding, and more. The main goal is to tell the world about Qatar's rich traditions, affirmed Al-Ammari, adding that preserving such crafts was a national duty that should be continued for generations to come. International Horticultural Expo 2023, Doha, began on October second under the theme of "Green Desert, Better Environment" and will continue until March 28, 2024.—KUNA



A man weaving palm fronds to make baskets. — KUNA photos



Falconry is essential in the traditions.



Wooden ships making showcased in Expo

# Nepal quake sparks revival of traditional craft skills

Nepal's deadly earthquake eight years ago reduced swathes of centuries-old monuments to rubble, but the vast task of restoration has sparked a revival of once-fading architectural craft skills. Carpenter Dinesh Tamang is one of hundreds of craftspeople who learned a new trade in the quake's aftermath. "I got a chance to work in reconstruction projects, to rebuild damaged temples and houses," said Tamang, who was unemployed before the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that killed nearly 9,000 people.

"It is very rewarding work," he said while carefully carving an intricate pattern on a wooden panel with a chisel and mallet. The 2015 quake also destroyed hundreds of monuments and royal palaces—including the Kathmandu Valley's UNESCO World Heritage sites—that had drawn visitors from around the world. In deeply religious Nepal, temples and heritage sites are not just tourist attractions, but an integral part of cultural and spiritual life.

The public demand for their rebuilding fueled a need for workers adept at traditional architectural techniques including stone masonry and intricate wood and metal work. "Nepal is rich in cultural heritage," Tamang said. "You see temples everywhere and I was always fascinated by the designs on the wood".

Nepal Vocational Academy, where Tamang enrolled, said it had trained hundreds in traditional skills since the quake. "Even though the quake was a

tragic event, it has created opportunities in different sectors," said Rabinendra Puri, a heritage conservationist and the academy's founder.

"The demand for skilled manpower drastically increased", Puri said that the academy expanded its facility after the



In this photograph artisans carve stone sculptures at the Nepal Vocational Academy in Bhaktapur on the outskirts of Kathmandu.--AFP photos

quake to meet the surge in demand for training. "As far as I know, none of our graduates are unemployed," he said.

### 'Live on after us'

Many initially feared Nepal lacked the skills needed for the huge task of rebuilding. The palaces and temples damaged date back to the period between the 12th and 18th centuries when the Kathmandu Valley was di-

vided into the three kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhaktapur. The wood carvers, stone sculptors and metal workers who created the spectacular temples and palaces were once feted from far away and paid handsomely from the royal purse.

These crafts were historically carried out exclusively by families belonging to the Newa ethnic group and passed on through generations. But over time many opted for other professions. "The fathers didn't want to teach the sons, and sons didn't want to learn, so it was close to disappearing," Puri said. The funding for reconstruction has made these professions more economically sustainable.

The government has poured in over \$45 billion to restore its heritage sites, with additional projects funded from countries including neighboring China and India—as well as Japan, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and the United States. About 80 percent of the 920 heritage



In this photograph heritage conservationist and Nepal Vocational Academy founder Rabinendra Puri (right) guides artisans as they craft clay at the academy in Bhaktapur on the outskirts of Kathmandu.

structures that were flattened or damaged have been reconstructed.

Heritage conservationist Rohit Ranjitkar, director of the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust, said that while the renewed interest in learning traditional crafts is encouraging, the focus should be on quality.

"The quality must match the monuments we have... These skills that have

been passed on from generation to generation cannot be learnt with a few months' training," he said. "Practice is important... We need to see how to encourage them, so that they can carry on the skills." Stonework expert Kancha Ranjitkar, 82, who began working with his father as a teenager, said he felt happy alongside younger craftspeople. "Many of the skills are vanishing," he said. "But the quake gave a chance to pass on our knowledge to the next generation... for it to live on after us."—AFP



In this photograph heritage conservationist and Nepal Vocational Academy founder Rabinendra Puri gestures as he speaks during an interview with AFP at the academy in Bhaktapur on the outskirts of Kathmandu.



In this photograph heritage conservationist and Nepal Vocational Academy founder Rabinendra Puri (left) walks past a laborer working to reconstruct a temple in Bhaktapur.



In this photograph heritage conservationist and Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust director Rohit Ranjitkar (fourth right) speaks with laborers at a reconstruction site in the Patan Durbar Square of Lalitpur district on the outskirts of Kathmandu.



In this photograph laborers work at a reconstruction site in the Patan Durbar Square of Lalitpur district on the outskirts of Kathmandu.

## Sports

# Rohit's record ton powers India to World Cup win over Afghanistan

## Rohit's century was also the fastest by an Indian in a World Cup

**NEW DELHI:** Captain Rohit Sharma on Wednesday surpassed compatriot Sachin Tendulkar with a record seventh World Cup century to lead India to a crushing eight-wicket win over Afghanistan. Chasing 273 for victory in New Delhi, the hosts rode on Rohit's 131 to achieve their target in 35 overs for a second straight win in the 50-over showpiece event.

He brought the nearly packed house to its feet with his century off 63 balls to go past Tendulkar's record of six tons in World Cups. "Special to get a World Cup 100. Very happy about that. Don't want to think about records too much because I know there's a long way to go," Rohit said after being named man of the match.

"I know it's my responsibility to give the team a good start and put the team in a good position as much as possible. It's something I've done for a while and love." Rohit's century was also the fastest by an Indian in a World Cup, quicker than Kapil Dev's hundred in 72 balls against Zimbabwe in 1983.

Rohit hit the ball to all parts of the ground as he reached 1,000 World Cup runs and then went past Chris Gayle's record of 553 sixes across all international formats. The dashing opener hit 16 fours and five sixes in his 84-ball knock before being bowled by leg-spinner Rashid Khan. His opening partnership of 156 with the left-handed Ishan Kishan, who made 47, extended the team's dominance after a good bowling show on a batting-friendly pitch.

### Happy homecoming for Kohli

Superstar cricketer and Delhi-born Virat Kohli soon took over to hit an unbeaten 55 and finished the match with a boundary. Kohli had Shreyas Iyer, who made 25 not out and hit the biggest six of 101 metres in the tournament so far, for company at the other end. Rohit said the team has players "who can play fearless cricket".

Afghanistan posted 272-8 after electing to bat at the ground which witnessed a World Cup record 754 runs scored in the previous match when South Africa posted 428 and defeated Sri Lanka. Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah stood out for the home side with his best World Cup bowling figures of 4-39.

Afghanistan slipped to 63-3 before skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi (80) and Azmatullah Omarzai (62) put on 121 runs to help Afghanistan recover. Bumrah got Ibrahim Zadran caught behind for 22 and celebrated by pointing to his temple.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz, on 21, and Rahmat Shah, on 16, fell in the space of four balls with Hardik Pandya and Shardul Thakur taking the wickets. Shahidi, a left-hand batsman, and Omarzai then rebuilt the innings in a century stand, prompting Rohit to rotate his bowlers.

Omarzai reached his second ODI fifty and soon Shahidi smashed Pandya for four to bring up his half-century and followed it up with a six. Omarzai, who hit two fours and four sixes in his 69-ball knock, also attacked but was bowled by Pandya.



**NEW DELHI:** India's Virat Kohli (R) plays a shot as Afghanistan's wicketkeeper Rahmanullah Gurbaz watches during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between India and Afghanistan at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. — AFP

Shahidi kept up the attack with regular boundaries but fell lbw to Kuldeep Yadav in his attempt to reverse sweep the left-arm wrist spinner. Bumrah struck twice including Rashid to keep Afghanistan down on a run-filled wicket. "We have seven more games, looking

forward to those games," said Shahidi. "Hopefully we learn from our mistakes and we will work on it." The Afghans lost their opening match to Bangladesh while tournament favourites India began with a victory over five-time winners Australia. — AFP



**President of Egyptian Bowling Federation Major General Ahmad Nasr with Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad (centre).**

## Teams' bowling championship to begin today

**KUWAIT:** The teams' competition of the World Bowling Championship being held in Kuwait will start today for both men and women as all teams are hoping to present their best in this the strongest and most important competitions of the tournament.

The tournament will conclude on Sunday as

Kuwait presented a good example that should be followed and as an exceptional tournament. President of Egyptian Bowling Federation Major General Ahmad Nasr said Kuwait dazzled the world with its hosting and organizing the tournament which turned out to be perfect in addition to the opening ceremony. He said the bowling center which is a piece of architectural genius attracted all guests and received their appreciation.

He said competitions were strong as the best in the world were keen to be present and thanked the organizing committee headed by Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad who made sure all must be as expected and appreciated the general assembly's keenness to keep him at the helm for the third consecutive term.

## Biggar to start for Wales in WCup q-final against Argentina

**TOULON:** Warren Gatland has named influential play-maker Dan Biggar as starting fly-half for Wales in their World Cup quarter-final against Argentina in Marseille on Saturday. Biggar sustained a chest injury in the 40-6 thrashing of Australia, but was forced into action as a replacement against Georgia after Gareth Anscombe, initially down to start, had to withdraw with a groin injury. Flanker Jac Morgan is back to captain the side after being rested for the 43-19 win over Georgia that saw Wales finish unbeaten in their pool after previous victories over Fiji, Portugal and Australia. Gatland made six changes to the team that defeated Georgia, with three in the forward pack and three in the back-line.

"We had a goal of making the quarter-finals which we have achieved. Now it's about building on that momentum," said Gatland, who is eyeing a third World Cup semi-final appearance with Wales. "It's exciting to enter into the knock-out stages of the tournament and we are ready for the challenge of a quarter-final. All our preparation has been geared to getting to this spot and we're very much relishing the opportunity.

"We're expecting another tough encounter this weekend against a physical Argentina side. We haven't had the perfect performance yet, but we have shown that we are a hard team to beat." Gatland added: "There is a lot more growth in this squad—collectively and individually—and we can't wait to get out there in Marseille on Saturday." Morgan makes his fourth start of the tournament and is joined in the Wales back row by Tommy Reffell (opposite flanker) and Aaron Wainwright, at No 8 in place of Taulupe Faleatu, who broke his arm against Georgia. Ryan Elias is named at hooker alongside props Gareth Thomas (loose-head) and Tomas Francis (tight-head), while Adam Beard partners Will Rowlands in the second row. Biggar is joined by Gareth Davies in the halfbacks, as Nick Tompkins and George



**BERRE-L'ETANG:** Argentina's scrum-half Lautaro Bazan Velez (2ndR) takes part in a training session in the Stade de l'Arc stadium in Berre-L'Etang, near Marseille, southeastern France. — AFP

North continue in midfield, the latter making his 20th World Cup appearance in his fourth tournament. Liam Williams has overcome a bang on the knee to be named at full-back with Josh Adams and Louis Rees-Zammit on the wings. Hooker Dewi Lake and props Corey Domachowski and Dillon Lewis, along with Dafydd Jenkins and Christ Tshunza, provide forward coverage from the bench. The back line cover comes in the form of Tomos Williams, Sam Costelow and Rio Dyer.

## N Zealand seek to emulate All Blacks at Cricket WCup

**CHENNAI:** Kane Williamson said the legacy of the All Blacks inspires New Zealand's cricketers as he prepares to return from a long injury layoff to captain the team at the World Cup. New Zealand have won their opening two matches in India in the absence of their skipper, who injured his knee while playing in the Indian Premier League in late March.

The Black Caps face Bangladesh in Chennai on Friday in their third match of the tournament. "It's been quite a journey but largely a good one that's had some really good progress and you know I've said a number of times, really excited to be named in the World Cup squad, be sitting here now and really excited at the prospect of tomorrow," he said on Thursday.

Williamson, 33, was asked whether that legacy of success inspired his men. "We love the All Blacks," he said. "You know, coming from New Zealand obviously rugby is our number one game and so I think everybody in the squad is pretty passionate about rugby and following their journey at the moment at the World Cup and the success that they've had.

"For us, we've had some really enjoyable times recently and got pretty close, but you still have to start again. And there's been some good performances so far." He added: "We're here as a cricket team but I think something that you do hear often about their side is their culture, their environment, and their ability to keep moving forward as a team and adapting to what's in front of them, whether that's the movement of the game and how that keeps changing and evolving. — AFP



**MANCHESTER:** Pakistan's Mohammad Hafeez (R) walks back to the pavilion after his dismissal during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between India and Pakistan at Old Trafford in Manchester. — AFP

## Four key India-Pakistan battles at World Cup

**AHMEDABAD:** Arch-rivals India and Pakistan meet in a blockbuster clash at the World Cup on Saturday. AFP Sport takes a look at four key battles that could decide the eagerly-awaited contest at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

### Rohit v Shaheen

India skipper Rohit Sharma has struggled against Shaheen Shah Afridi's left-arm pace in the few outings the two teams have had in recent times. Shaheen rattled Rohit's off stump in their first Asia Cup match in Pallekele last month when the opener's lack of footwork saw him bowled for 11.

The duel began at the T20 World Cup in 2021 when Shaheen trapped Rohit lbw for a duck in the first over in Dubai with his pace and swing. But Rohit came back prepared when the rivals next met in Colombo and remained cautious against the quick despite hitting a six off his first over.

### Kohli v Rauf

The stakes were high when Virat Kohli came up against Haris Rauf in a challenging chase at the T20 World Cup in Melbourne last year. India needed 31 off the last 18 balls while chasing 160 when Kohli held his nerve to smash Rauf for two sixes to bring the house down at a packed MCG.

The first was a length ball which Kohli dispatched straight down the ground and he flicked the next to over fine-leg en route to victory. Kohli later said the sixes were "instinctive", but it began a great battle with the Pakistan quick which awaits another showdown in Ahmedabad.

### Azam v Bumrah

Jasprit Bumrah experienced the Pakistan captain's ability at the 2021 T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates. Azam took on the Indian attack including Bumrah, a yorker king, with ease as he and Mohammad Rizwan steered the team to a 10-wicket victory in Dubai. But two years later Bumrah and company seemed to have learnt their lessons when they bowled out Pakistan for 128 in a crushing 228-run win in an Asia Cup Super Four clash. Bumrah beat the bat of Azam on a few occasions in Colombo before Hardik Pandya got the prized wicket.

### Iftikhar v Kuldeep

Iftikhar Ahmed is a middle-order batsman who can play anchor or go after the bowling with equal ease but at the Asia Cup last month, India spinner Kuldeep Yadav cut short the batsman's knock, taking a smart catch off his own bowling. Kuldeep, a left-arm wrist spinner, claimed 5-25 in that game as India claimed a 228-run win. Iftikhar's task on Saturday will be to tackle the spinners in the middle overs and also accelerate the scoring. — AFP

Sports

# Jabeur rides roller coaster on way to Zhengzhou last eight

## Korda holds off Shelton to battle into Shanghai semi-finals

SHANGHAI: World number seven Ons Jabeur defied a bad knee on Thursday to finally defeat Italian Lucia Bronzetti 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) and reach the quarter-finals of the Zhengzhou Open. Playing with her right knee taped, the Tunisian three-time Grand Slam finalist failed to serve out the victory on three occasions and needed five match points to move past the 63rd-ranked Italian in just under two hours.

A champion in Ningbo two weeks ago, Jabeur will next face eighth seed Daria Kasatkina, who beat home player Bai Zhuoxuan 6-2, 6-4. "It was a tough finish obviously, she's a great player, such a fighter," said the 29-year-old Jabeur. "So I'm glad that I got to finish in two (sets). It would have been a different story if it was three sets. We will learn a lot from this match. "I tried to do my best, it's the end of the season and it's very, very tough with the knee. Today it wasn't 100 percent." A seesaw opening set saw a combined five breaks of serve but it was Jabeur who carved out a 5-2 gap and the Tunisian took a one-set lead after 45 minutes.

The fourth seed earned a double-break lead in the second set and looked on track for a smooth victory when she served for the match at 5-2. But Bronzetti had other ideas and snatched the next three games, breaking Jabeur twice to level the frame for five-all, saving a match point along the way.

Jabeur stopped the bleeding as she used her signature drop shot to maximum effect to break Bronzetti and put herself in position to serve for the win for a third time. Still the North African could not close as Bronzetti saved three more match points and broke serve on a Jabeur double fault to take the set into a tiebreak.



Tunisia's Ons Jabeur

Jabeur finally closed out the 74-minute second set, and the contest, on her fifth match point. Kasatkina also had to overcome a second-set fightback from her opponent and needed four match points before she completed a 90-minute victory over 117th-ranked Bai.

The 26-year-old Russian has lost her last five matches to Jabeur. "Ons is an amazing player, she's creative on the court and you never know what to expect from her," said Kasatkina. Germany's Laura Siegemund upset 11th seed and recent Beijing runner-up Liudmila Samsonova 3-6, 6-2, 6-1 to book a quarter-final

against Italian Jasmine Paolini.

Earlier, Sebastian Korda reached his first Masters semi-final as he battled back to tame fast-rising fellow American Ben Shelton 6-7 (10/12), 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) in Shanghai on Thursday. The 26th seed finally sealed the quarter-final on his sixth match point and plays Poland's 16th seed Hubert Hurkacz for a place in Sunday's final. With the centre-court roof closed because of rain in Shanghai, the first set went to a tie break after they exchanged breaks in the 11th and 12th games. US Open semi-finalist Shelton, who un-

dered a serve clocked at 236 kilometres (150 miles) per hour earlier in the set, had Korda on the back foot throughout a gripping tie break.

The pressure finally told when the recently turned 21-year-old Shelton unleashed an ace on his fifth set point that Korda could only watch whizz by. The 23-year-old Korda, whose father Petr reached two in the world at his peak, recovered to break Shelton's big serve at the start of the second set and raced to level the quarter-final at one set all. Korda broke the 19th seed at the start of the deciding set and then dug himself out of a hole, saving three break points to extend his lead to 3-1 and then 4-2. But Korda, whose only previous ATP title came in 2021 in Parma, allowed Shelton back in again and they went to another tie break. Korda let slip five match points from 6-1 in the tie break before belatedly sealing an absorbing encounter in just under three hours.

In the first quarter-final, Hurkacz similarly fought back to defeat unseeded Hungarian Fabian Marozsan 4-6, 6-1, 6-3. The Shanghai Masters is back after four years following the pandemic and has witnessed a succession of shocks.

Top seed Carlos Alcaraz was turfed out in the last 16 to follow Daniil Medvedev—beaten by Korda—Holger Rune, Stefanos Tsitsipas and Jannik Sinner out the exit door. There is only one player from the world's top 10 left in the draw in the form of seventh-ranked Russian Andrey Rublev.

The fifth seed faces 32nd seed Ugo Humbert of France in the quarter-finals while 18th seed Grigor Dimitrov—who turfed out Alcaraz—plays 22nd seed Nicolas Jarry. World number one Novak Djokovic skipped the tournament. — AFP



HOUSTON: Michael Brantley #23 of the Houston Astros hits a single against the Minnesota Twins during the fourth inning in Game Two of the Division Series at Minute Maid Park. — AFP

## Astros, Arizona advance in MLB playoffs

WASHINGTON: Defending champions Houston and the Arizona Diamondbacks advanced in the Major League Baseball playoffs on Wednesday while Philadelphia smashed a record-tying six home runs to defeat Atlanta. Jose Abreu belted a two-run homer and Michael Brantley hit a solo homer for Houston, who won 3-2 at Minnesota to reach the American League Championship Series for a seventh consecutive campaign. "It was a great victory," Astros manager Dusty Baker said. "This was a team win." The Astros defeated Minnesota 3-1 in their best-of-five AL second-round series to book a berth against the Texas Rangers in the best-of-seven ALCS, which starts on Sunday at Houston. Texas swept out Baltimore earlier.

Houston went 9-4 against AL West division rival Texas in the Lone Star State matchup this season, edging the Rangers for the division crown on the final day of the season. "They know us and we know them," Baker said. "It's going to be a heck of a series."

Houston has won four of the past six AL finals on the way to capturing World Series titles last year and in 2017. The Astros are one shy of Atlanta's MLB-record eight consecutive trips to a league finals in the 1990s.

### Team effort

Also advancing were the D-backs, who swept out the Los Angeles Dodgers in their National League series with a 4-2 home victory. Arizona had solo homers

in the third inning from Geraldo Perdomo, Ketel Marte, Christian Walker and Gabriel Moreno to take a 4-0 edge. The Dodgers rallied with two runs in the seventh on consecutive two-out singles by Max Muncy, Will Smith, Chris Taylor and Enrique Hernandez. Arizona reliever Kevin Ginkel retired the top of the Dodgers batting order in the eighth and reliever Paul Sewald delivered the final outs to keep the D-backs unbeaten in the playoffs. "It was a team effort. It's people caring about people. That's what stood out to me," Arizona manager Torey Lovullo said. "There's a lot of love in this clubhouse. It's real and it's here every day." The Diamondbacks, in the last four for the first time since 2007, await either Atlanta or Philadelphia in the NL Championship Series that starts Monday. At Philadelphia, Bryce Harper and Nick Castellanos each smashed two homers in the Phillies' 10-2 romp over Atlanta. The Phillies, who matched the 2015 Chicago Cubs for the most homers in a single MLB playoff game, grabbed a 2-1 series lead with game four Thursday at Philadelphia.

The Braves, who had this season's best MLB record, fell one game from being ousted by the Phillies in the playoffs for a second straight year. At Minneapolis, Royce Lewis smashed a solo homer off Houston's Jose Urquidy in the first inning, but Brantley answered with a solo homer in the second to equalize.

Houston grabbed a 3-1 lead in the fourth when Yordan Alvarez singled and Abreu smashed a homer, his third in two days, to the upper right-field grandstands. In the sixth, Minnesota's Edouard Julien smacked a solo homer over the left-field wall off Urquidy to pull the Twins within 3-2. But Minnesota couldn't manage another hit much less the tying run. In the ninth, Houston relief pitcher Ryan Pressly, now 13-for-13 in playoff saves, struck out Jorge Polanco, Lewis and Max Kepler to end the game.—AFP

## Former world MotoGP champion Marquez to join Gresini Racing

LOMBOK: Marc Marquez will join Ducati satellite team Gresini Racing for the 2024 season, the team said Thursday, days after it was announced he would leave Honda, where he won six world MotoGP titles. The announcement comes ahead of the Indonesian MotoGP on the resort island of Lombok, with just six races left in the season with the Japanese team. "The Gresini Family is pleased to announce the arrival of Marc Marquez for the 2024 season," his new team said in a statement on the MotoGP website.

"Starting next season, he will be the new standard bearer of Gresini Racing MotoGP alongside his brother Alex," it said. The 30-year-old Spaniard, who has been hampered by injury since the start of the 2020 season, had one year left of his four-year deal with Honda. Both parties agreed to go their separate ways a year early. "I'm excited about this new challenge. It wasn't an easy decision because it's a big change in every way," Marquez said in the statement. "But sometimes in life, it's important to get out of your comfort zone and put yourself through the paces in order to keep growing."

Marquez—currently 15th in the MotoGP standings—said he would likely have to adapt his riding style for his new team after so many years at Honda. "It won't be easy. But I'm also sure that the whole Team Gresini will help me a lot. I can't wait to get to know the team and start working with them," he said.

Marquez was in good spirits at a later news conference but paid his respects to his team of 11 years.

"It has been a super difficult decision. It was a little bit hard on the personal side because all my staff, all my friends, all my family are there," he said.

"One of the big reasons, the biggest doubt, was all my team," Marquez said he made the decision last week to give Honda more time to deal with his exit and said that he moved to enjoy his racing again.

"The easiest way was to stay in Honda. Situation under control, bike under control. But if I want to take care of myself and my career, I need to find a new challenge," he said. "It's true that for a long time, especially last four years... I couldn't enjoy. If I smile, then everything will come."

### Historical moment

He said he chose Gresini for several reasons, including the quality of its bike. "It's a big family. It has the best bike on the grid. And my brother is there," he said. He said he would not seek to take many of his Honda colleagues across to Gresini because he did not want to "destroy" the team.

"I am trying to bring at least one mechanic, that would not be a problem," he said. Gresini owner Nadia Padovani said it was "a historical moment" for the team. "The fact that Marc Marquez chose to race with us in the upcoming season is absolutely fantastic and I'm extremely happy to be able to make it official," she said. Padovani said they were sure "he has all the potential to be competitive" next season. Marquez joined Honda after winning the Moto2 title in 2012. He became the youngest race winner, at Austin, Texas, in his first season in the premier class with Honda and ended the season the youngest champion.

He won the title in five of the next seasons and has 59 wins, 101 podium finishes and 64 pole positions so far in 11 seasons with Honda. But he has missed 30 starts in the past four campaigns and has not won since Emilia Romagna in October 2021.—AFP



KUTA MANDALIKA: Repsol Honda MotoGP rider Marc Marquez of Spain (R), Ducati Lenovo Team rider Francesco Bagnaia of Italy (C) and Prima Pramac Racing rider Jorge Martin of Spain attend a press conference ahead of the MotoGP Indonesian Grand Prix at the Mandalika International Circuit in Kuta Mandalika, Central Lombok, on October 12, 2023. — AFP

# Classifieds

## Clinics & Hospitals

### Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913

Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

### Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005

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

## Change of Name

I, **VINITHA ROSHNI DSOUZA** holder of Passport No. X5373929 do hereby change my name to **VINEETHA ROSHNI** (as Given name) **DSOUZA** (as Surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **VINEETHA ROSHNI DSOUZA** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. **(C#4243) 12-10-2023**

## Former F1 boss Bernie Ecclestone escapes jail in UK court fraud case

'F1 is what it is thanks to Bernie, to the way he built this sport over 35 years'

**LONDON:** Former Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone on Thursday received a non-custodial sentence after pleading guilty in a UK court to charges of failing to declare a multi-million-pound trust in Singapore to the British tax authorities. The 92-year-old, wearing a dark suit and grey tie, told London's Southwark Crown court: "I plead guilty."

He was handed a 17-month sentence suspended for two years, meaning he will only serve jail time if he reoffends within that time. Ecclestone was charged last year over an alleged failure to declare more than £400 million (\$453 million) of overseas assets to the UK government in 2015, and was due to stand trial in November.

He had previously told tax officials that he did not have any undeclared trusts in or outside the UK. But prosecutor Richard Wright told court: "That answer was untrue or misleading. Mr Ecclestone was not entirely clear on how ownership of the accounts in question were structured."

"He therefore did not know whether it was liable for tax." "He now accepts that some tax is due in relation to these matters," added Wright. The court heard Ecclestone had agreed a civil settlement of £652,634,836 with tax authorities. The British businessman, whose financial net worth has been estimated at some \$3 billion, is widely credited with transforming F1 commercially.

His control of the sport developed from the sale of television rights in the 1970s and he was chief executive of Formula One Group until January 2017. The flamboyant former second-hand car salesman ran Formula One with an iron fist for more than four decades, building it into a global

empire with a cut-glass brand. But his career has not been without controversy.

Ecclestone paid \$100 million to German authorities to end a high-profile bribery trial in 2014, which was linked to the sale of Formula One's rights in 2006 and 2007. Although he had faced a possible 10-year prison sentence if found guilty, many in the F1 paddock remained loyal.

"F1 is what it is thanks to Bernie Ecclestone, to the way he has built this sport over the past 35 years," Christian Horner, team principal at Red Bull, said at the time. "I think that without him we would have big problems."

### Divorce payout

He also stoked up controversy in 2009 by claiming that Adolf Hitler was a man who "was able to get things done" and that democracy had not worked out for Britain. Holder of a chemistry degree from Woolwich Polytechnic in southeast London, Ecclestone, known for his grey mop-top hairstyle, began his career selling cars and motorcycles in the capital, and also briefly drove race cars himself. His own modest career was cut short following a series of accidents and he turned to the business side of racing.

He was a manager of promising British F1 driver Stuart Lewis-Evans, who died in a fiery crash in 1958. A decade later he managed Austrian Jochen Rindt, who was killed in a crash in 1970 and is the only driver to posthumously win the F1 world title.

In 1971 Ecclestone bought the Brabham team, becoming a member of the Formula One Constructors' Association, the group that represented teams against what became the Inter-



LONDON: Ex-Formula One chief Bernie Ecclestone arrives at Southwark Crown Court in central London, on October 12, 2023. — AFP

national Automobile Federation (FIA).

Ecclestone's influence increased as he took over responsibility for negotiating television rights for Formula One, which until then was done on a race-by-race basis. One of the first to recognize the potential in sponsorship, he became the exclusive manager of F1 rights, taking the helm of Formula One Management, negotiating

with circuits, advertisers and television stations. Ecclestone's fortune was dented after having had to pay out one billion euros (\$1.3 billion) to divorce his wife Slavica—the mother of two of his children, Tamara and Petra. In 2012, he remarried for a third time, to Brazilian Fabiana Flosi, 46 years his junior and whom he met at the South American country's grand prix. — AFP

## South Africa toying with 'smart' but controversial 7-1 bench

**PARIS:** As South Africa weigh up their options before naming their team for Sunday's World Cup quarter-final against hosts France, one of the biggest questions being whispered in the galleries is: Will they play the 7-1 bench? For the uninitiated this may seem to be a technical detail akin to tyre choices in Formula One but in a 23-man game it is of considerable importance. But what is it and why has it polarised the rugby world to such an extent that Australia coach Eddie Jones can describe it as "daring and courageous" while his compatriot Matt Williams, a former Scotland coach, called it "not morally correct"?

In brief, each team has 15 starters and eight replacements, traditionally selected to cover all parts of the team. Usually this would mean a split of five forwards—three for the front row, one each for second row and back row—as well as three backs. They would include a scrum-half, a fly-half and one utility back who might slot in at centre, full-back or on the wing.

In recent years, it has become more commonplace to see a 6-2 split with the extra forward coming in for one of the backs. What the South African management team of Rassie Erasmus and Jacques Nienaber have done is seen as pretty radical—having seven forwards on the bench and just one back.

On top of that, they have opted to change all seven at the same time, introducing the so-called "Shock Boks" around the 50-minute mark. "The 7-1 split is really smart," former Springbok fly-half Joel Stransky told AFP before the pool match against Ireland.

"It's risky, though. If (fly-half) Manie Libbok pulls a hamstring in the third minute and someone else cramps up you have problems. "But if you can get to 55 minutes with all your backs on the field and then you unload seven forwards, change virtually the whole pack, the opposition knows what's coming."

Stransky, however, who dropped the goal that won the 1995 World Cup, is aware that the strategy is not suitable for every team. "You can only really do it if you have someone like Kwagga Smith who has played Sevens rugby and has the skill set of a back," he said. "You know he's not going to be a handicap."

### 'Ridiculous'

Williams' concerns focussed less on the international game and more on the trickle down effect of tired props and locks in lower levels of club rugby. "If they are fatigued and the opposition bring on seven fresh forwards and they go for a scrum later on in the

game knowing they could get a penalty and win the game, those guys' spines are in danger," he said after the Boks first unrolled the tactic in the 35-7 thrashing of New Zealand in the warm-up match at Twickenham.

There is also a concern among French rugby circles that this may be one Springbok innovation too far for the good of the game. "It's ridiculous but I'm not shocked by it," says Didier Retiere, who was forwards coach during France's run to the 2011 final.

"It fits the Springboks' game profile, which is based on combat and the explosiveness of their forwards. "Being able to change seven forwards in the same match means you can play at the same intensity for 80 minutes, with no drop-off at the end of the match."

The tactic does not work every time. Against Ireland, the Bok pack had the squeeze on their opponents but there was not the fresh pace out wide to exploit gaps that opened up. A series of missed kicks did not help as they lost 13-8 and it is that fallibility off the tee which may see the Boks opt for the safer 6-2 split against the French.

Libbok's flowing open game at number 10 is outstanding but his boot is not a patch on that of Handre Pollard, their 2019 World Cup winner, who has been drafted into the squad. The likelihood is that Erasmus and Nienaber will want both men in the 23, meaning Cobus Reinach will be the scrum-half/utility choice.

But the management do not always like to take the obvious path, so the 7-1 split remains a possibility. "If they did, it wouldn't be surprising," says former France lock Abdelatif Benazzi, who played against the Boks in the quagmire of King's Park in Durban in the 1995 semi-final. "If we are faced with this challenge, we cannot hang around. We have to hit back by winning the ball back, with intensity, by moving the South Africans around and keeping the ball. "In short, we have to play our game." — AFP

## VAR decisions could be broadcast live, says FA chief exec

**LONDON:** Football Association chief executive Mark Bullingham says the sport's authorities may examine whether VAR decisions could be broadcast live. The Premier League was rocked by the recent VAR blunder that saw Liverpool's Luis Diaz wrongly denied what would have been the opening goal in their 2-1 defeat at Tottenham.

The error was caused by miscommunication between the VAR operator and the on-pitch officials, sparking calls for such conversations to be played during television broadcasts in future. Live broadcasts of conversations between officials and VAR operators is currently prohibited under football's laws.

But Bullingham, who is a director at the International Football Association Board (IFAB) which has the power to change the game's laws, said the organ-

isation had discussed the subject. "Generally there is a split in the room over that, and quite often it is between the marketing and commercial people and the referees," he said.

"Our point of view, from the marketing and commercial perspective, would normally be that transparency is a really good thing, and we want fans to have the maximum experience." Bullingham said an ongoing FIFA trial where referees announce and explain the outcome of an on-field review is a "step in the right direction".

"My personal point of view is I do think (live audio) will continue to be a question over time, because the greater transparency shows how difficult the referee's job is, and it has worked in other sport," he said.

"There is an understandable nervousness from others that the referee's job is hard enough as it is. In a tournament you have referees with multiple languages, so it is not as straightforward as some might suggest. "So I think we are taking a step in the right direction with announcing the decision and explaining why it has been reached. Let's see if that leads to further progression." — AFP

## Ex-PSG boss Galtier takes job in Qatar

**PARIS:** Former Paris Saint-Germain coach Christopher Galtier has returned to management three months after leaving the French champions, taking over at Qatari side Al Duhail. Galtier, 57, won the Ligue 1 title with PSG but lasted just one season at the club after a poor second half of the campaign.

The final weeks of his reign were marred by accusations of racism during his previous job at Nice. He has vehemently denied the accusations but will stand trial in December. At Al Duhail he will inherit a squad including former Liverpool and Barcelona playmaker Philippe Coutinho.

Galtier succeeds Hernan Crespo after the club parted ways with the ex-Argentina international



Christopher Galtier

who won the league with Al Duhail last season. The Frenchman will face an Al Nassr side spearheaded by Cristiano Ronaldo and Sadio Mane in the Asian Champions League group stage later this month. Al Duhail have just one point from two matches in the competition. — AFP

## WCup fever as fans tie up hospital beds for India-Pakistan clash

**AHMEDABAD:** Cricket crazy fans desperate to witness Saturday's World Cup blockbuster between India and Pakistan will sleep in hospitals, a source told AFP, rather than hotels where some prices have been hiked by up to 10 times their standard rates. Thousands of fans have descended on the western Indian city of Ahmedabad from across the country and overseas to witness a rare meeting of the bitter cricket rivals at the 132,000-seater stadium named after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A prominent hotel in the city usually charges 6,000 rupees (\$72) for a deluxe room but on Friday, Saturday and Sunday the price for a day has been hiked to 70,000 rupees (\$841). However, by checking into a city hospital for a health check, the cost is 7,000 rupees (\$84) a day. "It's a double act, I believe. They want a full-body

check up and an overnight stay, probably to watch the match," a city doctor told AFP on condition of anonymity. "These are mostly NRIs (Non-resident Indians) from the United States and the UK who have booked deluxe one-bed rooms and have opted for a full health package."

The doctor added: "We have to be cautious with these bookings, because our primary aim is patient care. We can't just hand out a bed to watch the match. But we can't deny check-ups for patients with medical history." Prices of flights have also gone up during the weekend while Indian railways has added two special trains for fans travelling between Mumbai and Ahmedabad.

The two neighbours only play cricket with each other in international tournaments and their last bi-lateral meeting was when Pakistan toured India in 2012. "We had booked a hotel in June soon after the schedule was announced, but had to re-adjust the dates when the match was brought forward by a day," Henish Patel, who has flown in from Birmingham to meet his family and watch the match, told AFP.

"We usually come to India during Diwali (one of the biggest festivals of the Hindu calendar) but this time it's the India-Pakistan festival and here we are." — AFP



South Africa's fly-half Handre Pollard kicks a penalty during the Autumn International friendly rugby union match between England and South Africa.