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## ZIONISTS UNLEASH BARBARITY

Gaza under air, ground attack • Kuwait, Gulf sound alarm • Erdogan slams West



(Left) This image grab from an TV footage shows balls of fire and smoke rising above Gaza City during a Zionist strike on Oct 27, 2023. (Right) People wave Turkish and Palestinian flags as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks during a rally organized by the AKP party in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza in Istanbul on Oct 28, 2023. — AFP photos

**GAZA:** The Zionist entity said on Saturday its war with Hamas had "entered a new phase" as the army relentlessly pounded Gaza three weeks into a conflict sparked by the deadliest attack in the country's history. The United Nations warned thousands more civilians could die as the Zionist entity escalated ground operations in the Hamas-run Palestinian territory, while the European Union called for hostilities to stop to enable aid deliveries.

Arab Gulf states Saturday warned the Zionist entity against further ground operations in the Gaza Strip, with Kuwait cautioning that "any

ground invasion of Gaza... will prove that the (Zionist) occupation is determined to continue committing crimes against the brotherly Palestinian people". A Kuwaiti foreign ministry statement expressed regret on the "international community's unprecedented silence", which, if continues, will threaten international peace and security.

"Kuwait renews its call to the UN Security Council and the international community to take responsibility and provide international protection for the Palestinian people," the ministry said, expressing Kuwait's "deep regret" for the contin-

uation of the Zionist entity's "barbaric aggression on Gaza and continued violations of international and humanitarian laws".

Saudi Arabia "condemns and denounces any ground operations carried out by (the Zionist entity) due to the threat they pose to the lives of Palestinian civilians", the kingdom's foreign ministry said in a statement. It cautioned against "the danger of continuing to carry out these blatant and unjustified violations of international law against the brotherly Palestinian people", warning of "serious repercussions for the stability of the region".

Qatar's Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said on X, formerly Twitter, that a "(Zionist) ground escalation would have dire consequences for civilians and devastating humanitarian and economic impacts." Oman on Saturday accused the Zionist entity of committing "war crimes" in Gaza and warned against any further ground maneuvers.

The escalation in the Zionist entity's "brutal war on the Gaza Strip constitutes war crimes and crimes against humanity," said a foreign ministry statement carried by the official Oman News Agency.

Continued on Page 6

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### 35 dead in Egypt road accident

**CAIRO:** At least 35 people were killed and more than 50 others injured Saturday in a "horrific collision" on an Egyptian highway involving a bus and several cars, state media reported. "A horrific collision on the Cairo-Alexandria desert road near Wadi al-Natrun led to the death of 35 people, at least 18 of whom burnt to death," said Al-Ahram news website, indicating "at least 53 were injured". — AFP

#### 32 killed in Kazakhstan mine fire

**KARAGANDA, Kazakhstan:** Kazakhstan said Saturday that 32 people died in a fire in yet another deadly accident at a mine owned by ArcelorMittal, with over a dozen still missing, in the Central Asian country's worst disaster in years. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called the Luxembourg-listed steel and mining giant the "worst" company "in our history" while the firm announced a preliminary deal on the nationalization of its local operations. — AFP (See Page 7)

#### Iran teen dies after metro incident

**TEHRAN:** An Iranian high school student died on Saturday after falling into a coma in disputed circumstances on the Tehran metro, local media said. "Armita Garawand, a student in Tehran, died an hour ago after intensive medical treatment and 28 days of hospitalization in intensive care," reported the Borna news agency affiliated with the youth ministry. — AFP

### Kuwait slams Zionist crimes, displacement

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait has underlined that the Zionist occupation's war crimes against Palestinians under the pretext of "self-defense" show disregard for the relevant UN resolutions and the international law. The international community must immediately intervene and hold the Zionist occupation accountable for its blatant war crimes and continued violations of international law, said Diplomatic Attache Reem Al-Sharhan, of Kuwait's Permanent Delegation to the UN, at the UN General Assem-

### NY police arrest scores at protest for Gaza ceasefire

**NEW YORK:** Hundreds of people were arrested Friday when police broke up a large demonstration of mostly Jewish New Yorkers who had taken over the main hall of Grand Central station in protest of the Zionist entity's bombardment of Gaza, police and organizers said. The New York Police Department said at least 200 people had been arrested, while protest organizers put the number at more than 300.

Photos from the scene showed long lines of young people standing in handcuffs and wearing black sweatshirts with the words "Not In Our Name" and "Cease Fire Now" printed in white. The massive sit-in was called by the group

Jewish Voice for Peace-New York City, which said thousands of its members had attended the protest, blocking the main concourse of the city's central rail station.

Pictures showed the terminal packed with protesters who held up banners reading "Palestinians should be free" and "Mourn the dead, fight like hell for the living". Organizers called the peaceful sit-in "the largest civil disobedience New York City has seen in 20 years". Rabbis launched the event by lighting Shabbat candles and reciting the Jewish prayer for the dead, known as the kaddish.

"While Shabbat is typically a day of rest, we cannot afford to rest while genocide is unfolding in our names," said Rabbi May Ye, in a statement released by organizers. "The lives of Palestinians and (Zionists) are intertwined, and safety can only come from justice, equality, and freedom for all," the rabbi said. — AFP



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis protest in solidarity with the Palestinian people at Irada Square on Oct 27, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)



NEW YORK: People demonstrate calling for a ceasefire between the Zionist entity and Hamas at Grand Central Station on Oct 27, 2023. — AFP





## Local

# Children's cosmetics market booms in Kuwait, posing serious health risks

## Social media platforms inundated with makeup tutorials for girls

By Majd Othman

**KUWAIT:** The normalization of makeup use among teenagers can be attributed to extensive marketing campaigns by cosmetics companies worldwide, aiming to expand their customer base and boost profits. While these campaigns face criticism from children's societies and individuals, the media continues to promote and normalize makeup use for young girls, portraying it as a trendy behavior that everyone should embrace.

Comparing the past 15 years to today, the usage of cosmetics among young girls has increased significantly. Social media platforms are now inundated with makeup tutorials created by girls as young as 12 years old. Amani Mahmoud shared her experience, noting that her daughter's interest in makeup and its tools began when she started school, even though many children her age were unaware of such things. She mentioned that some of her daughter's 9-year-old friends wear light makeup to stay on-trend.

Amani also witnessed a concerning situation where an 8- to 9-year-old girl was wearing a full face of makeup, including eyelashes. A conversation with her older sister and a friend revealed that their mother thought it was normal at that age due to peer influence.

Toy stores, typically known for selling toys for children, now stock makeup sets labeled for ages 8 and above. While this can be acceptable for play, the cosmetics industry plays a role in normalizing real makeup use among children.

Beyond the educational concerns, medical reports indicate that allowing children to wear makeup can have adverse effects on their sensitive skin, weakening the skin's barrier and making



it more susceptible to issues like teenage acne. It can cause it to be more sensitive to even water. Improper product removal and unhygienic practices can clog pores and spread bacteria.

"If they apply lipstick with dangerous chemicals, their skin will immediately absorb it, and the effects might become evident in the future. Simply applying makeup products on the skin of your kids will make them vulnerable to toxic material," a report said. Moreover, young children who wear makeup are exposed to toxic substances, to which they are more vulnerable. Due to their faster metabolism, studies suggest that children's skin ab-

sorbs makeup at a rate at least 10 percent higher than that of adults.

The Council of Europe recently published the 2023 report "Safe Cosmetics for Children", offering guidelines for manufacturers and safety assessors of makeup products used by children under the age of 3. This report addresses the makeup industry's responsibility in the face of growing market demand, both for dedicated kids' makeup and adult cosmetics. Meanwhile, the global children's cosmetics market forecasts that by 2029, the market's value will reach \$1.795 billion, with a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.79 percent.

## Palestinian literatures of resistance

In my view

By Mai Al-Nakib

Mahmoud Darwish. Ghassan Kanfani. Fawaz Turki. Edward W. Said. Samih Al-Qasim. Fadwa Tuqan. Yasmine Zahran. Emile Habiby. Elias Sanbar. Salwa Salem. Atef Abu Saif. Salim Tamari. Salma Jayyusi. Khaled Juma. Selma Dabbagh. Susan Abulhawa. Naomi Shihab Nye. Deema Shehaby. Ghada Karmi. Mourid Barghouti. Raja Shehadeh. Suad Amiry. Shafeeq Ghabra. Siham Abu-Ghazaleh. Salman Abu Sitta. Steven Salaita. Joseph Masaad. Saree Makdisi. Walid Khalidi. Rashid Khalidi. This is a short list of the Palestinian writers — that is to say, poets, novelists, memoirists, scholars, and academics in every field — who happen to sit on three of my bookshelves dedicated to Palestinian writing. Edward Said alone occupies one of those shelves in its entirety. Many more books by other Palestinian writers are scattered across different shelves in my library, not restricted to those three, mirroring, it suddenly occurs to me, the cruel scattering across the globe that Palestinians have had to endure since the Nakba of 1948. Yet the shelves of my library and every library in the world are a shelter for Palestinian words, if not for the Palestinian people. The dispersal of Palestinian words in books across global shelves is not the same as the diaspora of the Palestinian people post-Nakba. In fact, the former acts as a counterforce against the latter by affirming and articulating Palestinian resilience.

In the face of the utter calamity of the last few weeks — the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians by Zionist forces, the shameless war crimes committed against Palestinian civilians and their children — the tongue freezes in the mouth. And the mouth refuses to shape the words that would try to make sense of the violence on the ground and the cynical indifference of global leaders. Senseless injustice sticks like a bone in the throat. However, the groundswell of public support that grows around the world for the rights of the Palestinians, for the justice to which they are long overdue, is an outcome, in part, of the words of the Palestinians themselves. Their words have accumulated over seven decades and longer, sometimes heard loudly and to great acclaim, more often ignored but still present and persistent. Word by word, poem by poem, novel by novel, song by song, essay by essay, film by film, study by study — Palestinians have produced an avalanche of cultural and academic works, and through these eloquent expressions, they have established their right to exist in an oblivious world inclined to erase them and their history. Palestinians, like all human beings, should not have to bear the burden of proving their right to exist. And yet, Palestinians have been and continue to be forced to claim that fundamental human right again and again, under threat of annihilation. Persisting against existential annihilation is precisely what Palestinian writing does.

First and foremost, Palestinian writing — whether in the form of poems, novels, essays, or social media posts — is a literature of existence. By the very fact of its existence, despite every effort to snuff it out, Palestinian writing becomes a literature of resistance against colonial violence, dehumanization, injustice, and oppression. But Palestinian writing is much more than a literature of existence and resistance. Palestinian writing has and will continue to prepare the conditions for social and political transformation. In the glaring gap left by unethical leaders and politicians, Palestinian writers have triumphed. So much of the critical vocabulary used today in narratives of decolonization and anti-racist struggle derives from Edward Said's masterful studies of the 1980s and 90s. And today, on the ground, brave young Palestinian social media activists and journalists are providing corrective narratives with their lucid verbal and visual reports — and paying for it with their lives — even as the most powerful media apparatuses on the planet remain blatantly biased. As a direct result of these reports, we are witnessing a shift in public opinion the world over.

As someone who cares about language more than most other things, I hold Palestinian words especially close. They are the last vestige of our rapidly vanishing humanity. To become worthy of Palestinian words, of Palestinian writing, is what the rest of us must strive to achieve without delay and without fail. The alternative — as we are witnessing before our eyes — is monstrous.



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaitis protest in solidarity with the Palestinian people at the Irada Square in Kuwait City on October 27, 2023 as the Zionist forces relentlessly continued their unprecedented bombardments of Gaza, killing more than 7,703 people, mainly civilians, with more than 3,500 of them children. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Jaber Hospital's Gynecologic Oncology Unit sets a record

**KUWAIT:** Setting a milestone in the healthcare sector, the national cadres at the Gynecologic Oncology Unit at Jaber Hospital recorded the successful conduct of more than 100 surgeries within a period of six months. Led by a surgical team of distinguished national cadres consisting of Dr Wafaa Al-Duwaisan and Dr Noura Al-Ibrahim, and under the supervision of the Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the hospital, Dr Manal Jaber, the Hospital achieved this rare feat.

The unit affirms its commitment to ensuring that every patient receives the highest level of healthcare for ovarian, uterine, cervical and other gynecological tumors, and to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field of treating these diseases. It performs surgical procedures and removes tumors with the latest medical technologies through endoscopy and surgical robot or through the system of tracking the sentinel glands with fluorescent dye.

In addition, the unit is specially

equipped with an integrated systematic program for the treatment of these cases to suit each case separately in terms of chemotherapy, healthy nutrition, psychological support, or practical and motor rehabilitation. This has been done in joint coordination between the surgical team led by Dr Wafaa Al-Duwaisan and Dr Noura Al-Ibrahim and between the various medical departments concerned such as the department of Healthy Nutrition or the department of physiotherapy and the psychological support team in collaboration with the mental health clinic.

This systematic program includes a comprehensive assessment, diagnosis and treatment plan specific to each patient, as the inclusion of chemotherapy along with surgery with joint coordination with other concerned departments allows for a more detailed and effective treatment strategy, increasing the chances of recovery.

The unit has established the 'Post-Cancer Recovery' clinic, whose role revolves around the health and



quality of life of women during their cancer treatment and post-recovery, which is supervised by Dr. Nada Al-Ibrahim, a specialist in obstetrics, gynecology and urology in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital.

Dr Manal Jaber, head of Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at Jaber Hospital, said: "The success of the Gynecologic Oncology Unit reflects the hospital's commitment to providing the highest and best levels of healthcare.

We are proud of the unit's achievements and look forward to continuing to provide advanced, modern and comprehensive care to our patients," Dr Jaber said.

She added: "the Gynecologic Oncology Unit at Jaber Hospital is a beacon of hope for Kuwaiti women who are fighting cancer, as it provides a comprehensive program and approach centered on the treatment and care of cancer patients according to the latest medical protocols in this regard.



Local

# Zain and KFAS sign MoU to promote innovation, empower local startups

## Partnership also to upskill national talents, enable social enterprises



Eaman Al-Roudhan and Dr Ameenah Farhan sign the MoU.



Eaman Al-Roudhan and Dr Ameenah Farhan with Zain and KFAS officials.

**KUWAIT:** In a new step that reflects their unwavering efforts to support and grow the innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems in the community, Zain and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) have announced signing a memorandum of understanding. The two organizations are joining forces to accelerate capacity building, upskill national talents in the private sector, grow research & development in innovation, enable social enterprises, and empower local entrepreneurs.

The MoU was signed at KFAS headquarters in Kuwait City, attended by Zain Kuwait CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan, KFAS Director General Dr Ameenah Farhan, and top executives and officials from both sides. This partnership embodies Zain and KFAS' joint vision to foster innovation and promote entrepreneurship in Kuwait, continuing their long-term missions to upskill national talents in science and technology and empower local startups, who form a vibrant part of the nation's economy.

Under this partnership, Zain and KFAS will join their expertise and resources to present several de-

velopment programs and community initiatives that upskill national talents, empowering them to enter the highly competitive market. The programs are designed to tackle the needs and requirements of the Kuwaiti private sector, with key topics like leadership skills, digital competencies, management and business skills, and sustainable strategies. The two organizations will also host programs for capacity building in innovation and technology, targeting various age groups with a special focus on young people. Such programs will feature unique training sessions and interactive workshops that cover technical and digital skills to cultivate the youth's creativity, support their talents, and embrace their passions.

The agreement also explores means to enrich research & development for innovation, with the aim of promoting sustainable corporate practices and transforming traditional workflows. By having innovation as the main drive for corporate strategies, organizations can contribute to achieving the nation's developmental goals. One of the key topics covered by the MoU focuses on empowering entrepreneurs and supporting local startups. Certified

trainers and experts from KFAS will join in facilitating highly specialized sessions and workshops for entrepreneurs under Zain's award-winning tech startup accelerator program, Zain Great Idea.

This agreement goes in line with Zain's Innovation Nation initiative, under which all of Zain's innovation and entrepreneurship programs fall, especially within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) areas. The initiative mainly targets the youth, and centers around a number of pillars, including entrepreneurship, investment, startup acceleration, supporting inventors, fostering innovation, and more. In a previous step to support the growth of innovation in Kuwait, Zain signed an MoU with Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), a KFAS center. The agreement built a new strategic partnership that focused on elevating the digital literacy of the youth, empowering creativity and innovation, and enhancing the local startup ecosystem in the community.

The partnership resulted in many successful programs and initiatives, most notably a summer

bootcamp that upskilled over 800 children and young people through 130 courses and workshops that covered the fundamentals of electronics, robotics, 3D printers, programming, artificial intelligence, and more.

The MoU fostered a joint collaboration between the two partners to elevate digital literacy, develop digital competencies, support the local startups ecosystem, empower Kuwaiti inventors and innovators to excel, and more to serve the nation's developmental, economic, and social goals.

Through its journey that started over 46 years ago, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences seeks to harness science, technology and innovation in Kuwait, as well as to promote modernization, a better quality of life, and a sustainable future for the Kuwaiti people.

KFAS continues to achieve its mission through many of its centers, including the Scientific Center, Dasman Diabetes Center, and Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC). Zain has had many successful and fruitful partnerships with these centers.

## Al-Haddad Ambassador to Salvador

**KUWAIT:** The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Mexico, Salah Al-Haddad, presented his credentials as Ambassador Extraordinary and Non-Resident to El Salvador to the Vice President of El Salvador, Felix Ulloa.

Ambassador Al-Haddad said that during the ceremony, which was held at the presidential palace in the capital, San Salvador, he conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the President of El Salvador Nayib Bukele, and also conveyed to the Vice President of El Salvador the greetings of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, expressing the State of Kuwait's pride in the good friendly relations between the two countries.

Al-Haddad, during the meeting, stressed the keenness of Kuwait to strengthen the bilateral relations between Kuwait and El Salvador in various fields. For his part, the Vice President of El Salvador welcomed Ambassador Al-Haddad, praising the relations between his country and the State of Kuwait and its mutual desire as well to develop relations, while wishing him success of his mission.

Al-Haddad became the first Kuwaiti ambassador to present his credentials to El Salvador. The two



Salah Al-Haddad presenting his credentials as Ambassador Extraordinary and Non-Resident to El Salvador to the Vice President of El Salvador Felix Ulloa.



Ambassador Salah Al-Haddad with Vice President of El Salvador Felix Ulloa.

countries established diplomatic relations in 1999 although there are no embassies of the countries in the capitals of the two countries.

## Advisory on entering Sabah Al-Ahmad Natural Reserve

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Voluntary Work Center warned on Saturday against entering the Sabah Al-Ahmad Natural Reserve without obtaining an official permit, pointing out that a number of violations have been monitored.

The center said in a press statement that its natural reserve management team, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, monitored these violations and seized firearms used for poaching. It stressed the necessity of obtaining an official permit before entering the reserve to avoid legal accountability, as according to Article No 100 of the Environmental Law.

According to the law, it is prohibited to hunt, kill, catch, collect, harm, possess, or transport terrestrial and marine fungal organisms, whether alive or dead, or to harm the young of these organisms, their eggs, nests, or their habitats. The executive regulations of this law specify the types and numbers of organisms. It is permissible to catch it in specific seasons and places. He stated that Article 149 of the law stipulates: "Anyone who violates this law shall be punished with imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year and a fine of not less than KD 500 and not more than KD 5,000, or one of these two penalties in addition to confiscating the seized objects as well



The main gate to the desert section of Sabah Al-Ahmad Natural Reserve.

as the materials used." He called on people not to approach the reserve's walls and attempt to enter them in order to preserve lives, declaring his disclaimer of responsibility for people who breach the reserve's walls in violation of the law.

The Sabah Al-Ahmad Natural Reserve is located under the supervision of the Voluntary Work Center and has an area of 330 sq km and is considered the largest terrestrial ecosystem which has been designated as a reserve of natural topographic and biological importance in addition to preserving the management of renewable natural resources. The reserve includes a rocky cliff that rises to 116 meters above the coastal mudflats and the associated salt marshes and sanddunes on Kuwait Bay. — KUNA

## NBK holds banking awareness seminar for KSCD-Girls

**KUWAIT:** Reflecting its dedication to delivering on its social responsibility towards all segments, particularly people with special needs, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organized an awareness seminar on banking transactions and methods of communication with people with hearing disabilities, in cooperation with the Kuwait Sports Club for the Deaf (KSCD) – Girls, which is the first of its kind in Kuwait.



Emad Al-Ablani

The seminar attended by 20 KSCD members, aimed to promote financial literacy among participants and to familiarize them with the methods and types of banking transactions, and the paperwork required for these transactions. This included the steps to be taken in the event of a lost bank card, financial transactions made by a relative on behalf of special needs customers under special power of attorney, in addition to account opening/closing procedures, and how to communicate with customer service, as well as other banking transactions.

The seminar was attended by Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, AGM - Consumer Banking Group at NBK



and Ali Al-Mulla, AGM - Head of Domestic Branches, Consumer Banking Group at NBK. On this occasion, Emad Al-Ablani, GM – head of Group Human Resources at National Bank of Kuwait said, "NBK is always keen on delivering on its social responsibilities by extending support to all segments of society, particularly people with special needs. In this context, we always strive to provide them with all services to serve their needs, which we identify through direct communication with them, and cooperation with the concerned government and civil society organizations."

"At NBK, we firmly believe in providing equal opportunities for all segments of society. So today, we are proud to host the cherished special needs segment to drive their knowledge acquisition, regarding this a national duty and unshakable commitment," he added. "NBK believes in the potential of every individual in our society, and the need to provide them with the due support for learning and development. Reflecting this belief, we have a poli-

cy for recruiting certain categories of special needs people, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Disabled Affairs (PADA) and the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM)," he noted.

NBK is the first bank to assign sign language trained staff in all branches to serve hearing-impaired customers. It has dedicated branches equipped with the latest services to accommodate and facilitate banking for customers with visual, hearing or physical disabilities, maintaining the following practices to cater to special needs: ATMs equipped with Braille keyboards and headphones, enabling visually impaired customers to make easy and secure withdrawals, Braille printing facilities, iPads with speech-to-text functionality for visually impaired customers, wheelchair access to branches (available in all branches), and reserved, clearly marked parking spaces for special needs customers. Moreover, the bank provides easily accessible safe deposit boxes, debit and credit cards with photo for easy identification, when requested.

## Former KTA official sentenced

**KUWAIT:** The court of appeal, presided over by Judge Abdullah Al-Sane, has sentenced the former financial director of the Kuwait Teachers Association, an Egyptian national, to 15 years in prison with labor, in addition to imposing a KD 1 million fine. This ruling comes in response to various charges against him, including money laundering and embezzlement of substantial amounts. Upon serving the sentence, he will be deported from the country.



Judge Abdullah Al-Sane

The Kuwait Teachers Association issued the following statement: "The board of directors of the Kuwait Teachers Association expresses its gratitude and appreciation to our fair and impartial judiciary. Special thanks are also extended to former presidents and current President Hamad Al-Houli for their significant roles in addressing this case, elucidating its details and forwarding it to the relevant authorities."



## Al-Sammak season begins in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The Al-Ujairi Scientific Center said on Saturday that the second stage of the season, known as Al-Sammak, begins on Sunday which will last for 13 days. The center added in a statement to KUNA that during the period of Al-Sammak, the weather is usually cold at night and the winds will be humid with sunrise. The night will be longer and the noon prayer also reaches its earliest progress throughout the year. "One of the features of this season is the cooler temperature of the sea, especially in the morning," a statement issued by the center said.

He explained that one of the advantages of this season is the feeling of the coldness of the water, especially in the morning. He mentioned that the number of night hours will increase significantly, reaching 12 hours and 53 minutes and sunrise will be exactly at 5.58 am while the dawn prayer according to the Al-Ujairi calendar is at 4.38 am. Sunset will be earlier at 5.05 pm. He pointed out that during the Sammak period, the time for the call to prayer for the noon prayer reaches its earliest advance throughout the year. The call to prayer comes at 11.32 am. — KUNA

## Expat remittances up by 6% over past 9 months

KUWAIT: Money transfers by expatriates abroad rose by 6 percent over the last nine months amounting to an 8.6 percent increase on annual basis. It rose to KD 4.14 billion (\$13.7 billion) during the period, as remittances from workers transferred abroad recorded KD 3.81 billion (\$12.6 billion) during the same period in 2020. Furthermore, workers' remittances fell 1.9 percent quarterly to KD 1.37 billion (\$4.54 billion) in the third quarter of last year. It is worth noting that expatriates in Kuwait represent about 68 percent of Kuwait's total population which is about 4.6 million.

### Photo of the day



KUWAIT: The fifth relief aid plane, filled with 10 tons of medical supplies, departed Kuwait on Saturday, heading to Egypt to provide assistance to the people of the Gaza Strip. This initiative came in line with the Kuwait leadership's directives and reflected the people's solemn support to the Palestinian people. Government and non-government entities as well as charities had coordinated their efforts to gather supplies and send much-needed relief aid. — KUNA

# Kuwait, Turkey ink MoU to bolster cooperation in healthcare sector

## Al-Awadhi underlines growing role of AI in medical sector

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and his accompanying delegation, which includes the assistant undersecretary for foreign health services affairs and the assistant undersecretary for medicines and medical equipment, participated in the Ninth Turkish Medical Conference in Istanbul at the invitation of the Turkish minister of health.

The three-day conference, attended by over 14 health ministers from various countries, focused on discussions regarding the use of "artificial intelligence in the healthcare sector" and involved numerous bilateral meetings between the participating delegations.

Dr Awadhi delivered Kuwait's speech, emphasizing the close and productive relationship between Turkey and Kuwait in various areas, including healthcare. During the conference, Dr Awadhi met with his Turkish counterpart Fahrettin Khoja for a joint bilateral meeting. They discussed the deep ties between the two brotherly nations and peoples, as well as the



ISTANBUL: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi with his Turkish counterpart Fahrettin Khoja during the signing of the MoU.



comprehensive healthcare cooperation agreement and methods for its enhancement and development.

In the course of the bilateral meeting between the Kuwaiti ministry of health, led by Dr Awadhi and the Turkish ministry of health, headed by Khoja, a memorandum of understanding — "letter of intent" — was signed. This memorandum is based on the cooperation agreement in the field of healthcare between the government of Turkey and the government of Kuwait, dated Feb 12, 2008.

It is noteworthy that the areas of enhanced cooperation and coordination between the two sides, as outlined in the cooperation agreement, include the following aspects:

1. Sharing information and experiences to strengthen healthcare systems.
2. Collaboration in emergency healthcare services and disaster management.
3. Partnership in healthcare investment and service provision.
4. Joint efforts in treating patients abroad.
5. Enhancing collaboration in the procurement of medications, medical devices and consumables.
6. Organizing short-term training courses to build capacity with relevant institutions and organizations in Turkey.
7. Sharing experiences and cooperating in healthcare information systems.



ISTANBUL: Minister of Health Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi and his accompanying delegation at the Ninth Turkish Medical Conference in Istanbul at the invitation of the Turkish minister of health.

## MoH holds awareness campaign on psoriasis

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health organized an awareness and educational campaign in the Avenues Mall on chronic psoriasis. The campaign hosts a group of specialists and doctors to introduce the chronic disease and ways to treat it and mitigate its effects, whether with topical medications or ways to strengthen immunity. Through the campaign, specialists sought to correct misinformation revolving around psoriasis, such as considering it only a skin disease. — KUNA



One of the specialists during the campaign



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32 killed in Kazakhstan ArcelorMittal mine fire

## US, China to work towards Biden-Xi meeting next month

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GAZA: A man sits amid the destruction following Zionist strikes on Al-Shati camp on Oct 28, 2023. — AFP

# ‘Worse than earthquake’: Zionist strikes hammer Gaza

## Ground shakes as Zionist navy, planes spare no one: Eye witnesses

GAZA: After Zionist air strikes and artillery fire rained down for hours overnight, much of the Gaza Strip has become an indistinguishable wasteland of rubble, with residents likening the devastation to that of a natural disaster. The intense bombardments “changed the landscape”, Mahmud Bassal, a spokesman for the Gaza Civil Defence told AFP of the damage. “Hundreds of buildings and houses were completely destroyed and thousands of other homes were damaged,” he added.

The destruction followed an announcement from the Zionist occupation forces that it had expanded operations in Gaza, following three weeks of intense bombardments. Zionist airstrikes have killed more than 7,700 people, including some 3,500 children, according to the Gaza’s health ministry. They came after the Oct 7 Hamas attack, in which 1,400 people were killed in occupied areas near the Gaza-Zionist heavily fortified border. Hamas has also taken some 229 people to the Gaza Strip as captives, according to the Zionist occupation forces.

Just hours before the Zionist occupation intensified its bombardment on Friday night, army spokesman Daniel Hagari accused Hamas fighters of waging war on Zionists from Gaza’s hospitals and using civilians as “human shields”. Hamas rejected the allegations. Hamas’ political official Ezzat El-Reshiq on Friday denied accusations that the group was using the al-Shifa hospital as a shield for its underground military infrastructure, and said the claims have “no basis in truth”.

In Shati refugee camp on the outskirts of Gaza City, widespread damage was visible. “What happened in Shati is worse than an earthquake,” camp resident Alaa Mahdi, 51, told AFP. “There was bombing from everywhere, the navy, artillery and the planes,” he continued. “Who are they striking, the resistance? No, the poor people.”

Mahdi said the internet and communications blackout in the Gaza Strip since Friday evening had been imposed so that the Zionist occupation “would commit a massacre without anyone hearing about it”.

The blackout triggered condemnation from a range of rights groups. “This information blackout risks providing cover for mass atrocities and contributing to impunity for human rights violations,” said Human Rights Watch in a statement.

### ‘Is anybody there?’

“Last night, the ground in Gaza shook,” Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared on Saturday. “We attacked above the ground and below the ground. We attacked terror operatives of all ranks in every location.” Amid the onslaught, taxi driver Jamal Abu Shaqfa, 50, left the Shati camp with his family in a bid to flee south. “We are heading towards Khan Yunis because the indiscriminate bombings in Shati have spared no women, children or old people,” he said. “The situation is very bad.”

Amid a humanitarian situation described by world organizations as “catastrophic”, a food rations distribution center run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) was looted. Doz-

ens of Palestinians were seen coming out of the premises in Deir al-Balah in central Gaza, one carrying a sack of flour on his shoulder, another bottles of oil under his arm. “If we weren’t in need, we wouldn’t have gone in. The whole world is against us,” said one as he left the center.

In a street in the camp, dozens of residents picked through the debris of a residential tower that along with several houses nearby was razed by the bombing. “Is anybody there? We are here to save you,” shouted Abdelmajid Abu Hassira, as he waded through the wreckage searching for survivors.

Kamal Abou Fattoum, 47, who fled south from Gaza City last week, returned on Saturday morning to find his house reduced to debris. “I saw destruction worse than that caused by the earthquake in Turkey,” he said, referring to the devastating natural disaster in February that killed more than 50,000 people in southeastern Turkey. “People are under the rubble. Some are dead, others are still alive,” he added. — AFP

## US bombs Syria ammo depots, first since March

WASHINGTON: The United States said Friday it sought to degrade ammunition supplies of Iranian-linked militias with strikes in Syria but insisted it did not want to widen the Middle East conflict. The Pentagon on Thursday announced air strikes on two sites in eastern Syria it said were used by Iran’s elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) after a string of attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria since the Zionist occupation began bombing Gaza following an attack by Hamas.

“The purpose for those two sites that we targeted was to have a significant impact on future IRGC and Iran-backed militia group operations,” National Security Council spokesman John Kirby told reporters Friday. “It went right at storage facilities and ammo depots that we know will be used to support the work of these militia groups, particularly in Syria.” “The main goal was to disrupt that ability and also to deter — to prevent — future attacks,” he said.

The White House earlier said that President Joe Biden had relayed a direct warning to Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei against militias’ strikes on US troops in Syria and Iraq, where US forces are stationed as part of efforts against the Islamic State group, which also has clashed with Shiite Iran.

There have been at least 14 attacks on US and allied forces in Iraq and six in Syria since Oct 17, a period in which 21 American military personnel suffered minor injuries and one contractor died from a cardiac incident, according to the Pentagon.

The US strikes on Thursday were the first on Iranian interests since March, breaking a stretch of calm after the Biden administration opened quiet diplomacy with the US arch-enemy that led to a prisoner swap and conversations on Iran’s disputed nuclear program.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, in a statement Thursday, said that the strikes were “narrowly tailored” to protect US personnel. “They are separate and distinct from the ongoing conflict between (the Zionist occupation) and Hamas, and do not constitute a shift in our approach to the (Zionist)-Hamas conflict,” Austin said. The Pentagon said Friday evening that its current assessment is the strikes did not cause casualties.

In new pressure, the United States — which already considers Hamas and the Revolutionary Guards to be terrorist organizations — said it was imposing sanctions on a Hamas official based in Iran and members of the IRGC. The Biden administration has vowed to target the finances of Hamas, which holds hundreds of millions of dollars in global assets, according to US Treasury Department estimates.

Iran also has a close relationship with Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite militia and political movement that has so far stopped short of opening a full second front. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Friday that he has spoken with Lebanese and Palestinian militants and they “have their finger on the trigger” if the Zionist occupation expands its ground operation into Gaza.

Speaking to US National Public Radio from the United Nations, Amir-Abdollahian said the militants’ actions would be “much more powerful and deeper than what you’ve witnessed.” “Therefore I believe that if this situation continues and women and children and civilians are still killed in Gaza and the West Bank, anything will be possible,” he said. Amir-Abdollahian insisted, however, that militants would decide their own actions, saying, “We don’t really want this conflict to spread out.” — AFP

## Thousands demand ceasefire in London, Paris demonstrations

LONDON/PARIS: Tens of thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters marched in central London on Saturday calling for an immediate ceasefire in the deadly Zionist attack on Gaza. It was the third consecutive weekend that the British capital was the venue for a large rally in support of Palestine since Oct 7. Saturday’s protest in London came as Zionist occupation forces intensified their assault on the war-torn Gaza Strip late Friday.

Many demonstrators waved Palestinian flags and chanted slogans including “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.” They also held signs that read “Free Palestine” and “Gaza, stop the massacre,” while some protesters let off fireworks and red and green flares.

Dani Nadiri, 36, said UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s call for a “humanitarian pause” in the fighting to allow aid into Gaza and hostages to leave was not enough. “A full ceasefire needs to happen,” the TV producer told AFP, adding: “It’s time now to do something rather than let it escalate any further.”

Noori Butt, from Luton in southern England, said she just wanted the war “to end.” “It can’t go on like this. The world is dying and I want lasting peace for everybody. That’s the way it should be,” the 38-year-old teacher told AFP.

About 100,000 people joined the “March for Palestine,” according to British media which reported that a few demonstrators threw kicks and punches at police officers as they detained someone near the British parliament. London’s Metropolitan Police, which deployed



LONDON: A protester waves Palestinian flags sitting on a red telephone box on Whitehall during the ‘March for Palestine’ to call for a ceasefire. — AFP

more than 1,000 officers to patrol the march, said one protester was arrested on suspicion of assaulting an officer. A man was also arrested for making racist remarks and threats to kill, the force added. Other rallies took place Saturday in Manchester and Glasgow, Scotland.

The UK government’s stance on refraining from calling for a ceasefire is in line with the position of the United States — both say the Zionist occupation has the right to defend itself within international law. British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said Saturday that Hamas has given no indication it “desires or would abide by calls for a ceasefire”.

In Paris, Thousands of demonstrators protested on Saturday in a banned march in “support of the Palestinian people”. A large contingent of police blocked marchers in a central part of the capital. Among the protesters were elected officials wearing tricolor scarves, including a green MP and a far-left lawmaker. “(The need for) a ceasefire is urgent, to stop killing women, children and men,” said the deputy mayor of the central town of Corbeil-Essonnes, Elsa Toure. — AFP



## International

# US, China to work towards Biden-Xi meeting next month

## US officials press Beijing to take 'more constructive approach' to 'situation' in Middle East

WASHINGTON: The United States and China agreed Friday to work towards setting up a meeting between the two countries' leaders next month, after President Joe Biden met Beijing's top diplomat at the White House. Biden has invited Xi Jinping to San Francisco in November for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit at a time of tense relations between the two powers. Xi has not yet confirmed he will come.

After Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held talks with Biden and other senior US officials in Washington, the White House said both countries had agreed to keep up "high-level diplomacy" to try to smooth ties. The two sides "reaffirmed" that they were "working together towards a meeting between President Biden and President Xi Jinping in San Francisco in November," the White House said in a statement. A senior administration official said the White House was leaving it to Beijing to confirm that Xi would come, but "we are making preparations for just such a meeting."

An official readout of talks between Wang and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan released by Beijing confirmed "both sides agreed to make joint efforts to realize a meeting between the two heads of state". In a separate readout of his meeting with Biden, Wang was quoted as saying his visit was aimed at "working to stop the decline in China-US relations, stabilize them, and bring them back to the track of sound and steady development."

Biden told Wang that Washington and Beijing must "manage competition in the relationship responsibly and maintain open lines of communication," according to the White House. With the Zionist occupation forces ramping up their at-

tacks on Palestine, Biden also "underscored that the United States and China must work together to address global challenges," it added in a statement. US officials had "expressed our deep concern with the situation (in the Middle East) and pressed China to take a more constructive approach," including talking to its allies there, the senior administration official added.

Wang has been on a two-day visit to Washington during which he also met with Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the latest in a series of high-level contacts between the United States and China. His meeting with Biden had been expected after Blinken met Xi in Beijing in June, but it had not previously been confirmed.

### Taiwan 'threat'

After meeting with Blinken on Thursday, Wang acknowledged that differences would still come up, but said China would respond "calmly." Biden and Xi have had no contact since a meeting in Bali in November 2022. Relations have been tense for years between the world's top two economies as they vie for influence in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, and as Beijing boosts cooperation with Russia in a bid to reduce US dominance. A particular point of contention has been Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy claimed by Beijing. "The biggest threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is 'Taiwan independence', and the biggest challenge to China-US relations is also 'Taiwan independence', which must be resolutely opposed," Wang said in the readout of his meeting with Sullivan.

In his meeting with Biden, he also stressed the centrality of the "One-China principle" to US-China



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken shakes hands with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi prior to meetings at the State Department on Oct 26, 2023. - AFP

ties, according to the foreign ministry readout. The United States and China have also traded barbs over the conflict in the Middle East, where Biden has been Israel's foremost ally. US officials have repeatedly spoken of creating "guardrails" with China to prevent worst-case scenarios and have sought, without success, to restore contact between the two militaries. Biden on Wednesday warned China of US treaty

obligations to the Philippines, which said that Chinese vessels deliberately hit Manila's boats in dispute-rife waters — an account contested by Beijing.

Speaking alongside Australia's prime minister, a key Asia-Pacific ally, Biden vowed to compete with China "every way according to the international rules — economically, politically, in other ways. But I'm not looking for conflict." - AFP

## Suspect in Maine mass shooting found dead

LEWISTON: The suspect in a mass shooting that killed 18 people in the US state of Maine has been found dead, the state's governor said Friday, ending a two-day manhunt that mobilized hundreds of law enforcement agents and set jittery residents of the northeastern state on edge. Robert Card, a 40-year-old Army reservist, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, and his body was discovered at 7:45 pm (2345 GMT), Maine public safety commissioner Mike Sauschuck said.

Card is believed to be the perpetrator of a rampage on Wednesday evening that left 18 people dead and 13 others wounded in a bowling alley and a bar-restaurant in this hard-scrabble city. "I'm breathing a sigh of relief tonight knowing that Robert Card is no longer a threat to anyone," Governor Janet Mills told a hastily called news conference.

The sentiment was echoed by US Senator Susan Collins of Maine, who said on X, formerly Twitter, that President Joe Biden called her "to tell me the perpetrator of the heinous attacks in Lewiston had been found." Biden said the mass shooting brought "a tragic two days — not just for Lewiston, Maine, but for our entire country." "I will continue to do everything in my power to end this gun violence epidemic. The Lewiston community — and all Americans — deserve nothing less," Biden said in a statement released by the White House.

Authorities on Friday identified the victims, ranging from a husband and wife in their 70s, to a 14-year-old boy killed alongside his father. The



Maine Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mike Sauschuck speaks to the press during a press conference at Lewiston City Hall under a picture of suspect Robert Card on Oct 27, 2023.

killing spree in a bowling alley and bar-restaurant marked the deadliest mass shooting in the US this year. Card's body was found in Lisbon Falls, southeast of Lewiston near the Androscoggin River, authorities said. US media said his body was found near a recycling center that was Card's place of employment before he lost his job there. Roads leading to the site were blocked by police Friday evening, an AFP journalist saw. Sauschuck said he could not immediately say when Card shot himself.

The shooting — and Card's fugitive status — had brought dread to southern Maine over the past two days. Authorities had described Card as "armed and dangerous." Earlier Friday, authorities said they were chasing down more than 530 tips and leads on Card's possible whereabouts. Card is an army

reservist but had not been deployed in any combat zone. US media reported that he had recently been sent for psychiatric treatment after he said he was hearing voices.

This latest shooting is one of the deadliest in the United States since 2017, when a gunman opened fire on a crowded music festival in Las Vegas, killing 60 people.

Earlier Friday, law enforcement agents deployed along the Androscoggin River — near where Card's white SUV was found — and divers using sonar entered the river to look for evidence — or a body. Hours before the break in the case, Sauschuck announced the lifting of a lockdown in the area around Lewiston that had shuttered schools and businesses. Lewiston resident Jeremy Hiltz told AFP that a

number of intersecting social crises have afflicted Lewiston, a city of some 38,000 inhabitants. "This community itself has been devastated by addiction and housing crisis and poverty ... So to put this on top of it, it's really just a devastating situation for us," Hiltz said.

An education center for the deaf and hard of hearing, located on a small island a 45-minute drive south of Lewiston, was particularly hard-hit by the tragedy. Among those killed at the Schemengees bar-restaurant — where the killer appeared after the rampage at the bowling alley — were four men with ties to the school, as former students, educators or parents, Karen Hopkins, the school's director, told AFP. "It's a heavy time. Our community is shattered right now," she said. — AFP



LEWISTON: Hearts with messages are hung all over the downtown area in Lewiston, Maine on Oct 26, 2023. — AFP photos

## ZIONISTS UNLEASH BARBARITY...

### Continued from Page 1

Oman too warned of the destabilizing effects of a large-scale land invasion, while Qatar said "a ground escalation" would risk "the safety of civilians and hostages in Gaza".

A Qatari foreign ministry statement expressed "complete rejection of the indiscriminate bombing of the Gaza Strip and the attempts to forcibly displace its people". Qatar's top diplomat said "mediation efforts to release civilian hostages" and "to end the war" were ongoing. The six-member Gulf Cooperation Council condemned the military escalation in Gaza as a "violation of international law," urging an immediate end to hostilities.

Addressing a rally of several hundred thousand Palestinian supporters in Istanbul on Saturday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said "the main culprit behind the massacre unfolding in Gaza is the West". Erdogan earlier said "(The Zionist entity) must immediately stop this madness and end its attacks" in a post on X. UN chief Antonio Guterres said he regretted the "unprecedented escalation" of the Zionist entity's bombardment of Gaza and demanded an "immediate" ceasefire.

The Hamas-controlled health ministry in Gaza said Zionist strikes had killed 7,703 people, mainly civilians, with more than 3,500 of them children. UN human rights chief Volker Turk warned of "the possibly catastrophic consequences of large-scale ground operations in Gaza", saying "thousands more civilians" could die. The intense Zionist strikes against Hamas, the Islamist group that has ruled Gaza since 2007, coincided with ground operations and came as tens of thousands of troops massed along the Gaza border ahead of an expected full-blown invasion.

Zionist forces also made limited ground incursions on Wednesday and Thursday. "We've entered a new phase in the war," Zionist Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said in a video on Saturday. Zionist

fighter jets dropped leaflets over Gaza City Saturday warning residents that the area was now a "battlefield". "Shelters in northern Gaza and Gaza governorate are not safe," the army said, urging residents to "evacuate immediately" to the south. The army already delivered similar warnings earlier in its campaign, but many who fled south ended up returning to their homes after failing to find refuge from Zionist bombing.

Gaza Civil Defense spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP "hundreds of buildings and houses were completely destroyed and thousands of other homes were damaged" in the overnight strikes. Amid the rubble of destroyed buildings in Al-Shati refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip, Alaa Mahdi likened the Zionist entity's bombardment to an "earthquake". "If it were a natural earthquake, it would have been much easier than what happened last night," he told AFP. "What happened last night was more like a horror movie," Gaza City resident Jihad Mahdi told AFP. "People in the streets have become lifeless bodies walking."

Hamas' armed wing, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades, said it targeted Zionist forces in an area of northern Gaza near the border on Saturday. Zionist warplanes flew overhead as booms were heard coming from Gaza. AFP journalists reported. The families of Zionist captives held by Hamas demanded on Saturday an immediate government explanation about their fate after the army's intensified strikes. On Thursday, the Ezzedine al-Qassam Brigades said "almost 50" captives had been killed in Zionist bombings since Oct 7.

Hamas said all Internet connections and communications across Gaza had been cut. AFP journalists in Gaza confirmed they were only able to communicate in limited areas where they could connect to Zionist networks across the border. The Palestinian Red Crescent said the outage had disrupted ambulance services. The UN humanitarian coordinator for the Palestinian territories, Lynne Hastings, said on X, formerly Twitter, that "hospitals & humanitarian operations can't continue without communications". — Agencies

## Kuwait slams Zionist crimes...

### Continued from Page 1

international community's double standards on disarmament and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It is quick to condemn some countries but remains silent towards others, she said.

Kuwait also expressed sincere condemnation of Zionist calls to evict Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, calling on the international community to intervene. This came during a speech delivered by Diplomatic Attaché of the Kuwaiti delegation to the UN Manar Bashir before the First Committee of the UN General Assembly under the framework of "Establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and other weapons in the Middle East". She also said Kuwait is calling for immediate action towards lifting the siege on Gaza and ensuring safe passage for aid, medical and humanitarian convoys, as aggressive fighting continues without consideration for civilians.

"We extend our sincere condolences and sympathy to the Palestinian people", especially those innocent casu-

alties of inhumane attacks, Bashir said, accusing the Zionist entity of "flagrant violations committed by these occupying forces, which flout the rules of international humanitarian law under the pretext of self-defense". As for the discussions of the committee, she said the recent escalation of events witnessed in the Middle East, as violent actions surge, requires the international community to strengthen cooperation and multilateral action towards establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destructions, calling on regional states to comply with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons of the 1995 Review Conference.

Bashir added Kuwait stands firm on the issue of international security and peace and nuclear disarmament as well as stressing all nations need to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Bashir mentioned the country chaired the "Second Session of the Conference on the Establishment of a Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and other Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East", in line with the determination to end the spread of nuclear weapons. She assured Kuwait will adhere to the necessary measures and procedures to strengthen international cooperation to achieve this goal, advising against the politicization of issues and distortion of facts, in order to focus on tangible progress. — KUNA



GAZA: People check the destruction following Zionist strikes on Al-Shati camp in Gaza City on Oct 28, 2023. — AFP



## International

# 32 killed in Kazakhstan ArcelorMittal mine fire

## Mining giant 'worst' company in Kazakhstan's history: Tokayev

KARAGANDA: Kazakhstan said Saturday that 32 people died in a fire in yet another deadly accident at a mine owned by ArcelorMittal, with over a dozen still missing, in the Central Asian country's worst disaster in years. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev called the Luxembourg-listed steel and mining giant the "worst" company "in our history" while the firm announced a preliminary deal on the nationalization of its local operations.

Tokayev had earlier ordered his government to take control of the Kazakh branch of the company. "ArcelorMittal can confirm that the two parties have ... recently signed a preliminary agreement for a transaction that will transfer ownership to the Republic of Kazakhstan," the global steel giant said in a statement.

At the mine, emergency workers comforted local community members, especially women, as they waited anxiously for news of those who had been working below the surface. Dozens gathered in a waiting room, some with their heads in their hands and all looking anxious.

ArcelorMittal, led by Indian businessman Lakshmi Mittal, has a history of deadly disasters in Kazakhstan and is regularly accused of failing to respect safety and environmental regulations. The fire was one of the deadliest in Kazakhstan's post-Soviet history and came just two months after five miners were killed in a blast at a site owned by the company. "At the Kostenko mine as of four pm (1000 GMT) the bodies of 32 people have been found," the emergency situations ministry said in a statement. "The search for 14 miners is continuing."

"This is a tragedy," Tokayev said as he met with families of the victims in the Karaganda region. He called for a day of national mourning on

Sunday. "This company has turned out to be the worst in our history from the point of view of co-operation between a company and the government," Tokayev said.

He asked the deputy governor of the Karaganda region, Vadim Basin, who used to work for ArcelorMittal, to head the company. "The current management of the company cannot do anything," he added. No cause of the accident had been announced, with Tokayev saying an investigative commission would be set up.

### Five deadly accidents in a year

The fire was Kazakhstan's worst mining accident since 2006, when 41 miners died at an ArcelorMittal site, and came two months after five miners were killed in a blast this summer. There have been five other deadly accidents at ArcelorMittal in Kazakhstan since November last year, resulting in a total of 12 deaths. Ambulances and police entered the mine compound on Saturday, an AFP reporter saw.

ArcelorMittal promised compensation and said it would cooperate with authorities. "Our efforts are aimed at that (compensation) and on the tight cooperation with state authorities," it said. Officials said 18 people had been hospitalized after the fire. "Fifteen of them are in the toxicology department with carbon monoxide poisoning," said regional health department head Bibigul Tulegenova.

### Putin sends condolences

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his condolences to his Kazakh ally. "Please convey words of sympathy and support to the families of the killed miners," Putin said in a statement. "We hope the miners that are underground will be saved."

of corruption and human rights abuses. At least 20 people were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the country's largest, with wounds from rubber bullets, police inspector Bacchu Mia told AFP. The clashes began in front of the city's largest Catholic church when rowdy opposition supporters fought with sticks and allegedly torched a bus and a police post. The BNP has called a nationwide strike on Sunday to protest the violence. "Police and armed ruling party cadres attacked our peaceful rally," party spokesman Zahir Uddin Swapan told AFP.

### Months of protests

The resurgent opposition has been mounting protests to press their demands for months, despite the BNP's ailing leader Khaleda Zia, a two-time premier and old foe of Hasina's, being effectively under house arrest after a conviction on corruption charges.

Hundreds of opposition activists were detained in the days running up to the rally, officials confirmed, but her supporters poured into Dhaka on Saturday, crammed into buses and despite checkpoints on roads into the capital, and even riding on top of packed trains. "Vote thief, vote thief, Sheikh Hasina vote thief," chanted the crowd at a demonstration in front of the BNP headquarters.

Student activist Sekandar Badsha, 24, from Chittagong, said: "We demand the immediate resignation of the Hasina government, release of our leader Khaleda Zia and establishing the people's right to vote." At least 10,000 police had been deployed, officials said. Dhaka Metropolitan Police spokesman Hossain said that at least 100,000 people had joined the BNP rally, while up to 25,000 were at the Jamaat protest near the city's main commercial district — which had been banned by police. BNP spokesman Swapan told AFP that there were more than one million people at its rally, which he described as its "final call" for Hasina to resign. — AFP

## Bangladesh police break up anti-PM protest with tear gas

DHAKA: Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at huge crowds of Bangladesh opposition supporters Saturday to break up a giant protest against the prime minister, with one officer killed and scores of people injured in several hours of violent clashes in central Dhaka. More than 100,000 supporters of two major Bangladesh opposition parties rallied to demand Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina step down to allow a free and fair vote under a neutral government. Live footage on the verified Facebook page of the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) showed thousands of people running for safety as sound grenades went off one after another and plumes of black smoke rose from the roads.

AFP correspondents said the violence spread in roads and alleys in the center of the capital as police fired tear gas and rubber shotgun rounds, while the protesters threw stones and bricks. One officer was killed and more than 100 injured, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police spokesman Faruk Hossain, telling AFP: "The constable was hacked in the head by opposition activists." The protests by the BNP and the largest Islamist party, Jamaat-e-Islami, were the biggest so far this year, AFP journalists on site said, and marked a new phase in their protests with a general election due within three months.

Hasina — daughter of the country's founding leader — has been in power for 15 years and has overseen rapid economic growth with Bangladesh overtaking neighboring India in GDP per capita, but inflation has risen and her government is accused



DHAKA: Police (front) stand guard in front of Bangladesh Nationalist party (BNP) activists during a rally demanding the resignation of the current government. — AFP

## Over 200,000 minors sexually abused by Spanish clergy: Probe

MADRID: Over 200,000 minors are estimated to have been sexually abused in Spain by the Roman Catholic clergy since 1940, according to an independent commission published Friday. The report did not give a specific figure but said a poll of over 8,000 people found that 0.6 percent of Spain's adult population of around 39 million people said they had suffered sexual abuse by members of the clergy when they were still children.

The percentage rises to 1.13 percent — or over 400,000 people — when including abuse by lay members, Spain's national ombudsman Angel Gabilondo told a news conference called to present the findings of the report which has over 700 pages. The revelations in Spain are the latest to rock the Roman

Catholic Church after a series of sexual abuse scandals around the world, often involving children, over the past 20 years. The commission also interviewed 487 victims, who stressed "the emotional problems" the abuse has caused them, Gabilondo said. "There are people who have (died by) suicide ... people who have never put their lives back together," the former Socialist education minister said.

Teresa Conde, a philosophy teacher who was abused for years by a friar starting at the age of 14 when she attended a religious school in the northwestern city of Salamanca in the early 1980, said she is "never going to be a normal person." "I'm never going to stop doing therapy or taking medicine," the 57-year-old told AFP.

### 'Downplay the issue'

Unlike in other nations, in Spain — a traditionally Catholic country that has become highly secular — clerical abuse allegations only recently started to gain traction, leading to accusations by survivors of stonewalling. The report is critical of the response of the Catholic Church, saying "it has long been charac-



KARAGANDA: This photo, taken on Oct 28, 2023, shows the Kostyenko ArcelorMittal coal mine in Karaganda, north-western Kazakhstan. — AFP

After the fire at an ArcelorMittal coal mine in August, Tokayev denounced the "systemic character" of accidents involving the company that he said had left more than 100 people dead since 2006. ArcelorMittal operates around a dozen mines in the highly polluted industrial region of the vast, resource-rich nation, formerly part of the Soviet Union.

Extraction of iron and coal as well as oil, gas and uranium have made its economy the largest

in Central Asia, though accidents are common because of ageing infrastructure and equipment and lax safety standards. In December 2022, the government had threatened to ban ArcelorMittal from operating in the country after a worker died in what the company called "an accident" at its factory in Temirtau. The death came just a month after five miners were killed at another Arcelor site in the region. — AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah (center left) and Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar of Johor (center right) walk together after the election for the next Malaysian king on Oct 27, 2023. — AFP

## Malaysia picks Sultan Ibrahim to be next king

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's royalty on Friday chose an influential sultan from the southern state of Johor to be the country's next king. The position is largely ceremonial but oversees major appointments such as the prime minister and serves as the head of Islam in the Muslim-majority country and the commander-in-chief of its armed forces.

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy, with a unique arrangement where the throne changes hands every five years between rulers of the nine Malaysian states headed by centuries-old Islamic royalty.

Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar was appointed the country's 17th king after a conference of rulers in the capital Kuala Lumpur. The 64-year-old will be sworn in after the incumbent king's term expires on January 31 next year, before a coronation ceremony several months later. The system has been in place since independence from Britain in 1957. The outgoing king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, ascended the throne in 2019. Ibrahim hails from the wealthy and powerful Johor royal family, the head of which commands its private army.

He has a close relationship with Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and often comments on Malaysian politics. He is a hands-on monarch and a fully trained army, navy and air force officer who studied abroad in the United States. The king also wields the power to pardon convicted figures. In 2018 Sultan Muhammad V, one of Ibrahim's predecessors, pardoned Anwar, who had served a jail sentence for sodomy. — AFP

terized by denial and attempts to downplay the issue." It recommended the creation of a state fund to pay reparations to victims. "Unfortunately, for many years there has been a certain desire to deny abuses or a desire to conceal or protect the abusers," said Gabilondo. Spain's parliament in March 2022 overwhelmingly approved the creation of an independent commission led by the country's ombudsman to look into clerical abuse. The country's Catholic Church, which for years flatly refused to carry out its own probe, declined to take part in the probe, although it did cooperate by providing documents on cases of sexual abuse that had been collected by dioceses.

But as political pressure mounted, it tasked a private law firm in February 2022 with an "audit" into past and present sexual abuse by clergy, teachers and others associated with the Church, which should be completed by the end of the year. The Spanish church has also set up protocols for dealing with sexual abuse and has set up "child protection" offices with dioceses. Contacted by AFP, the Spanish bishops' conference said it would react to the commission's report on Monday at an extraordinary meeting. — AFP

## Flowers laid at former home of late Li Keqiang

DINGYUAN: As dusk fell on a remote village in eastern China on Friday, a small group gathered around a mud and thatch house to pay tribute to its most famous resident — former premier Li Keqiang, who died Friday aged 68. Once in the running to take over the country's top job before being passed over for President Xi Jinping, Li had a relatively humble upbringing in rural Anhui province.

On Friday a cluster of bouquets was laid against the walls of his family home in Jiuzi village, Dingyuan county, where he lived throughout many of his school years. "Li Keqiang was an amiable premier and was loved by people all over the country," said one man, who stood staring at the display for some time, looking moved. "When I heard the news, I was shocked, unable to accept the truth. I happened to be here in Dingyuan, his hometown, and came here to mourn our beloved premier," he told AFP.

It was not clear whether some of the people milling around were present in an official capacity, with the pile of bouquets slowly added to as the evening went on. A small group of people gathered, with some laying bunches of yellow and white chrysanthemums — a symbol of mourning in China — and bowing before the house. "He has done a lot of good things for the people and the country. We are very grateful to him," one man told AFP. The mourners speaking to AFP didn't want to give their names for privacy reasons.

Arriving with a large standing floral arrangement, a delivery man told AFP he had been summoned from about an hour away, as there were no closer flower shops. The rural surroundings were a far cry from the lofty halls of power in Beijing where Li spent a decade as China's nominal second in command.

Li reportedly still has relatives living in Jiuzi, a small settlement surrounded by fields of hay, where the sides of the roads are lined by beans left out to dry. One woman told AFP she felt "very sad" at Li's passing. "My mum is related to him in some way," she said. "We share the same ancestor."

The son of a minor party official, Li's path out of Anhui began when he was accepted into the prestigious Peking University, first for a law degree, then a doctorate in economics. At a small restaurant next to the house, two young men said they had travelled from Hefei, about an hour away, to pay their respects to a fellow alumnus. "After learning the news, we came here in the afternoon," Zhong, the Youth Secretary of Anhui Peking University Alumni Association said. He showed AFP a video online from Hefei, where people were also laying flowers outside places connected with Li. "There will probably be more people here on the weekend," said his companion. — AFP



DINGYUAN: A man places flowers in front of the former house of former Chinese premier Li Keqiang on Oct 27, 2023. — AFP



# Business

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2023

## Tight US job market rebalances power between business, labor

### Runaway inflation another catalyst for workers to demand pay rise

**NEW YORK:** The US economy is contending with a wave of union activism unseen in decades as organized labor seizes a rare opportunity to play hardball in a tight employment market. Sectors experiencing unrest include automobiles, healthcare, restaurants, defense, airlines, technology and the performing arts.

In some cases, employees have threatened to walk out, but didn't actually strike. "Workers haven't had much leverage for decades, and certainly not in the aftermath of the 2008-2009 recession," said Susan Schurman, professor of labor relations at Rutgers University.

Schurman considers the current dynamic the most advantageous for unions since the 1930s, a rupture from a long period in which employers had the upper hand. "Wages have been stagnant for decades," Schurman said. "The pandemic changed all that," with the low unemployment bolstering worker leverage. Such a backdrop has given momentum to organizing campaigns at more companies, although establishing a union shop remains difficult. In some cases such as Starbucks and Amazon, workers have voted in favor of representation, but struggled to seal a contract with the employer.

The activism can feed on itself as workers in different sectors observe each other fighting for more, sometime spurring concessions from employers who are trying to stay union-free, said Schurman. This can mean higher wages, better working conditions, increased job security or other conditions.

#### Inflation

Higher consumer prices have been another catalyst for workers, adding credibility to workers claims that they need higher pay just to break even. Data released this week showed a 3.7 percent increase over September 2022, down from the 9.1 percent surge in June 2022. The Federal Reserve has raised

interest rates 11 times since March 2022 in an effort to return inflation to a two percent target.

In August the United States lost 4.1 million days of work due to strikes, the highest level in 23 years, according to the Labor Department. One of the most prominent strikes has been the United Auto Workers' unprecedented stoppage of Detroit's "Big Three," Ford, Stellantis and General Motors, the first time the union has walked out of all three companies at once.

Pointing to soaring CEO pay at the companies, UAW President Shawn Fain has called out the automakers to boost pay and restore benefits following union concessions after the 2008 financial crisis and ensuing auto industry bankruptcies. "Another record quarter, another record year. As we've said for months: record profits equal record contracts," Fain said Tuesday as he announced the latest expansion of the strike at GM.

"It's time GM workers, and the whole working class, get their fair share," said Fain, who has seen gradually improved company offers as evidence the "stand up" strike is working. With this week's most recent walkouts, UAW auto employees on strike numbered around 45,000. Schurman said she was "surprised" by Fain's strategy, "but it appears to be working," she said. "They all have more on the table now than they did a month ago."

On Wednesday night, the UAW announced a tentative agreement with Ford applauded as "an historic accord" by the President Joe Biden. The agreement, which includes a 25 percent wage hike, still must be ratified by Ford workers.

#### Health care, airlines, etc.

Biden also cheered an agreement between the Teamsters and UPS in July that averted a potentially calamitous strike. Defense group General Dynamics also sealed a deal with the UAW that could

augment their allocated shares, can engage in the process by acquiring rights issues. This rights trading period commences on Sunday, October 29, 2023, and concludes on November 5, 2023.

The primary objective of the capital increase at the bank is to bolster its capital base and ensure compliance with regulatory capital adequacy ratios. This initiative aligns with the bank's strategic vision of expanding its capabilities to seize future growth prospects. By doing so, the bank aspires to achieve sustainable growth and create additional value for its diverse stakeholders and customers in the long run. This strategy aims to deliver exceptional banking services that cater to the evolving needs and aspirations of its clientele.

The prospectus and extra information about the offering process are available on Gulf Bank's official website and through authorized underwriting agents at [www.e-gulfbank.com](http://www.e-gulfbank.com) and [www.kamcoinvest.com](http://www.kamcoinvest.com). It is important to note that subscription applications should be submitted through KCC's online IPO platform at [www.ipo.com.kw](http://www.ipo.com.kw) during the subscription period. Gulf Bank has appointed KAMCO Invest as a Joint Issue Manager and Underwriting Agent, while Gulf Bank also serves as a Joint Issue Manager and Underwriting Agent.

## Gulf Bank begins capital increase subscription process

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank is commencing the subscription process today, October 29, 2023, for the increased issued and paid-up capital of KD 26.1 million. Subscriptions will be open for a two-week period, concluding on Sunday, November 12, 2023.

Gulf Bank has received approval from the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Capital Markets Authority, to enhance its issued and paid-up capital. This will be achieved by issuing 260,869,565 new ordinary shares priced at 230 fils per share. This amount includes the nominal value of 100 fils per share, along with an issue premium of 130 fils per share. Consequently, the bank's capital base will rise by KD 60 million. Shareholders listed in the Bank's Register of Shareholders as of the maturity date on Thursday, October 26, 2023, will have access to the subscription. Non-shareholders desiring to participate in the capital increase, along with shareholders looking to

## Panama bans new mining deals, but fails to quell protests

**PANAMA CITY:** Panama's President Laurentino Cortizo on Friday announced a ban on new metal mining concessions, but maintained a contract with a Canadian company that has sparked massive protests in the country.

In a televised address, the president said the government had issued a decree "declaring a ban on granting new metallic mineral concessions throughout the country." Cortizo made no mention of the controversial contract with First Quantum Minerals, the Vancouver-based company whose Caribbean copper mine sparked demonstrations over potential environmental impacts and in which protesters have clashed with police.

"All new metal mining applications and also those that are currently in process will be rejected outright," the president said, adding that "this ban will be effective as of today."

Cortizo, who signed the decree before television cameras, said he made this decision "taking into account the different positions of society in relation to the issue of mining." But his announcement did little to quell tempers at a protest by thousands of people that was taking place in the financial center of the capital even as he spoke.

Thousands of Panamanians marched again Friday to demand that the contract with the Canadian company, which operates the largest copper mine in Central America, be repealed. "You who are watching, yes, they are robbing you too," protesters chanted as they banged pots and pans and waved

Panamanian flags. The demonstrations began a week ago and have drawn thousands of people, an unusual occurrence in this country of 4.2 million inhabitants.

"The government has not been listening to us, it has used all means to repress us and to suppress information," said activist and protest organizer Felipe Chon. "The mine has been a bad deal for the nation, because of the ecological damage they have done," protester Alfredo Fonseca told AFP.

In the past week, the protests have grown, with street blockades set up in the capital and other cities, including some blocking the Pan-American highway that connects the country with the rest



**HOLLYWOOD:** SAG-AFTRA members picket outside of Netflix's building on day 99 of their strike against the Hollywood studios in Hollywood, California. Automotive, healthcare, food service, arms, airlines, Internet, entertainment, etc. for several months now, Americans have been taking advantage of the bargaining power provided by low unemployment to demand - and obtain - better conditions against a backdrop of high inflation. — AFP

of Central America. Schools were suspended all week and in some areas clashes broke out between stone-throwing protesters and police who fired tear gas at the demonstrators.

Protests intensified last Friday after Cortizo signed a bill establishing the mining contract. The demonstrators have been calling for that law to be repealed. The Supreme Court had declared the original contract unconstitutional in 2017, but the government has argued that the new version sets out a minimum annual contributions from the mining company to the state of \$375 million, 10 times the amount of the initial agreement. — AFP

mid-September. Health network Kaiser Permanente agreed to hefty wage hikes after some 75,000 of its 85,000 employees walked out for three days in early October and threatened another stoppage next month. Workers at pharmacy chain Walgreens have had walkouts. In Hollywood, actors have been on the pickets since July, while the Writers Guild of America ratified its contract earlier this month after a 148-day stoppage. — AFP



## Russian central bank raises key interest to 15%

**MOSCOW:** Russia's central bank on Friday raised its key interest rate from 13 percent to 15 percent as it warned inflation was rising across the Russian economy. It is the fourth hike in as many months as the central bank tries to grapple with the economic fallout of Moscow's assault on Ukraine. "Current inflationary pressures have significantly increased to a level above the Bank of Russia's expectations," the central bank said in a statement announcing the rate rise.

A surge in government military spending and the call-up of hundreds of thousands of soldiers has caused the domestic economy to show signs of overheating. The central bank said annual inflation was running at 6.6 percent — above its official 4 percent target — and was continuing to rise. Higher interest rates are designed to sap demand by making it more expensive to borrow money and encouraging consumers and businesses to save, not spend.

The bank said it saw a "substantial" risk that prices would continue to rise in the months ahead. "The central bank has aggressively raised its key rate ... This is a tougher move than the market expected," analysts at Moscow-based Alfa Bank said in a research note. The Russian ruble strengthened slightly on the decision to around 93 to the US dollar. The exchange rate is seen as a key barometer of Russia's economic health by politicians, businesses and the population. While Moscow has defied early predictions that its assault on Ukraine and the resulting Western sanctions could trigger a near economic collapse, the offensive has still put a strain on the domestic economy. — AFP

## JPMorgan CEO says to sell 1 million shares

**NEW YORK:** Jamie Dimon, the head of JPMorgan Chase, is to sell one million shares he holds in the US bank, worth roughly \$140 million, the bank announced Friday. This will be Dimon's first stock sale since becoming the bank's CEO in 2005, JPMorgan said in a statement. "Mr. Dimon continues to believe the company's prospects are very strong and his stake in the company will remain very significant" following the sale, the bank said. Dimon and his family currently own approximately 8.6 million shares, according to the document.

The sale of shares by Dimon and his family, set to start in 2024, was justified by a desire for financial diversification and for tax reasons, the statement said. JPMorgan shares ended Friday's session on the New York Stock Exchange down 3.6 percent. Shares of other banks slumped as well, with Citi down 2.8 percent and Goldman Sachs falling 2.4 percent. — AFP



**PANAMA CITY:** People protest during a march against the government contract with Canadian mining company First Quantum and its subsidiary Minera Panama in Panama City on October 27, 2023. — AFP



Business

# ABK Group reports KD 32.6 million net profit for first 9 months of 2023

## 19% profit increase demonstrates ABK's ability to deliver sustained growth

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is pleased to announce strong financial results for the nine-month period ended Sept 30, 2023. The Bank has demonstrated exceptional performance, reflecting its resilience and commitment to customers and stakeholders.

Net profit reached KD 32.6 million, a 19 percent increase compared to the previous year, demonstrating ABK's ability to navigate through the economic conditions and deliver sustained growth.



Talal Behbehani

Earnings per share (EPS) rose to 13 fils, reflecting the Bank's strong profitability and shareholder value creation. Operating profit was reported at KD 71.2 million. Total assets stood at KD 6.3 billion indicating ABK's healthy financial position and robust balance sheet.

ABK maintained a steady growth in Loans and Advances, which reached KD 4.3 billion with customer deposits at KD 3.9 billion, a testament to the Bank's reputation as a trusted financial partner. Meanwhile, the non-performing loan (NPL) ratio stood at 1.34 percent, NPL coverage at 420 percent, capital adequacy ratio (CAR) at 14.67 percent, and shareholders' equity at KD 602.8 million.

Expressing his satisfaction with the bank's financial performance, Talal Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, said, "These results demonstrate ABK's prudent risk management practice, customer-centric

approach, and commitment to delivering value to its stakeholders. We remain steadfast in our focus to achieve sustainable growth and our continued investment in technology and innovation, both of which have driven our success."

The chairman continued, "We will continue to adapt to the changing market conditions, seize opportunities, and build on our strong foundation to ensure value creation for our stakeholders. Together with our dedicated employees



Abdulla Al-Sumait

and esteemed customers, we are confident in our ability to navigate the path ahead and contribute to the economic development of Kuwait and the markets we operate in." Behbehani affirmed that "ABK's financial results reflect our disciplined approach to credit management and capital allocation. We have focused on optimizing our balance sheet, managing costs, and maintaining a strong liquidity position, enabling us to deliver these outcomes."

### Capital increase and strategic focus

ABK recently announced the successful completion of its capital increase, offering 500 million shares valued at KD 100 million. The demand exceeded the targeted value by 331 percent to reach KD 331.37 million and the Bank's paid-up capital increased by 26.7 percent to reach KD 237.4 million.

Abdulla Al-Sumait, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer emphasized the Group's strategic focus, stating, "At ABK, we believe that our success lies in understanding and meeting the evolving needs of our customers. We remain committed to providing innovating financial solutions, personalized service, and a seamless banking experience. Our ongoing investments in digital transformation and our dedicated team of professionals will enable us to consistently exceed expectations and maintain our position as a leading financial institution."

Having maintained its investment grade credit ratings by Moody's (A2) and Fitch (A), Al-Sumait said, "These demonstrate our robust financial standing which continues to contribute to our reputation within the financial industry." He added that these credit ratings allow ABK to foster trust and confidence among stakeholders, and attract a diverse range of customers and investors. "We are well-equipped to navigate market challenges, seize growth opportunities, and deliver sustainable value to our shareholders."

### Cross-border offerings

As a forward-thinking institution, ABK recognizes the vast potential that lays in its reach beyond the borders of Kuwait. Commenting on this, Al-Sumait said, "Our operations in Egypt and the UAE have provided us with unique growth opportunities, allowing us to tap into new customer segments and expand our product offerings. As such, we use every opportunity to capitalize on strengthening our presence in both markets to diversify our revenue streams and create long-term value for our stakeholders."

He clarified that the success achieved in these countries underscores ABK's ability to adapt to diverse business environments, leverage local knowledge and deliver tailored financial solutions. He continued, "Our presence in Egypt and the UAE has not only enhanced our profitability but also further solidified ABK's position as a trusted regional bank."

### ESG and CSR

ABK acknowledges that initiatives focusing on environmental sustainability and ethical business practices can result in cost savings and operational efficiencies. Al-Sumait stated, "By proactively addressing social and environmental issues, we are more likely to attract and retain top talent, leading to increased productivity and innovation. We are also very aware of the fact that stakeholders, including investors and shareholders, are increasingly considering our efforts in this respect when making investment decisions."

egy has not only resulted in societal benefits, but has also positively contributed to the Group's bottom line. ABK also continues to support the 'Let's Be Aware' banking awareness campaign. In collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait Banking Association, the goal of the campaign is to raise financial and banking awareness among customers and promote financial inclusion in society.

ABK was recognized as one of the top three contributors to the campaign's success in 2022, as announced earlier this year. As such, ABK remains dedi-

### Key Financial Highlights

- Net profit reached KD 32.6 million, a 19% increase
- Earnings per share (EPS) rose to 13 fils
- Operating profit reached KD 71.2 million
- Total assets stood at KD 6.3 billion

He added that women empowerment remains a crucial priority for ABK, stating that it is not just a moral imperative, but a strategic advantage. The Acting Group Chief Executive Officer elaborated, "As we embrace the principles of ESG, we recognize that gender equality is vital for driving innovation, enhancing decision-making, and fostering a more inclusive and robust work culture."

Al-Sumait proceeded to highlight the significant impact CSR initiatives have on a company's financial results. He said, "By engaging in socially responsible practices, we endeavor to build trust and goodwill among customers, investors, and the community." The Group CEO elaborated that it leads to enhanced brand reputation and loyalty, which in turn drives customer acquisition and retention.

Furthermore, he mentioned that integrating CSR into ABK's business strat-

egated to spreading relevant information through its branches, social media platforms, and other potential opportunities.

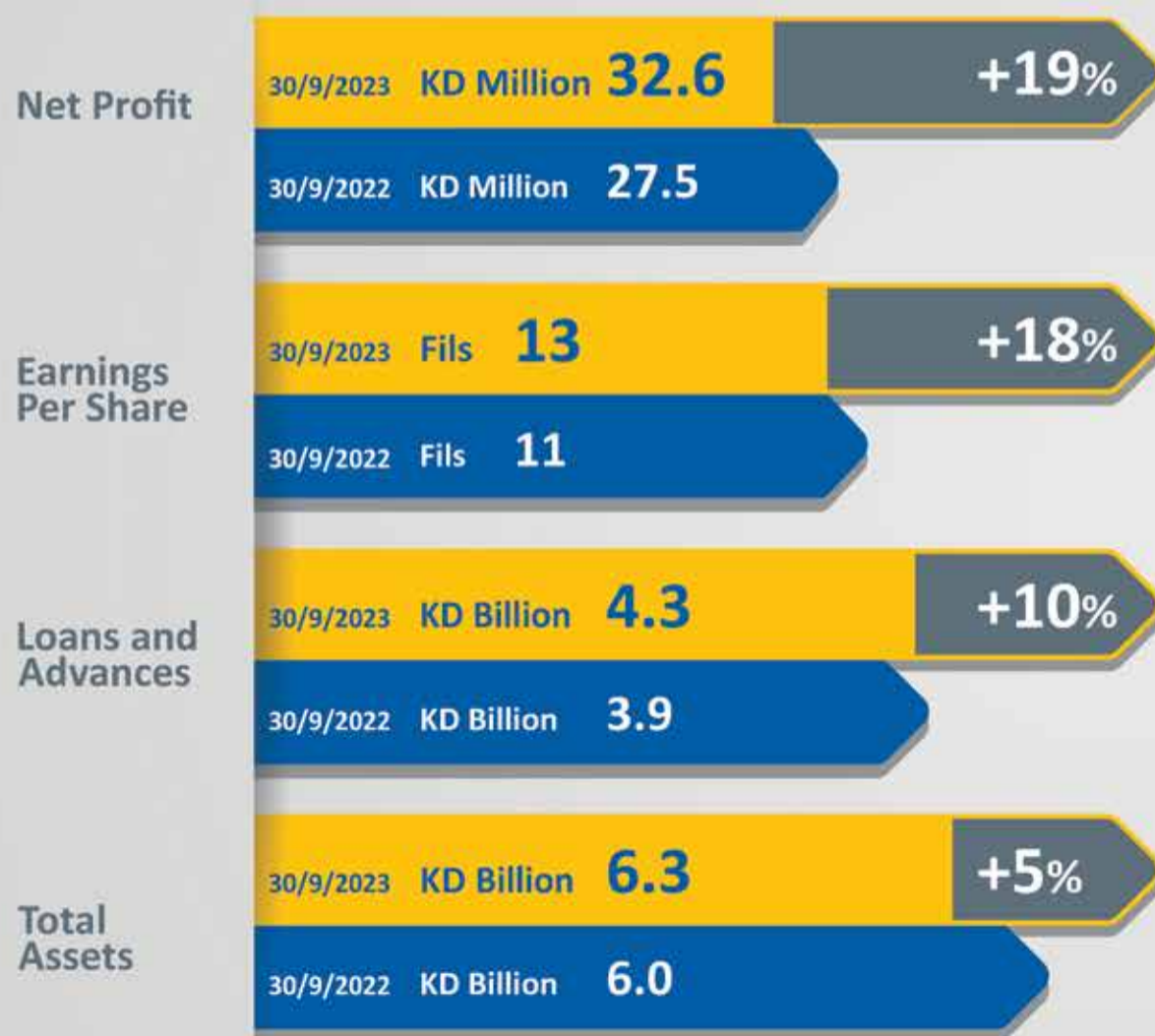
Since its establishment in 1967, ABK has progressed to become one of the leading Kuwaiti banks in the region that offers a wide array of personal, corporate, and private banking products and services. ABK also provides a broad range of local, regional, and global investment solutions and services through its subsidiary, ABK Capital. The bank also offers individuals and corporates the convenience of comprehensive banking and financial services across the region in the Egyptian market through ABK-Egypt's network of 44 branches.

Furthermore, in the United Arab Emirates, ABK has three branches located in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), servicing both Kuwaiti and Emirati individual and corporate clients.

# 2023

## Financial Results

9-Month Period Ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023



MOODY'S A2 FitchRatings A





# Burgan Bank reports KD 195 million in revenue for first 9 months of 2023

## Bank's operating profit increased by 21% y-o-y to KD 109m

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank ("Burgan" or "the Bank") announced its financial results for the nine-month period ending Sept 30, 2023 (9M'23). The Bank reported KD 195 million in revenue for 9M'23, marking a 17 percent year-on-year (y-o-y) growth compared to KD 166 million during the same period in 2022. Higher revenues were driven by strong increase in non-interest income of KD 104 million.

Burgan Bank also announced a 21 percent y-o-y increase in its Operating Profit, reporting KD 109 million in 9M'23, against KD 90 million for the corresponding period in 2022. This growth reflects the Bank's improving operating efficiencies despite its investments in digital and technology infrastructure. The Bank's 9M'23 Cost-to-Income ratio improved to 43.8 percent from 45.5 percent in the previous comparative period. Meanwhile, the Bank's Cost of Credit (net of one-off recoveries) for the nine-month period in 2023 reduced to 20 bps, a marked improvement compared to 40 bps in 9M'22. Burgan Bank generated a Net Income of KD 30 million, compared to KD 41 million reported in the same period of 2022. This decrease is primarily attributed to the impact of its Turkish subsidiary's hyperinflation-related monetary loss.

Burgan continued to maintain its stable asset quality during the first nine months in 2023 with a Non-performing Loan (NPL) ratio of 2 percent. The Bank's capital and liquidity metrics also continued to be healthy in the same period.

Commenting on Burgan's financial results, the Bank's Chairman, Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Al-Sabah, said: "Burgan Bank is currently on a new, revitalized path towards progress and evolution, following the adoption of an expansive strategic transformation plan that has been initiated and approved by our Board of Directors. This transformation roadmap – which was developed collaboratively between our



Sheikh Abdullah Nasser Al-Sabah

leadership team and our strategic consultancy partner, Oliver Wyman – seeks to build on our solid foundations, strengthened over the course of our five-decade-long history; to ensure we remain a modern, dynamic, and digitally smart Bank offering an elevated experience and tailored solutions."

He added: "As a group, Burgan has long had a strong regional presence, but today we are focused primarily on strengthening our Kuwait business with several key objectives in mind. This includes expanding our retail market share; re-assessing and optimizing certain aspects of our overall operations; and reallocating assets in line with the core business goals. With a new vision and mission in place, our team is embarking on an exciting journey of change and development."

As a core part of its strategy, Burgan remains focused first and foremost on its long-term investment in its human capital, with a commitment towards attracting, retaining, and promoting top national talent. Accordingly, the Bank rolled out an exhaustive organizational restructuring exercise across the entire organization, including a number of strategic appointments and promotions at the leadership level. Additionally, as a certified Great Place to Work organized employer on the Best Workplaces in Kuwait™ and Best Workplaces in Asia™ lists, Burgan Bank continues to dedicate a tremendous number of resources towards the growth and development of its staff, continuing to

position itself as an employer of choice for all aspiring and seasoned Kuwaiti bankers.

On the other hand, one of the biggest milestones of the Bank's recent change efforts include the creation of the Transformation Unit, which has been positioned as a central driver of the entire transformation plan. The unit will play a pivotal role in helping the Bank achieve its strategic goals by monitoring the progress of the approved plan, ensuring timely execution, and providing periodic reporting to the board regarding transformational initiatives.

The Bank also continued to propel its efforts to enhance and develop its banking experience for all segments of customers. In line with its continued efforts to remain at the forefront of the digital transformation of Kuwait's banking sector, Burgan Bank recently launched Tjarati Pay, a new and unique enhancement to its market-leading small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) platform, Tjarati. The Bank's one-of-a-kind offering to local businesses, especially entrepreneurs and SMEs, is the first of its kind in the region, and it integrates multiple aspects of payment collection and monitoring, thereby transforming how merchants manage their finances.

"We continue to pursue constant dynamic change with focused development and growth across our business and operations. This includes continuing to grow our segment base; serving retail, corporate, and SME clients with a diversified product portfolio, a constantly evolving offering of modern financial solutions, and a next-level, customized level of service," added Chairman Al-Sabah.

The chairman concluded his statement by thanking Burgan Bank's Board of Directors, Executive Management, shareholders, customers, and all employees across every department for their dedication, loyalty, and notable contributions to the Bank.



He also affirmed Burgan's commitment to the sustainable development of its business operations across all departments with a sharpened focus on environment, social, and governance (ESG).

It serves to note that the consolidated financials for Burgan include the results of the Group's operations in Kuwait, as well as its share of results from its subsidiaries, namely: Burgan Bank Turkey, Gulf Bank Algeria, and Tunis International Bank. Through this regional reach, Burgan Bank has one of the largest regional branch networks across Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, Tunisia and a representative office in the United Arab Emirates.

## Mixed day for global stocks as oil prices rally

NEW YORK: Global stocks were mixed Friday following uneven earnings as worries over the Middle Eastern conflict lifted oil prices. Following a positive session in Asia, bourses in Europe and New York mostly fell, extending a rough patch for equities.

"We are seeing the sellers are relentless and clearly in control," said Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments, adding that "the market is repricing for a potential increased military involvement in the Middle East." Strong earnings from Amazon and Intel lifted the Nasdaq, but the other two major indices finished lower.

The broad-based S&P 500 finished at 4,117.37, down 0.5 percent for the day and off more than 10 percent from July 31 – technically a correction. A closely-watched indicator of US inflation stayed steady in September. The personal consumption expenditures price index rose 3.4 percent from a year ago – the same rate as in the preceding two months.

The report comes ahead of next week's Federal Reserve meeting. The figures "had a sticky feel to them, meaning they lacked a stronger trend of disinflation," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare. "That is apt to keep the Fed in a more hawkish mindset... the Fed won't be thinking about a rate cut anytime soon," he said. The inflation data comes after figures released Thursday showed that the US economy had its best growth since late 2021 during the third quarter.

Asian equity markets rose on the strong US tech earnings, but European stocks finished lower as a number of companies failed to meet earnings expectations. Meanwhile, oil prices finished up more than two percent following US strikes of Iranian-linked militias in Syria as officials in Washington insisted they did not want to widen the Middle East conflict.

It was the first US strike on Iranian interests since March, breaking a stretch of calm after the Biden administration opened quiet diplomacy with the US arch-enemy that led to a prisoner swap and conversations on Iran's disputed nuclear program. The October 7 assault by Hamas and Zionist entity's retaliatory strikes have inflamed the region. Iran's clerical leaders back Hamas, while the United States is the foremost ally of Zionists. –AFP



## NBK Quarterly Economic Brief

### Egypt's growth soft but steady; reform measures expected

KUWAIT: Egypt's economy is entering a crucial few months that will provide a clearer steer on the medium-term outlook, with the presidential election in December likely to give way to various economic reform steps.

GDP growth was steady at a well-below-par 3.9 percent in Q3 FY22/23, amid severe pressures from high inflation and interest rates, as well import compression measures to support the currency. The current account deficit has narrowed, but we still see an external funding gap of around \$12bn this year, which could be partially plugged by more privatization, official support and reserve drawdowns. Inflation although very high has been moderating in month-on-month terms. It could pick up in the event of a currency devaluation early next year, with interest rates initially moving higher as well. As for FY24/25, we see lower inflation and lower interest rates, a more settled currency and policy reform moves providing for a pick-up in economic growth.

Egypt is entering a crucial few months that will provide a clearer steer over the economy's medium-term outlook. Presidential elections will be held in the second week of December (earlier than previously expected) with incumbent Abdel Fattah El-Sisi strong favorite to secure a new six-year term ending in 2030. The elections could be followed by a government reshuffle and the long-awaited devaluation of the Egyptian pound, which although superficially stable for most of this year has remained under pressure. This could unlock currently paused IMF reviews of the 2022 loan program, paving the way for the release of crucial support funds to help address the external funding gap.

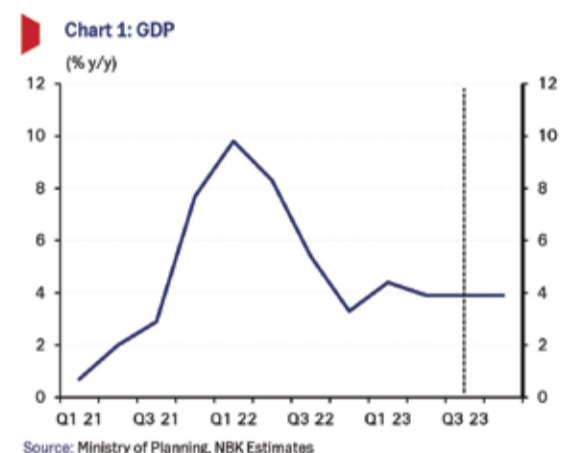
Macroeconomic conditions have remained extremely challenging over the past quarter, with growth subdued, inflation still very high if cooling slightly, and the external account improving somewhat but mostly due to a severe drop in imports. The recently-escalated Zionist-Hamas conflict adds to the challenges facing Egypt's economy.

#### Depressed private consumption

Economic growth continued its downward path in FY22/23 (ending June 2023) with growth expected at 4.0 percent, down from 6.7 percent in the previous year. This is well below par for a country of Egypt's development level and potential. Growth in Q3 FY22/23 came in at 3.9 percent y/y, steady versus Q2 but lower than the 4.3 percent recorded in Q1 and we expect another 3.9 percent print in Q4. The PMI activity indicator ticked up slightly through Q3, but at an average of 49 remained below the 50 'no change' level with firms reporting weak sales, difficulties sourcing raw materials from abroad and rapid price rises.

Elevated costs, a high cost of funding, and continued import restrictions are taking their toll on private consumption. It grew 7.9 percent y/y in Q3 FY22/23 versus 1.3 percent in Q2, but the rebound in annual growth was mainly due to a low base recorded in Q3 a year earlier. Meanwhile, net exports returned to positive territory in Q2FY22/23 for the first time since 2005 and making a positive contribution to GDP – albeit on the back of import compression measures. The impact on overall GDP growth of these increases were offset by major weakness in investment, which fell 31 percent y/y.

As for FY23/24 (to June 2024), we continue to expect limited growth at 4 percent as consumption (especially private) takes a strong hit. So far this fiscal year, inflation has moved still higher to 38 percent and interest rates have risen further. We also see the upcoming electoral process in addition to possible policy



steps such as a currency devaluation, fiscal austerity measures and interest rate hikes postponing the economic recovery story to H2 FY24/25 at the earliest.

#### Current account deficit

The external sector continues to be a key area where Egypt's economic difficulties are playing out. The goods trade deficit actually narrowed by \$12.2bn in FY22/23 to \$31bn (9 percent of GDP), but mainly on the back of a strong drop in imports due to restrictions aimed at alleviating pressures on the currency. The services surplus meanwhile doubled to \$22bn, mainly attributed to a 25 percent rise in tourism revenues and a 27 percent rise in Suez Canal receipts. However, the positive impact of these developments on the overall current account was partially offset by a drop in remittances (down \$10bn to \$22bn), probably due to a reluctance by expatriates to transfer FX home given exchange rate uncertainty. All in all, the current account deficit narrowed \$12bn to a 9-year low of \$5bn, or 1.6 percent of GDP (from 3.6 percent in FY21/22).

We forecast a wider current account deficit of \$8bn (2.6 percent of GDP). The pound looks set to remain pegged at a high level for much of the year, limiting dollar proceeds across key sectors such as tourism and remittances. Additionally, the ongoing shortage in natural gas production would continue to hit the net energy balance negatively, widening the trade deficit to \$36 billion.

Even though the current account has shown strong improvement, Egypt's large external debt maturities are an additional source of pressure. We estimate FY23/24 maturities of \$22 billion, assuming that GCC deposits are renewed. Including the current account deficit mentioned above, total gross external financing needs this year would be \$30 billion. On reasonable assumptions, FDI (\$11 billion), foreign portfolio investment (\$2 billion), IMF tranches (\$2 billion) and Euro-bond issuance (\$3 billion) would cover most of this, leaving a net financing gap of \$12bn for FY23/24. A possible upsizing of the IMF loan by \$2 billion, more privatizations, a partial rescheduling of some multilateral debts and reserve drawdowns could assist in filling part of the funding gap. Though in our opinion, import compression may still need to happen.

The war in Gaza is also likely to impact Egypt's external sector. At present the degree of continued escalation in (and duration of) the conflict is uncertain, but it is possible that it could reduce Egypt's external receipts by \$1.5 billion per quarter via lower tourism and gas exports.

As noted above, the Egyptian pound has remained under severe pressure over the past quarter, currently trading on the parallel market within the range of EGP39-42/\$1, 21-26 percent weaker than the official rate of EGP30.9/\$1. The 12M forward rate was recently at EGP43/\$1. The authorities have been hesitant to embark on steps to unify exchange rates unless it is preceded by a further buildup of FX buffers (\$5-7bn), in our view. As we approach the elections, the window for an EGP devaluation likely closes. However, in our opinion, the move towards a more flexible exchange rate regime is inevitable and could happen in H1 CY2024. Inflation has risen to historical highs at 38 percent y/y in September up from 37 percent in August and 26 percent in January. Inflation has been pushed up recently by unfavorable base effects following more modest increases a year ago. But price

rises on a monthly basis have cooled down with the July-September average at 1.8 percent versus 3.4 percent for January-June. The moderation mainly reflects the fading impact of the EGP devaluation in January. Segment-wise, the surge in food & beverage prices to 7.4 percent y/y has been the key source of upward pressure on inflation overall.

Moving forward, and with the base effect turning more favorable from October, we expect inflation to fall towards 30 percent by year-end. However, cost-push inflationary pressures should kick in following the elections, stemming from a possible EGP devaluation and subsidy cuts. Monthly inflation would pick up, though the annual rate would be capped at 24-25 percent in our view assisted by the favorable base effect. We expect inflation to average around 20 percent for CY2024. Despite dropping significantly, this will still be some way from central bank's target set for Q4 2024 (CY) of 7 percent +/-2 percent.

#### Policy rates could go up next year

Policy rates (19-20 percent) and average 1-year treasury bill yields (21 percent net of tax), while high in nominal terms, are still heavily negative in real terms due to the surge in inflation. However, as inflation drops next year we expect real rates to increase significantly – perhaps to around -3 percent by Q12024.

This said, in conjunction with a likely devaluation of the pound, the central bank could look to raise policy rates further to address a fresh rise in inflation. The CBE unexpectedly raised rates in August by 1 percent to "contain inflationary pressures and anchor inflation expectations are the CBE's targets", but then kept rates unchanged at its September meeting as expected on the back of no fresh inflationary triggers.

#### Policy rate hikes

The policy interest rate hikes of the past year as well as broader economic pressures are clearly trickling down to private sector credit, which slowed to 27 percent y/y in August from a 2023 peak of 35 percent in February. On a real-terms basis, credit to both private sector businesses (-10 percent) and households (-16 percent) were both heavily negative in August. However, public sector credit growth has held up better as it expanded by 11 percent q/q for the 3 months to August up from 10 percent q/q for the 3 months to May. On an annual basis, credit to the public sector expanded by 62 percent y/y in August, a continued rally from a low of 47 percent y/y in May. Credit to the public sector also grew by a strong 24 percent y/y on a real basis. The continuation of the construction boom, mainly infrastructure, is the main cause behind strong public sector lending growth.

The Ministry of Finance released preliminary data on the closing fiscal account for FY22/23 showing the deficit narrowing slightly to 6.0 percent of GDP from 6.1 percent for FY21/22 – much lower than the consensus forecast of closer to 7 percent. The primary surplus (i.e. excluding debt interest payments) also improved to 1.6 percent of GDP from 1.3 percent the previous year. Revenues increased by 15.5 percent y/y to EGP1.6tn, while spending increased by 19 percent to EGP2.2tn, leaving a deficit of EGP0.6tn. The rise in expenses came mainly on the back of a 50 percent increase in interest costs as treasury yields averaged 20.1 percent versus 12 percent in FY21/22, but also an increase of 30 percent in the subsidy bill on the back of the repeated devaluation of the pound.

The budget for FY23/24 projects a deficit of 7.0 percent of GDP (EGP824 billion) with spending of EGP3 trillion and revenues of EGP2.1 trillion. The projections are close to our own, after adjusting for a likely upcoming devaluation and the latest increase in oil prices. We expect the subsidy bill to increase by 32 percent and interest expenses to rise by 40 percent, leading to a rise of 36 percent in spending for this year. Overall however, although the fiscal deficit remains large it has been successfully brought down over the years (12.5 percent in FY15/16) and – despite the impact of higher interest rates on debt servicing – remains a less pressing issue than the external deficit from a general economic point view. In fact, we see current fiscal discipline as crucial as it helps to limit further pressure on the pound.





(From left) Nick Krishnamurthy, Tonia Davis, Sam Esmail, Chad Hamilton, Mac Quayle, Tod Campbell and Rumaan Alam attend the premiere of "Leave the World Behind" during the opening night of the American Film Institute (AFI) Festival at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California, on Oct 25, 2023. - AFP photos



(From left) Armani Ortiz, Gellila Bekele, Tyler Perry, Oprah Winfrey and David Oyelowo attend the centerpiece screening of "Maxine's Baby: The Tyler Perry Story".

## Disaster movie kicks off film festival in strike-hit Hollywood

"Leave the World Behind," an acclaimed novel about ordinary people struggling to cope as a slow and mysterious disaster shuts down the world, felt topical when it was published during the unfolding pandemic of 2020. So the world premiere of its star-studded Netflix film adaptation at AFI Fest in Los Angeles this week, at a time when the world is wracked by conflict, and Hollywood itself is paralyzed by a lengthy actors' strike, carries an extra resonance, filmmakers said.

"The notion that the world has ever been secure, or that the next day has ever been given, is sort of an illusion. And that's what the book is talking



Greta Gerwig and Diane Salinger attend the 2023 AFI Fest screening of "Pee-Wee's Big Adventure".

about," author Rumaan Alam told AFP on the red carpet Wednesday. "It was published into a moment where that seemed especially in stark relief be-

cause of Covid. But I would argue that that's probably how our grandparents felt about reality. "Life is always sort of a gamble. What is normal?"

The movie — starring Julia Roberts, and produced by Barack and Michelle Obama's company Higher Ground — will stream on Netflix from December 8. Its plot sees a wealthy white New York family hire a luxury vacation home in a remote pocket of Long Island. Their relaxation is shattered when a Black father and daughter claiming to be the house's owners arrive at the front door in the middle of the night, having fled a blackout in the city.

With all phone, Internet and televi-

sion networks down, the terrifying nature of what is unfolding in the rest of the world creeps slowly in on the two families, who are forced to make an uneasy alliance despite their obvious prejudices. "The thing that really resonated with me about the book was this idea that, in a moment of crisis, how easily we can lose our common humanity," said director Sam Esmail. "The monster is the unknown, the not knowing. And that's the connection that I had at the time of the pandemic, where we were really in the dark," he added. "It was the not knowing that was the part that scared us the most. But also, when it started to divide us."

Unlike most disaster movies, the apparent apocalypse unfolds mainly in the background, with the characters occupying the center of the story. Early reviews were mainly positive, with Deadline calling it a "chilling disaster movie that hits close to home." Stars including Roberts, Mahershala Ali, Ethan Hawke and Kevin Bacon were unable to walk the red carpet on Wednesday evening, with the actors' walkout having recently passed the 100-day mark. Talks between studios and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) over pay and other conditions are ongoing. AFI Fest continues until Sunday. — AFP



Japanese robotics startup Tsubame Industries exhibit the ARCHAX robot, weighing 3.5 tonnes and measuring 4.5 meters in height, during the press day of the Japan Mobility Show in Tokyo on Oct 25, 2023. - AFP photos

### Robot maker dreams of turning sci-fi into reality

Ryo Yoshida has monster-sized dreams for his drivable, "Gundam"-like robot, even though its huge size makes it hard to park and the \$3-million price tag will crush most wallets. An imposing 4.5 m high and weighing 3.5 tons, "Archax" can be moved and operated by a pilot who clambers up to the high-tech cockpit. "I want to make people's dreams come true, the dream people once had as a child, which is to get on board a robot and control it just like science fiction movies," said Yoshida, CEO of the start-up Tsubame Industries.

"This is a product to help people taste a bit of that world," the 25-year-old told AFP at the Japan Mobility Show where his monster was a star

of the show. When maneuvered in the vehicle mode, "Archax" is capable of moving at 10 km per hour, according to the company. It has 26 joints including on two huge hands, which a pilot controls with two joysticks, two pedals and a touchscreen.

One fun use could be getting several of the robots together for a shoot-em-up with toy guns like in the "Gundam" anime series, Yoshida suggests. "This will be a new sport that still does not exist in the world now. If I can do it, I think I could bring more excitement to the world," he said. He also envisages more practical roles, such as cleaning rubble after disasters and working at construction sites.

Yoshida said his company's objective is not only creating a robot but also developing a system to integrate a human pilot and a machine. "This is an idea in which the pilot would not only get on board a robot but also feel as if he became the robot himself, as if he became gigantic," he said. — AFP



A man wearing the Skeletonics, a suit produced by Japanese robot manufacturer Robot Ride, moves obstacles during a demonstration.

### Scratch my back, I'll scratch yours: Baboons wily cooperators

Like humans, baboons are able to cooperate with another of their kind for the common good — or punish them if they don't reciprocate, a study said on Friday. Scientists have long debated whether animals other than humans are capable of this complicated tit-for-tat interaction known as "strategic cooperation". For example, imagine a student who helped out an absent schoolmate by lending them their notes from class. The student might expect that schoolmate to return the favor next time — and if they did not, seek out someone else more willing to play ball.

To find out if baboons — which are particularly sociable monkeys — are capable of this level of sophistication, researchers conducted an experiment at a French primate center. Eighteen Guinea baboons were paired off and put opposite each other, separated by a transparent partition, so they could watch their partner's behavior. Each baboon had its own touchscreen, which they were accustomed to from previous research at the center.

One of the baboons was then presented with several images on their touchscreen. Pressing one image would release a tasty treat — a few grains of wheat — just for themselves. But pressing another image would give both baboons a treat — a decision the partner on the other side of the screen would see. Ten of the baboons were swiftly sacked because they did not understand the task. For the remaining eight, the researchers conducted nearly 250,000 tests on random pairings over 95 days.

#### Punishing the 'selfish'

In almost all of the interactions, the baboons selected "the image that rewarded them both", said Anthony Formaux, an expert in animal psychology and the lead author of the study in the journal Science Advances. The baboons made the decision out of a "sense of the general interest", Formaux told AFP. Then the researchers increased the difficulty. The baboons were given two options: one gave a treat to the monkey on the other side of the screen, while the other did nothing. "No longer able to reward themselves, they watched their partner much more carefully," Formaux said.

Baboons who gave treats to their comrades were more likely to receive some later in return. But if a baboon made the "selfish" choice of not rewarding its partner, the partner would later punish it, potentially by wandering off to find another monkey at a different screen. The baboons would only dish out punishment sometimes, "as a little reminder to control the partner in order to strengthen cooperation", Formaux said. — AFP

### Flashpoint statue of US Confederate general melted down

A statue of a US Civil War general for the pro-slavery Confederacy that became the focus of protests for racial justice has been melted down in secret, The Washington Post reported. The towering bronze statue of General Robert E. Lee, who commanded the Army of Northern Virginia during the bloody 1861-65 conflict, was removed in July 2021 from a public park in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The Post said the statue, which had been handed over to the city's black history museum, was melted down on Saturday at a foundry whose location is being kept secret. Tensions over the fate of the Lee statue led to violence in Aug 2017 when an avowed white nationalist drove his car into a crowd of demonstrators in Charlottesville.

The protesters had gathered in opposition to white supremacists who staged

a "Unite the Right" rally against plans to remove the statue of Lee. Then-president Donald Trump came under fire when he said afterward that there were "very fine people on both sides" of the protests. The Charlottesville violence gave new life to a campaign to remove Confederate symbols which first gained momentum following the June 2015 murders in South Carolina of nine black churchgoers by another white supremacist.

The campaign picked up again following the May 25, 2020 death of George Floyd, an African American killed by a white police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Post said bronze ingots from the Lee statue will be used by a group known as "Swords Into Plowshares" to make a piece of public artwork to be displayed in Charlottesville. — AFP



Workers remove the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee from a park in Charlottesville, Virginia on July 10, 2021. — AFP

### Grandma chimps offer clues for evolution of menopause in humans

Humans and some whales are the only known species in which females live long after they stop being able to reproduce. A new paper in the journal Science on Thursday argues that chimpanzees should now be added to the list, and offers clues about the evolutionary imperatives behind menopause in women. "Chimpanzees have been studied in the wild for a long time, and you might think there's nothing left to learn about them," senior author Kevin Langergraber of Arizona State University told AFP. "I think this research shows us that's not true."

The vast majority of mammal females produce offspring until the end of their lives, but humans experience a decline in reproductive hormones and the permanent cessation of ovary function around age 50. Females of five species of toothed whale, including orcas and narwhals, similarly survive well beyond fertile age. It isn't obvious why natural selection would favor this trait, and only among a handful of species. Some scientists have put forward the "grandmother hypothesis" as a possible explanation: the idea that older females enter a post-reproductive state to consume fewer resources and focus on improving their grandchildren's odds of survival.

#### Demographics and hormones

In the new paper, researchers examined the mortality and fertility rates

of 185 female chimpanzees in the Ngoko community of wild chimpanzees in Kibale National Park, Uganda, between 1995 and 2016. Specifically, the team calculated a metric called the post-reproductive representation (PrR), which is the average proportion of the adult life span that is spent in a post-reproductive state. Past attempts that used demographic data to study whether chimps underwent menopause were hampered by haphazard statistical methods, lead author Brian Wood of the University of California, Los Angeles, told AFP, with PrR proving a more robust measure.

It showed Ngoko chimpanzee females — but not other chimpanzees from other populations — lived on average 20 percent of their adult years in a post-reproductive state, just a little under what has been observed in humans. To exclude the possibility that, say, an STD swept through the community causing mass sterility among older females in the past, the team paired the demographic data with hormonal status. They took urine samples of 66 females ranging in age and reproductive status, and measured the levels of gonadotropins, estrogens, and progesterone, finding the hormonal patterns closely mirrored what was seen in human females experiencing menopausal transition. — AFP



## Lifestyle



From movies to marionettes

## AN ACTOR SWIMS AGAINST THE TIDE



Lanners works at his puppets workshop.

**A**ward-winning Belgian film actor Bouli Lanners tenderly applies the final brushstrokes to a traditional wooden puppet he is working on in the cellar of his home in Liege. Following a feted four-decade career — which saw him claim best supporting actor at the French equivalent of the Oscars this year — the mustachioed star, 58, is increasingly turning from the silver screen to puppetry. After inheriting last year a collection from his father-in-law, whose family had run one of Liege's famed puppet troupes, he is now looking to set up his own theatre in his backyard with his wife. "A puppet hanging in a library is a dead puppet, you have to give it life, make it play," he told AFP. "Our goal is to transmit theatre."

In an age of computer-enhanced superhero blockbusters and streaming services, the couple might seem to be swimming against the tide. But Lanners is convinced there is still room for the slower form of entertainment that has always had a special place in this working-class town of 200,000 in eastern



Puppets are seen at the workshop.

Belgium. "Until the 1920s, there were 62 theatres in Liege," Lanners said. "Cinema killed off puppetry somewhat, but today there are still six fixed and three travelling theatres. "Puppetry is still very present in the DNA of the people of

Liege, and it's the children who come to see it, not the older generations."

## 'We don't need much'

Another part of the motivation for Lanners, a committed environmentalist,



Belgium actor Bouli Lanners poses as he restores a puppet at his puppets workshop in Liege on Oct 25, 2023. - AFP photos



Belgium screenwriter and costume designer Elisabeth Lancion holds a puppet.

is to get away from what he sees as the unsustainable energy consumption of film sets. "The wood for the puppets is basswood, and we don't need much," he says. "We buy the props at flea markets. We paint the sets ourselves on bed sheets."

Lanners and his wife hope to stage two performances each week from January in their 30-seater theatre. Their troupe consists of an impressive series of around 160 characters and animals including donkeys, snakes and dragons, which they will manipulate at arm's length behind the stage. That is no mean feat, given that some of the puppets can weigh over 10 kg and stand 80 cm tall.

Lanners is still not turning his back entirely on cinema — but reckons he will cut his output down to one film a year. "I feel less and less comfortable with my place in this industry," he said. "I want to change my life, and my ideals too." — AFP

## Under your skin

## Tattoo artist inks remains in art

**W**hen Scout Frank lost her mother, she knew she needed to keep her close — and hit upon the perfect solution when she found she could have her ashes tattooed into her skin. Clutching a small wooden box containing the cremated remains of her mom, Frank was emotional as she arrived at the tattoo studio of artist Kat Dukes in the California city of Oceanside. "It's a little bit overwhelming," she said, her voice choking. "But I know I'm in really good hands. I'm really looked forward to just making my mama an even more permanent piece of my life."



Scout Frank (right) talks about the ashes of her cremated mother Theresa Pendleton before receiving a hand poked tattoo from artist Kat Dukes (back) using ink mixed with the ashes in Oceanside, California on Oct 6, 2023. - AFP photos

Dukes' tattoo studio has a different aesthetic to many of those dotting main streets and strip malls all over the United States, and much of the western world. Instead of roses, skulls or other traditional designs lining the counter it is immaculate, its clean white walls and scented candles evoking more of a spa than a tattoo parlor. Dukes reverently scoops a small measure of ashes from the box in readiness for mixing with the ink. "Come on, mom!" says Frank, whose tears have begun to turn into a smile. "It's respect for her in a different kind of way rather than just having her sitting in my house," she says.

## By hand

Dukes, who has built a loyal following at her Steel Honey studio thanks to her style of hand poke tattoo — in which the artists use a needle dipped in ink and poked into the skin dot by dot, rather than by machine — began incorporating cremains over three years ago when a client said he wanted to honor a pet dog. "I had heard that this could be done, but I didn't know how, so I looked it up," she tells AFP.

In fact, tattooing with wood ashes is an ancient practice — and the use of cremation ashes is a growing trend that has seen some US funeral homes link up with tattoo parlors, or even post instructions for making the ink on their websites. "It was pretty simple — just add ash, so that's what we did," Dukes said. "It just made it that much more special. It healed the same and he loved the tattoo, and he would always, always tell people that there was his dog's ashes in the tattoo."

Videos of Dukes' black inked hand-wrought tattoos have made the rounds on social media — bringing a surge of interest. A lot of it is positive, but not all. "I do get a lot of criticism for doing this," she says. "A lot of people will argue that it's unsanitary. I understand that this process is not for everybody." Dukes insists there is no risk of infection or contamination from the ashes — done properly, a tattoo's ink sits in the dermis and does not migrate to the bloodstream. And cremations are carried out at such high temperatures the ashes are usually sterile.



Dukes inks a hand poked tattoo of a dove on Frank using ink mixed with the ashes of Frank's cremated mother.

California tattoo parlors must meet legislated health standards, and Dukes says inspectors have affirmed that her work is safe and does not violate any regulations on the use of cremated remains. And, she argues, the criticism is mostly because people in the United States are unfamiliar with it. "It's something that people don't really hear about that often, and things that are foreign to people they're pretty much gonna immediately disregard." — AFP



Overall view shows the Pierre Boulez concert hall at the Barenboim-Said academy during a break in the inaugural concert in Berlin on March 4, 2017.

## Barenboim-Said music academy rocked by conflict

**O**n stage, the musicians of the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin still play in perfect harmony. But inside, they are reeling. The recent escalation of fighting between the Zionist entity and Hamas poses the greatest existential challenge yet for the music academy, founded to build bridges between young Zionist and Arab musicians. "The situation has always been complex, but this is the biggest test since the academy was created in 2016," Michael Barenboim, a violinist and dean of the school, told AFP.

The Barenboim-Said Akademie was born out of a long partnership between Barenboim's father, the Zionist-Argentine pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim, and the Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said, who died in 2003. Students at the school receive a broad musical education but also attend classes in philosophy, history and literature in English.

Tuition and accommodation are free for the first two years and competition is tough, with only one in three or four applicants granted a place, depending on their instrument. The current contingent of 80 students includes 17 Zionists and six Palestinians as well as young musicians from Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Syria and Turkey.

## 'Our hearts are heavy'

"Emotionally, it's extremely complicated for them" in a context where "everyone knows someone who knows someone" directly affected by the conflict, said Michael Barenboim, 38. A recent concert in Berlin gave the academy's students the opportunity to express their emotions. Before the lights went down, flyers containing a message from the students were distributed to the audience.

"Our hearts are heavy; our minds are elsewhere with every single person affected by the devastating situation in Palestine and (the Zionist entity)," the message read. "It is very difficult for many of us to be playing a concert right now. But even in this darkest hour, we will still follow in the footsteps of our founders, Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said," it said. "May our music bring us together, may it heal a little piece of our hearts. At the end of the day, all we can do is hope for peace, freedom, and the safety of everyone."

A minute's silence was held before the auditorium was filled with the sounds of music by Prokofiev, Beethoven and Wagner. Barenboim senior, 80, who rarely performs in public today because of poor health, was conducting. A 19-year-old Palestinian student, who did not want to give his name, spoke of a "hard atmosphere" in the school. "It affects all of us," he told AFP. The young musician, who has been studying at the academy for two years,

is from the West Bank and has friends in Gaza. "There are lots of talks, we are trying to listen. We agree and disagree. It's not very easy," he said.

## Psychological support

The school has provided additional psychological support via therapists, set up helplines in Hebrew and Arabic, and given the students permission to skip classes when necessary. "Some needed to withdraw. Others, on the other hand, immediately sought contact with others," Michael Barenboim said. "Many students are constantly on their mobile phones and in contact with their family and friends," said Regula Rapp, rector of the academy.

The Zionist entity's military has said it has increased its strikes on Gaza significantly, with the Islamist group Hamas responding with what it called "salvos of rockets" aimed at the Zionist entity. Rapp said she hoped the "daily routine of lessons, music and instrument practice" would help provide the young musicians with a sense of stability. Daniel Barenboim and Said founded the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, a project to encourage rapprochement between young Zionist and Arab musicians, in 1999. The orchestra has been a huge success and still gives concerts around the world. For Michael Barenboim, the ultimate culmination of his father's vision would be for the academy's ensembles to be able to perform in all of the students' home countries. "At the moment, we can't play in any country apart from Turkey, because of passports and pressure," he said. "It's a dream that's a long way off," he added. "I don't know if I'll live to see it." — AFP



Palestinian writer Edward Said (left) and Argentine-born Zionist musician Daniel Barenboim, both sharing the Prince of Asturias Award, chat together during the awards ceremony at the Theater Campoamor in Oviedo, Spain on Oct 25, 2002. — AFP





Carl Burge holds a telephone replica at his workshop.



A traditional British telephone box waiting to be restored.



A sticker is seen on the window of a traditional British telephone box.

# Britain's iconic red phone boxes get new lease of life

In a workshop packed with historic memorabilia, from rusty petrol pumps to vintage enamel signs, Carl Burge skillfully applied the finishing touches to the red British telephone box he was restoring. "They're iconic," said Burge, 54, who has been working on revitalizing the tired, ageing phone kiosks for over 20 years. Emblematic of the UK worldwide, these sturdy red pillars first rolled out in the 1920s have endured everything from vandalism to the country's famously wet weather over the ensuing decades.

like the tiramisu shop called "Walkmisu" in central London. Daniele Benedettini has set up shop inside two red boxes on the edge of Russell Square, selling the famous Italian dessert and coffee. "I think it was a really cool idea to use something really English traditional with something very Italian," Benedettini told AFP.

business before also opening a cafe nearby. The phone boxes have been renovated inside and fitted with shelves, a fridge and coffee machine but outside they remain largely the same, as they have stood for decades, apart from some posters on the windows.

Burge said that restoring a telephone

phone boxes come through his workshop in the town of King's Lynn, eastern England, and says they are often broken, missing glass from the window panes or their wooden doors are rotting.

Once the box's cast-iron frame is stripped of all internal and external components, it is sandblasted to re-

phone boxes come through his workshop in the town of King's Lynn, eastern England, and says they are often broken, missing glass from the window panes or their wooden doors are rotting.

### 'Enthusiasm'

Burge, who worked in the motor trade for 20 years, turned his passion for collecting British memorabilia into a full-time business called "Remember When UK". He spotted his first phone box while driving past a property that was going on sale. He bought it off the owners, restored it and kept it in his front garden. Burge later sold the phone box but said he "missed it" and thought he would like to refurbish another one.



An original telephone used inside traditional red telephone boxes is seen at "Remember When UK".—AFP Photos



Burge restores a telephone box at "Remember When UK".



One turned into many, and now Burge is working on restoring several telephone boxes at a time. Among them is an example of the famous K2, which was Britain's first red color telephone box introduced in 1926 and designed by British architect Giles Gilbert Scott, who is also known for his work on London's Battersea Power Station and other public buildings. But even after two decades in the trade, Burge said he hasn't lost his passion for the work that he does. "I'm getting a little bit older now. Everything seems to be getting a little bit heavier. But I think my enthusiasm level is on par with where it was 22 years ago," he said. "If anything, it's probably more," he added. — AFP

"If you were to send a postcard with nothing written on there apart from a picture of a telephone box and send it anywhere in the world, chances are 95 percent of people will say: that's England," he added. The number of phone boxes in Britain peaked in the 1990s at around 100,000, though many were not the famous red designs. While less used now with the widespread use of mobile phones, around 20,000 working public payphones remain nationwide.

Redundant red and other phone boxes are increasingly being adopted by local communities and converted into facilities such as mini libraries, visitor information stands and defibrillators. Some are even rented out by small businesses,

**'Real gem'**  
The cost of running a business from a phone box has also proved lower than opening a regular shop, he added. The 29-year-old, who rents the boxes from a private owner, said they were his first

box takes an average of six weeks, starting with the "painstaking" process of stripping it down to the "bare bones". "You don't know what you are going to find under that paint. You might find a real gem," he added. Burge has seen many

move paint, rust and any other impurities. The next step is applying body filler and sanding out any imperfections in a laborious process that is done by hand and which can take several days to complete. Finally the telephone box



Visitors look at "Smiling Copper" by British artist Banksy.



Visitors look at "Always Franco" by Spanish artist Eugenio Merino at the Forbidden Art Museum in Barcelona on Oct 26, 2023. — AFP photos

## 'Extraordinary' museum of censored art opens in Spain

Artworks take pride of place at a new museum in Spain devoted to previously censored art. The private Museum of Forbidden Art, which opened to the public in Barcelona on Thursday, features 42 works from around the world that have been denounced, attacked or removed from exhibition. Works by artists such as Spanish master Francisco de Goya, US cultural icon Andy Warhol and Chinese artist and activist Ai Weiwei are spread over two floors.

The objects are part of a collection of 200 such works belonging to Tatxo Benet, a Catalan businessman. While they push boundaries and often sparked controversy, Benet said this was not enough to be included in the museum, located in the center of the Catalan capital, one of the world's most visited cities. "We don't collect or show scandalous or controversial works in the museum. We show works in the museum that have been censored, assaulted, violated, banned," he told AFP. "Works that have a history behind them, without that history they wouldn't be here," he added.

### 'Always have a place'

Many works deal with religion. Benet, one of the founders of Spanish multimedia group Mediapro, said he started building his collection in 2018 when he bought an installation called "Political Prisoners in Contemporary Spain". It consisted of black-and-white photos



Spanish journalist and art collector Tatxo Benet gestures at the Forbidden Art Museum.

with pixelated faces of people who had broken the law, among them Catalan separatist leaders who faced legal action over a failed 2017 secession bid.

The work, by Spanish artist Santiago Sierra, was pulled from a Madrid art fair just two hours after Benet bought it. It is now on display at another museum in the Catalan city of Lleida. The museum also displays paintings and sketches by former prisoners at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, including one of the Statue of Liberty submerged in water with only the hand holding a torch and top of the crown visible.

The US government ordered that art made by inmates at the detention center would have to be destroyed when they

are released after an exhibition of works in New York in 2017 sparked controversy. "Any artist who can't show their work because someone prevents them from doing so is an artist who is censored, and therefore will always have a place in this museum," Benet said.

### 'Amazed'

Benet was speaking a few meters from a self-portrait of late US artist Chuck Close, known for his massive photorealistic portraits. The National Gallery of Art in Washington gave up dedicating an exhibition to Close's works after several women accused him of sexually harassing them several years earlier when they came to his studio to pose. Benet said having so many controversial works together caused visitors "levels of tolerance to widen and the level of scandal of the work to be lowered".

Corinna Dechateaubourg, a 56-year-old German who was visiting from Hamburg on the exhibition's opening day, said she kept looking up more information on the works on her mobile phone. "I'm amazed, it's extraordinary, it's really interesting," she told AFP. Montserrat Izquierdo, a 67-year-old Spaniard, said "it is good to be able to see what is forbidden, what you are not allowed to see normally". — AFP



## Sports

# Martin wins Thai sprint to cut Bagnaia MotoGP lead to 18 points

## S Africa's Brad Binder in second with Italian Luca Marini third

**BURIRAM:** Spain's Jorge Martin led from pole to chequered flag to win the Thailand MotoGP sprint race on Saturday and reduce the deficit behind championship leader Francesco Bagnaia to 18 points. Pramac-Ducati rider Martin took his fifth consecutive sprint victory, 0.933 seconds ahead of South Africa's Brad Binder in second on a KTM, with Italian Luca Marini's Ducati-VR46 third. Bagnaia was seventh.

Short-format king Martin reached the first corner in the lead and was never headed as Bagnaia suffered a poor start from the second row, dropping back to ninth by the end of the opening lap. Bagnaia, on the factory Ducati, finally found some pace four laps into the 13-lap dash and although he clawed his way back to seventh he could not make any inroads on Marco Bezzecchi, who finished sixth on his Ducati-VR46.

Honda's Marc Marquez crossed the line fourth with Aleix Espargaro's Aprilia in fifth. "It pretty much went to plan," said Martin, who realised he had to be wary once the flying Binder, who swept through the field from fifth on the grid, overtook Marini on the seventh lap to move up to second.

"I tried to save tyres at the beginning," said Martin. "Then I saw Brad overtook Luca so I said: 'OK, maybe now it's time to go.' "I pushed the lead out to 1.9 (seconds) then I tried to manage the tyres until the end."

Binder started best of all and overtook Bezzecchi and Espargaro to move up to third by the end of the second lap. The South African thought he might have

challenged for the win had he managed to get past Marini quicker. "The plan today was obviously not to come second but to win of course but, second place, we'll take it," said Binder.

### 'I have to adjust'

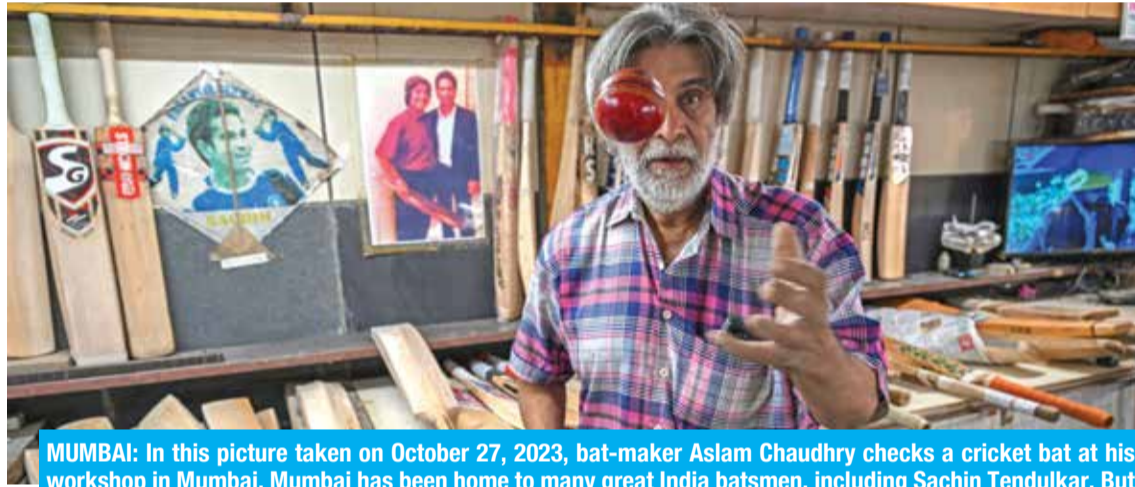
The result leaves Bagnaia on 369 points going into Sunday's 26-lap grand prix where he will again start sixth on the grid with pole-sitter Martin now on 351 after picking up 12 for the sprint victory. "I missed a little bit the start," admitted Bagnaia.

"But we managed to close the gap and my feeling was so good on my bike and so finishing seventh when you are so fast and so strong is not good for us." "So we have to consider that for tomorrow and I have to adjust to improve my pace in the first laps."

Martin began the weekend 27 points behind with four legs of the 20-race season to go, but he also started from pole a week ago in Australia before his gamble on a soft rear tyre backfired as he slumped to fifth. With 25 points available for the winners of Sunday's MotoGP main race the title battle could tighten further before the riders head to Malaysia's Sepang circuit in two weeks' time as the championship duel looks likely to go to the wire. "I think it will be a different race," said Martin of Sunday's 26-lap grand prix around the 4.554km Buriram International Circuit. "I expect Pecco (Bagnaia) to improve." The final two race weekends of the season are in Qatar and Valencia next month. — AFP



**BURIRAM:** Prima Pramac's Spanish rider Jorge Martin (L) celebrates after winning the TISSOT Sprint race with second place Red Bull KTM Factory Racing's South African rider Brad Binder (R) during the MotoGP Thailand Grand Prix at the Buriram International Circuit in Buriram on October 28, 2023. — AFP



**MUMBAI:** In this picture taken on October 27, 2023, bat-maker Aslam Chaudhry checks a cricket bat at his workshop in Mumbai. Mumbai has been home to many great India batsmen, including Sachin Tendulkar. But there is only one 'Batman of Mumbai' — Aslam Chaudhry. — AFP

## Tendulkar, Kohli turn to 'Batman of Mumbai'

**MUMBAI:** Mumbai has been home to many great India batsmen, including Sachin Tendulkar. But there is only one 'Batman of Mumbai' — Aslam Chaudhry. Unlike his fictional namesake, there is no need to use a flashlight or special telephone line to get hold of the bat-maker and repair specialist when the world's leading run-scorers need their favorite blades reconditioned while touring India or appearing in the lucrative Indian Premier League. Instead a call is put into Chaudhry's small, decades-old, workshop in a Mumbai side street, the home of M. Ashraf Bros, a bat-manufacturing business set up by his father in the late 1920s. Photographs of Tendulkar, a longstanding client, with Chaudhry adorn the walls.

India's Virat Kohli, one of the leading run-scorers at the ongoing World Cup on home soil and New Zealand's Kane Williamson have also entrusted their bats to Chaudhry. "All the good guys are very particular (about their bats)," Chaudhry, who must satisfy individual requirements regarding weight, thickness and shape, told AFP.

Despite a bout of COVID-19, Chaudhry, now approaching his 70th year, still makes bats by hand, a physically demanding process. He begins with a thick raw cleft of willow wood that is shaved, pressed and shaved again into shape, with a groove cut for a handle. Chaudhry's only concession to modern technology is an electric conveyor onto which a bat is placed while he turns a huge fly-wheel to operate a five-tonne weight to strengthen the wood. Few stars will visit Chaudhry's premises for fear of being surrounded by adoring fans in Mumbai, an intense hotbed of the game even by the standards of cricket crazy India.

### Malinga mayhem

Instead he calls on them, either at their hotel or at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium, with those that do turn up, such as Sri Lanka's Lasith Malinga, getting more than they bargained for. "Malinga was mobbed," recalled Chaudhry. "He was playing for Mumbai in the IPL. As soon as people saw him with his hair, all hell broke loose!"

"I had to pull down the shutters. We were isolated in the shop for almost an hour-and-a-half, the police were called." But Chaudhry said working on bats for Tendulkar, international cricket's all-time leading run-scorer, was no laughing matter. "Absolutely, I felt completely nervous. He's got a good knowledge of bats, so to satisfy him required something. "I had to take my tools when I went to see him with the bat," added Chaudhry. "Sometimes he would then ask me to do this or that."

"I used to see him bat in the nets, which was a privilege." Fans in the ground, or the millions watching on television, will be unaware of Chaudhry's work, with stickers on modern-bay bats often promoting both a major commercial sponsor as well as the equipment company with which a cricketer has an endorsement deal. "It doesn't bother me," said Chaudhry. And, thanks to the IPL, he does have a truly global clientele. "There are some guys you think you would never meet — for example New Zealand is at the far end of the world. "But I get calls from Kane Williamson, I've done a lot of his bats." It takes Chaudhry four to five days to make a bat from start to finish, but IPL repairs are often "same day" jobs.

Worries over willow supplies — "Indian willow is good but is not as good as English willow, it's heavier," remain a concern. But the pride Chaudhry still takes in his work is obvious. "(Australia's) Shane Watson, one bat he particularly liked was smashed to pieces," he said. "But I fixed it for him and he was so happy."

And while mass produced bats from leading UK manufacturers can now cost as much as £200-£400, you can purchase one from Chaudhry for 15,000 rupees (£149). "The English guys go a bit loopy when they see my prices," he said with a smile. — AFP

## Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah opens Asian Shooting Championship in S Korea

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** President of Asian Shooting Confederation Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah opened the 15th Asian Shooting Championship at Changwon city, South Korea with 30 Asian countries participating as this championship will qualify winners to the Paris 2024 Olympic games.

The opening was held in the presence of representatives from the Korean Government, ASC members of the board of directors, President of Korean Shooting Federation, Representatives of Asian federations and

Kuwait's ambassador to S Korea Theyab Al-Rashidi. Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah thanked the government of South Korea, people of Korea, President and members of the board of South Korean Shooting Federation for hosting this tournament in which there are 24 direct Olympic quota to the Paris 2024 Olympics. He also thanked the higher organizing committee, ISSF coordinators and all volunteers for their continued efforts and wished participants success.

Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah lauded Kuwait's Ambassador to S Korea Theyab Al-Rashidi for his presence with Kuwait delegation and giving shooters moral support to make more achievements in the name of Kuwait. Kuwait's delegation is headed by Kuwait Shooting Sport Federation Dr Nedal Asem which has 20 shooters both men and women who are participating in the Skeet, Trap, Pistol and Rifle competitions as they seek to make more achievements and qualify for the Paris 2024 Olympics following the good results they made in China lately.



**Dr Nedal Asem (left) and Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah (second right).**

## Indian 13-year-old makes cut at Asia Amateur Championships

**MELBOURNE:** Thirteen-year-old Kartik Singh became the youngest player to make the cut at the Asia-Pacific Amateur Championships, but the Indian golf prodigy will not be posting an historic win after slumping to an 81 on Saturday. Singh fired an opening-round seven-over-par 78 and followed it up with a 72 at the Royal Melbourne Golf Club's demanding course. At 13 years, nine months and 22 days, he was the youngest player to make the weekend since China's Guan Tianlang did the same aged 14 in 2012.

Guan went on to win, and backed up the breakthrough victory by making the cut at the 2013 Masters — the youngest to do so in PGA Tour history. The winner of the annual Asia-Pacific championship receives an invite to both Augusta and the Open Championship.

But Singh will not be following in Guan's footsteps after his 81 left him 21 shots behind China's Zheng Sampson-Yunhe, whose 65 on Saturday gave him a four stroke lead heading into the final day. "I came to the tournament with no expectations," said Singh, who has been playing golf since he was six.

"I had heard so much about it, I just wanted to get the experience. But if there was a goal, it was to make the cut, and I am so happy that I have managed to do that." The tournament also featured 14-year-old Malaysian talent Andrew Yap, but he missed the cut. In Kuala Lumpur, American Rose Zhang captured a one-shot lead at the Maybank Championship on Saturday after a masterful third round to pull ahead of Thai duo Athaya Thitikul and Jasmine Suwannapura. Zhang, 20, shot a round of 65 for an 18-under 198, while Thitikul fired home the week's lowest score of 62. Suwannapura, who led the first two rounds, finished with a 67. But the day belonged to the American rookie, who has swiftly moved up the ranks from third to first, and secured a deserved lead thanks to eight birdies she sunk at the Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club. — AFP

## Kuwait win silver, bronze in combat games in Riyadh

**RIYADH:** Kuwait's fencing team achieved distinguished results in the World Combat Games (Riyadh 2023) by winning a silver medal in the fluorescent weapon competition and a bronze medal in the saber team competition. Ali Al-Nassar, Ali Fadhel, Faisal Al-Zamel and Yaquoub Al-Shatti won a silver medal in fluorescent event, while Ali Rostum, Hamad Al-Shamlan and Hussein Al-Omairi won a bronze medal in the saber team tournament.

Rostum also snatched a silver in the saber individual weapon competition, while Nassar won a bronze in fluorescent individual competition. Commenting on the results, Secretary-General of the Kuwaiti Fencing Association Hamad Al-Awadhi voiced pleasure at the distinguished results achieved by Kuwaiti fencers during the Riyadh 2023 championship. The Kuwaiti athletes proved that they were responsible and deservedly able to represent Kuwait, Awadhi added. — KUNA





## Sports

# England hold on to edge Argentina in World Cup third place playoff

## Captain Owen Farrell kicked 16 points for England

PARIS: Captain Owen Farrell kicked 16 points for England as they clung on to beat Argentina 26-23 on Friday to claim third place in the Rugby World Cup. Farrell's contribution helped 2003 winners England finish third in the tournament for the first time, with champions South Africa facing New Zealand in Saturday's final, both teams eyeing a record fourth title.

With just three points between the sides, Argentina were unable to find the crucial try to match their best ever World Cup finish, back in 2007, as Nicolas Sanchez failed with a 75th minute penalty that would have drawn them level. "I am delighted for the boys we got the result," England scrum-half Ben Youngs said after his final international.

"We are pleased to end with a win. We wanted to be here tomorrow night, but it is still a nice win tonight." Pumas coach Michael Cheika made three changes to his starting lineup from last Friday's heavy semi-final defeat to New Zealand in a rerun of September's pool game between the sides in Marseille, won by England. Steve Borthwick handed flanker Tom Curry his 50th England appearance, eight years on from making his debut as a teenager against the Pumas and in a week where he alleged he was racially abused by South Africa hooker Bongani Mbonambi in the last-four loss.

Curry ran out on his own onto the pitch in front of 77,674 as the 25-year-old reached the half-century landmark before teammates Youngs, Danny Care and Dan Cole played their final Tests. The pre-match rainfall in northern Paris stopped and a loud chant of "Allez les Bleus" rang around the Stade de France from the majority French crowd, with Argentina wearing their alternative dark blue shirt against France's rivals from across the Channel.

Curry was involved as England opened the scoring after just three minutes with Owen Farrell slotting the penalty from the back-rower's successful pilfer at a ruck. Borthwick's team led 13-0 after 18 minutes as No 8 Ben Earl, outstanding throughout the tournament, crossed and Farrell kicked a conversion and a penalty. The Pumas' first venture to England's 22m was welcomed by the sizeable Argentine support but Youngs cleared the danger with a box kick.

### Sanchez miss

Farrell and winger Emiliano Boffelli traded penalties before Cubelli celebrated his 93rd international with a try and Boffelli's conversion made it 16-10 at the stroke of half-time after the Pumas finally showed some creativity in attack. Cheika's side returned from the break the better, as Cubelli turned the provider for fly-half Santiago Carreras, who beat three England defenders with ease, before Boffelli made it 17-16 after 43 minutes and Argentina led for the first time.

Their advantage was short-lived as Carreras' clearance kick was charged down and hooker Theo Dan dived over barely 90 seconds later and Farrell's extras restored the six-point gap. With half an hour to play Boffelli cut the deficit to three with a long-range penalty before 34-year-old Youngs was substituted and given a standing ovation from the England bench on his 129th and final game for his country and the British and Irish Lions.

As the pace of the game slowed down by the hour mark, Borthwick brought George Ford into the fray, allowing England to have three playmakers on the pitch with Farrell moving to centre and livewire Marcus Smith at full-back.

As the game approached the final 10 minutes En-

glance were 26-23 up thanks to Farrell's fourth penalty and Pumas' substitute fly-half Nicolas Sanchez' first shot at goal. The three points separating the outfits set-up a tense finish but with Argentina inside England's territory Sanchez missed a simple looking penalty to bring the teams level and take the game to

extra time with five minutes to go. The error took the wind out of Argentina's sails as England held on to go one better than they did the only other time they reached a third-place playoff, in 1995, the same year the Springboks and the All Blacks last met in a World Cup final. — AFP



SAINT-DENIS: England's players pose during the medal ceremony after winning the France 2023 Rugby World Cup third-place match between Argentina and England at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, on the outskirts of Paris. — AFP

## Celtics beat Heat, Wembanyama gets first NBA win

WASHINGTON: Derrick White put up 28 points as the Boston Celtics beat rivals Miami 119-111 on Friday while NBA Draft top pick Victor Wembanyama starred in his first win for the San Antonio Spurs. Jayson Tatum scored 22 points and Jaylen Brown contributed 27 in a strong all-around display from Boston, with all five starters in double figures as the Celtics won their home opener, a rematch of last year's Eastern Conference championship series.

Miami trailed by just three points with 47.1 seconds left when Jimmy Butler was called for a foul on White, which was unsuccessfully challenged by furious Miami coach Erik Spoelstra. White then drained his two free throws and when Tyler Herro missed a 3-point jumper and Brown sank his from 30-feet out, Miami's resistance was finally over.

Three crucial blocks added to an impressive performance from White, who was delighted with beating a Heat team that secured a place in the NBA Finals with a game-seven triumph at Boston. "Anytime you're on home court, you want to protect the home court and obviously, last time we played them here, they came out winning," White said.

"It's always a big game every time we play against them and we're going to see them down the line a lot of times. So it's always fun." Frenchman Wembanyama turned on the style in San Antonio's 126-122 overtime victory over the Houston Rockets, coming up big in the latter stages of the game as he put up 21 points and grabbed 12 rebounds with three blocked shots and two steals.

"It's just a victory but it's a day I'll remember," Wembanyama said. "I really love winning. This is what I love most in life. Of course it feels great." The Spurs trailed by two with 32.1 seconds remaining when the 19-year-old grabbed a defensive rebound and tied the game on a driving layup with 20 seconds remaining in regulation.

Wembanyama's 16-foot jumper put his team ahead in overtime and he grabbed four total re-

bounds in the additional period. "I'm proud of what we did tonight," Wembanyama said. "We can see where we can get better. A win is a win but it shows that we got a lot of way to go as a team."

Spurs coach Gregg Popovich was impressed by the youngster's impact in his second NBA start, despite "Wemby" going only 2-of-10 from the floor in the first half. "He's a competitor of course. He's gonna be decisive and do everything to win. But they're all like that," he said. "We showed some composure and some not so composed. That's work in progress. Good was they were persistent."

### Proud 'Pop' praise

Wembanyama finished the night with 7-of-19 shooting from the floor, grabbing five offensive and seven defensive rebounds. "Back in the locker room, Pop acknowledged it was my first-ever NBA win, just



SAN ANTONIO: San Antonio Spurs' French forward-center #01 Victor Wembanyama attempts a shot during the NBA basketball game between the Houston Rockets and the San Antonio Spurs at the AT&T Center in San Antonio, Texas. — AFP

Goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario has been one of the unsung heroes of Spurs' form and the Italian was needed to make a smart stop low to his left to prevent Odsonne Edouard opening the scoring inside the opening 10 minutes. The signing of James Maddison has been the catalyst to Tottenham's transformation under Postecoglou, despite the loss of the club's record goalkeeper Harry Kane to Bayern Munich. Fired up by Postecoglou's half-time team talk, Spurs emerged for the second period with greater intensity and Maddison created the opening goal as his driven low shot across goal was turned into his own net by the unfortunate Ward. — AFP



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Ivorian-born Malian midfielder #08 Yves Bissouma (L) vies with Crystal Palace's English midfielder #49 Jesurun Rak-Sakyi (C) and Crystal Palace's Malian midfielder #28 Cheick Doucoure during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Tottenham Hotspur at Selhurst Park in south London. — AFP

## Son fuels Tottenham 'dreams' to open up five-point EPL lead

LONDON: Ange Postecoglou told Tottenham fans to dream after his side moved five points clear at the top of the Premier League for the first time. The Australian's 26 points from his opening 10 games in charge is the best return of any new manager in Premier League history.

After a subdued first 45 minutes, Spurs sprang into life early in the second-half as Joel Ward's own goal and Son Heung-min's strike earned the victory. Jordan Ayew pulled a goal back in stoppage time, but it was too little, too late for the Eagles.

Not since Spurs last won the league in 1960-61 have they enjoyed such an advantage at the summit of the English top flight. A title challenge still appears a remote possibility, but with no European football to sap their energy, the sky may be the limit for Postecoglou's men. "Let them dream, that's what being a football supporter is all about and, fair to say, this lot have suffered a bit," said Postecoglou. After Tottenham's last game on Monday, the former Celtic boss was not fully satisfied with his side's performance, even though they beat Fulham 2-0.

It was more of a mixed bag from the visitors as they took 45 minutes to find their rhythm. "We showed real discipline and focus. Really happy with the effort the boys put in," added Postecoglou. "It is never gonna be an open game of football here. They're an organized team so I knew we needed to be patient. It is a different way for us to win a game."

made me proud of myself," Wembanyama said. "But it's just one. We have a whole lot of games to come."

Wembanyama's three dunks brought the arena fans to their feet but he received plenty of verbal attention from Popovich in the final minute of the game. "Cause I forgot a play. It's a little mistake - 100% legit for him to yell at me. I apologize," said Wembanyama.

Nikola Jokic scored 22 points and made 12 rebounds and seven assists as the reigning NBA champion Denver Nuggets went to 2-0 with a 108-104 victory over Memphis. The Chicago Bulls also enjoyed an overtime win, beating the Toronto Raptors 104-103 with Demar DeRozan scoring 33 points.

Alex Caruso's 3-point jumper with 2.1 seconds remaining secured the victory for Chicago. Luka Doncic scored 49 points, including a crucial 3-pointer with 26.1 seconds left, as the Dallas Mavericks held off the Brooklyn Nets 125-120. — AFP



Salma Al-Obaid

## Kuwait Olympics participates in training course for coaches

AL-QASEEM CITY: Kuwait Special Olympics is participating in the advanced training course to prepare senior athletics coaches, hosted by Saudi Arabia's Special Olympics in Al-Qaseem city, as Kuwait is represented by coach Salma Al-Obaid along with 20 coaches representing 14 countries.

This course is part of the efforts of the Special Olympics MENA region to bring back all activities of the Special Olympics in all fields to compensate for the lost time and activities during the Corona pandemic through the implementation of an integrated training plan and organizing several training courses for senior coaches to become a nucleus to prepare new coaches, and the start was with athletics for being the most common sport in the Special Olympics.

Chairwoman of Kuwait Special Olympics Hanaa Al-Zawawi lauded the efforts of the Regional Head of Special Olympics Engineer Ayman Abdelwahab and Director General of Sports and Training Dr Shareef Al-Fouli to support the abilities of technical cadres at the Special Olympics to keep up with the latest training field. She also thanked the National Director of Saudi Arabian Special Olympics Abdulrahman Al-Quraishi. Coach Salma Al-Obaid was pleased with her participation in the course which is important in her professional march. She lauded the efforts of Kuwait Special Olympics to support the technical and administrative departments to perform their duties at their best.

## Garcia homer lifts Rangers over D-backs in World Series opener

LOS ANGELES: Adolis Garcia smashed a solo home run in the 11th inning to give the Texas Rangers a dramatic 6-5 victory over Arizona on Friday in the 119th World Series opener. After Corey Seager crushed a game-tying two-run homer for Texas in the ninth inning, Rangers outfielder Garcia blasted the winning homer to left field off Arizona relief pitcher Miguel Castro.

"I was thinking hit a good pitch, make a good at-bat and just give me the victory to my team," Garcia said. "It was an exciting moment. I was just looking into the dugout, looking at my teammates. Happy, Happy." The homer gave the 30-year-old Cuban outfielder 22 runs batted in during the 2023 playoffs, breaking to old one-season record of 21 set by David Freese in 2013. The Rangers, rallying two outs from defeat, grabbed a 1-0 lead in Major League Baseball's best-of-seven final with game two also at Texas on Saturday.

"There's no quit in us, even if we're down early," Texas slugger Evan Carter said. "You can never count us out. We're going to come out on fire tomorrow." Garcia was inspired by the Seager homer, which pulled the Rangers from the brink of defeat. "He fired me up," Garcia said. "I got so excited. I knew we could get the win."

Garcia was hit on the left hand by a pitch later in the ninth but stayed in the game. "I got lucky that it was nothing worse," he said. The Rangers, in their first World Series since 2011, seek their first MLB crown since the club began play in 1961 while the Diamondbacks won their only title in 2001 in their only prior World Series appearance. Both clubs have matched the great-

est MLB reversal of fortune in history, Arizona dropping 110 games in 2021 and Texas losing 102 two years ago, with one upstart assured of a title. Arizona led 5-3 as D-backs closing relief pitcher Paul Sewald took the mound in the ninth seeking the last three outs.

After walking Leody Taveras and striking out Marcus Semien, Sewald surrendered the tying homer to Seager, who belted the ball over the right-field wall. Texas had also equalized at 3-3 in the third inning after Arizona pitcher Zac Gallen issued his third walk in four batters to Mitch Garver with the bases loaded to force in a run.

### Marte matches hit mark

But Tommy Pham crushed a solo homer in the fourth to give Arizona a 4-3 lead and Ketel Marte doubled in the fifth to score Geraldo Perdomo from second base for a 5-3 D-backs edge. Marte's double boosted his playoff hit streak, which dates to 2017, to 17 games — matching the post-season hit streak record shared by Hank Bauer, Derek Jeter and Manny Ramirez.

Texas took the lead in the first as Seager walked and scored on Carter's double. "He beat me on a couple fastballs so I didn't want to be late on anything else. I was trying to be a little early right there," Carter said of his run-scoring hit. Garcia followed with a single to left to score Carter for a 2-0 Rangers lead, stretching Garcia's streak of consecutive playoff games with an RBI to seven, matching the second-longest such stretch. Arizona equalized in the third when Alek Thomas and Evan Longoria singled, advanced on a Perdomo bunt sacrifice and scored on Corbin Carroll's triple to the centerfield wall. Carroll raced home on a fielder's choice to first base by Marte, beating the tag at home plate for a 3-2 Arizona lead. Carroll, a 23-year-old outfielder, grounded out to first to start the game, becoming the second-youngest rookie batter to leadoff a World Series opener after 19-year-old Freddie Lindstrom in 1924. — AFP



## Bellingham brace earns Real Madrid Clasico win at Barcelona

La Liga's top goalscorer is in unstoppable form



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's Spanish forward #07 Ferran Torres tackles Real Madrid's Brazilian forward #07 Vinicius Junior during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF at the Estadi Olímpic Lluís Companys in Barcelona on October 28, 2023. — AFP photos

**BARCELONA:** Jude Bellingham's stunning double snatched Real Madrid a 2-1 comeback victory at Barcelona in his first La Liga Clasico on Saturday. The England international, who has started his Madrid career in remarkable goalscoring form, unleashed a rocket into the top corner from distance after Ilkay Gundogan had sent hosts Barcelona ahead at the Olympic Stadium.

Bellingham then fired home a second in stoppage time to silence Barcelona fans and reach 10 goals in the top flight this season. Barcelona hit the woodwork twice and had the better of the game but Bellingham, La Liga's top goalscorer, is in unstoppable form and inevitably made his mark in his first Clasico.

Bellingham's brace sent Madrid to the top of La Liga, ahead of Girona on goal difference, with both teams four points ahead of Barcelona in third. The Catalans were boosted by the returns of Robert Lewandowski, Jules Kounde and Raphinha from injury, with Xavi naming them on the bench, but Frenkie de Jong and Pedri did not recover in time.

His counterpart Carlo Ancelotti selected Ferland Mendy at left back over Eduardo Camavinga and Fran Garcia, once again de-

ploying Bellingham in the number 10 role as he got his first taste of arguably the world's biggest club football match.

However it was another midfielder playing for the first time in the Clasico who broke the deadlock — Barcelona's summer arrival Gundogan. The former Manchester City man was sharpest when Aurelien Tchouameni intercepted Ferran Torres' pass, diverting it back into his own area. Centre-back David Alaba tried to clear but was thoroughly unconvincing and Gundogan read his intentions, hopped onto the ball and swept past Kepa Arrizabalaga in the sixth minute.

### Post denies Barca

Fermin Lopez, one of the emerging young Barcelona La Masia academy products who has broken into the first team, slapped a shot against the post after the intense Gavi pressed high to win the ball back. Madrid defender Antonio Rudiger hammered wide from nearly 40 yards out as Madrid were held off by the hosts, with winger Vinicius Junior getting into tangles with Gavi and Ronald Araujo, deployed at right-back to try and shackle him.

After Araujo barged the Brazilian, he protested, with Xavi telling him it was just a

shoulder charge, although the Barcelona coach could not defend Ferran Torres' rugby tackle on Vinicius just before half-time, which earned him a yellow card.

Gavi, Gundogan and Lopez controlled the midfield, with Joao Cancelo's more advanced position allowing Barcelona additional defensive security. Barcelona struck the woodwork again when Inigo Martinez headed Lopez's inch-perfect cross against the post early in the second half, with Arrizabalaga thwarting Araujo on the follow-up.

Madrid were reduced to long-range efforts but eventually one ripped into the net to level the score, with just over 20 minutes remaining. Marc-Andre ter Stegen saved a Tchouameni pile-driver but he could not keep out Bellingham's blast, pulling Madrid level in a game they had struggled to find a foothold in.

With the game heading towards an unsatisfying draw for both sides, Bellingham intervened decisively — in the right place at the right time to shoot through Ter Stegen's legs after Luka Modric diverted Dani Carvajal's cross into his path. — AFP

Jude Bellingham

## Chelsea slump again as Nketiah stars for five-star Arsenal

**LONDON:** Chelsea slumped to another damaging home defeat against Brentford on Saturday as Eddie Nketiah hit a hat-trick in a 5-0 win for unbeaten Arsenal against bottom club Sheffield United. Mauricio Pochettino's Chelsea appeared to have turned a corner in recent weeks, taking seven points from their three previous fixtures, but their 2-0 defeat means they have just one home win from their past 13 games in the league.

Ethan Pinnock took advantage of non-existent marking to head the visitors in front shortly before the hour mark after Chelsea had failed to capitalize on their first-half dominance. Robert Sanchez was embarrassed in added time after joining his team's attack for a corner, failing to catch Neal Maupay in a race as he broke with the ball, allowing Bryan Mbeumo to score in an empty net to compound home fans' woes.

The result means Brentford leapfrog Chelsea into 10th place in the Premier League table, pushing Pochettino's men into the bottom half. "I'm not happy and think the players also and the whole club is not happy about the run (at home)," said the Argentine manager.

"It's a long time that we need to be more consistent here and very disappointed with this. We feel the responsibility that we need to change the dynamic." The former Tottenham boss said on Friday that Christopher Nkunku is nearing a comeback from the knee injury that has prevented the £52 million (\$63 million) signing making a competitive appearance yet for his new club.

On this evidence, the French international's re-

turn cannot come soon enough as Chelsea's other new striker, Nicolas Jackson, again failed to fire. "If you don't score, you need to blame ourselves," said Pochettino. "We were not nasty or clinical in front of the goal."

It was a different story for Arsenal, who roared back from 2-0 down to draw against Chelsea last week to preserve their unbeaten league record. Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta shuffled his pack — including dropping captain Martin Odegaard to the bench — for the visit of Sheffield United and Nketiah celebrated his recall in style.

Arsenal broke through a resolute Blades defence as Declan Rice's pinpoint pass was collected by Nketiah, who made no mistake with a close-range finish past Wes Foderingham. Nketiah doubled up when Foderingham failed to deal with a Bukayo Saka corner and palmed the ball into the path of the England striker, who lashed home to make it 2-0. Nketiah's hat-trick was sealed in style as he smashed home from 20 yards.

Arsenal were awarded a penalty after a lengthy VAR check for an Oliver Norwood foul on Fabio Vieira, the Portuguese midfielder taking the spot-kick himself and sending Foderingham the wrong way to make it 4-0. Another substitute, Takehiro Tomiyasu, completed the rout in stoppage time.

The win lifts Arsenal two points behind pacesetters Tottenham, who beat Crystal Palace 2-1 on Friday. Struggling Burnley took the lead against Bournemouth through Charlie Taylor but Antoine Semenyo levelled midway through the first half for the south coast club with a superb individual goal.

Bournemouth took the lead in the 76th minute when Philip Billing chipped over goalkeeper James Trafford from long-range. Newcastle, who have won four of their past five league games, take on Wolves in the late kick-off. High-flying Liverpool and Manchester City are in action on Sunday. — AFP

## Australia edge NZ by five runs in record WCup epic

**DHARAMSALA:** Five-time champions Australia edged out gallant New Zealand by just five runs in the highest-scoring World Cup game in history on Saturday. Australia piled up 388 all out as Travis Head top scored with 109 and fellow opener David Warner made 81.

New Zealand battled hard with Rachin Ravindra making 116, Daryl Mitchell adding 54 and Jimmy Neesham supplying late fireworks with a 33-ball fifty before they finished on 383-9 in 50 overs.

With a total of 771 runs, it was the highest scoring game at a World Cup, beating the 754 scored in South Africa's win against Sri Lanka earlier in the tournament.

"That was awesome. Sometimes I have to remember I'm out in the field, not a spectator. A fantastic game, they kept coming at us," said Australia skipper Pat Cummins. In a dramatic final over played out in the shadow of the Himalayas, New Zealand needed 19 to win.

Trent Boult scampered for a single before Mitchell Starc donated five wides. Neesham, one of the stars of the 2019 final which New Zealand lost to England, then took six runs off the next three balls. However, attempting another two, he was run out from a fine throw by Marnus Labuschagne from the fence.

That left Lockie Ferguson, who had injured his Achilles in the field, needing to perform the heroics off the last ball. Starc fired the ball in on a full length and Ferguson could only push it to the covers, leav-



**DHARAMSALA:** Australia's players celebrate their victory at the end of the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between Australia and New Zealand at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamsala on October 28, 2023. — AFP

ing the Kiwis heartbroken. "It was a fantastic game of cricket. There were ebbs and flows throughout the 100 overs," said New Zealand captain Tom Latham. "To get so close hurts. It was a fantastic game."

The result left both sides with four wins and two defeats each and well-placed for the semi-finals.

Earlier, Head, playing his first match of the tournament after being sidelined with a broken hand, reached his fourth one-day international hundred off 59 balls with 10 fours and six sixes.

The 29-year-old had brought up his 50 off 28 balls and then made the most of being dropped on 70 and 75. He was eventually clean-bowled by off-spinner Glenn Phillips with Australia reaching 206-2 at the halfway stage. With Warner, Head had put on 175 in the first 20 overs before his veteran partner was dismissed. — AFP