

**3** Ambassadors in Kuwait gather in show of solidarity for Palestine



**8** Electric vehicles gain traction in Jordan as petrol prices rise



**13** 'AI' named Collins Word of the Year for 2023



**16** Dawsari and Kerr named AFC players of the year



## MPs slam Zionist war criminals

FM blasts int'l silence • Assembly asks govt to set up Gaza reconstruction fund



KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah addresses a special session of the National Assembly on Gaza on Nov 1, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti MPs unanimously called on Wednesday for treating the Zionist chief of staff, army commanders and other political leaders as war criminals and pursuing them at international arenas including the International Criminal Court and international parliaments. Following a six-hour special debate on the "Zionist atrocities in Gaza", the National Assembly asked its parliamentary caucus to lead legal, political and media efforts in this direction.

The lawmakers called on the government to take all necessary measures for an immediate halt of the Zionist aggression, protect the lives of civilians and reject any attempt to evict Palestinians from their homes. During the debate, the government and MPs strongly condemned the Zionist state for committing genocide and indiscriminate massacres

against Palestinian civilians and sharply criticized Western support to the Zionist government and adopting a double standard policy against the Palestinians.

The Assembly called on Arab and Muslim governments and parliaments to take practical steps to break the blockade on Gaza and open all border crossings to supply Gaza with immediate relief aid. The lawmakers also called on the Kuwaiti government and private sector to establish a Gaza Reconstruction Fund and invite other countries and their private sectors and businessmen to participate in the fund.

They called on the government to cooperate with charitable organizations to set up a "Kuwait Humanitarian City" in Gaza with all necessary housing, educational and health facilities to support the population there and prevent attempts to evict them. They also called on the health ministry to

make necessary arrangements to bring wounded Palestinians for treatment in Kuwait. They called on the government that Kuwait should categorically reject any normalization of relations with the Zionist state.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said barbaric Zionist attacks on Palestinians violate all international laws and resolutions and constitute a war crime and a crime against humanity. In a statement representing the government's viewpoint, the foreign minister criticized the silence of the international community, which has so far remained unable to halt these crimes and atrocities. He reiterated Kuwait's unwavering support for the Palestinian people and their legitimate rights to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf said the Zionist state is committing genocide

Continued on Page 6

### Jordan recalls envoy from Zionist entity, Bolivia severs ties

**AMMAN/LA PAZ:** Jordan on Wednesday said it would "immediately" recall its ambassador to the Zionist entity in protest at the war against Gaza. "Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi decided to immediately recall Jordan's ambassador to (the Zionist entity)," the foreign ministry said in a statement that condemned "the ongoing (Zionist) war that is killing innocent people in Gaza and causing an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe".

The last time Jordan recalled its ambassador to the Zionist entity was 2019. As the Zionist entity expanded its operations and sent in ground troops on Friday, Safadi warned it would result in "a humanitarian catastrophe of epic proportions for years to come" in a post on X, formerly Twitter. In 1994, Jordan became the second Arab state to make peace with the Zionist entity after Egypt in 1979. Its population includes more than two million Palestinian refugees.

Since the war began, it has seen several large protests in support of Gaza with demonstrators demanding it annul the peace treaty with the Zionist entity and close the Zionist embassy. On Tuesday, US President Joe Biden spoke with Jordan's King Abdullah II, a key US partner, with the two discussing "urgent mechanisms to stem violence, calm rhetoric and reduce regional tensions", the White House said. Biden and King Abdullah "discussed urgent mechanisms to stem violence, calm rhetoric, and reduce regional tensions" and agreed it was "critical to ensure that Palestinians are not forcibly displaced outside of Gaza", a White House statement said.

Bolivia said on Tuesday it was severing diplomatic ties with the Zionist entity over its "disproportionate" attacks in Gaza, as two other Latin American countries recalled their ambassadors over the mounting humanitarian crisis.

Continued on Page 6

### First evacuations from Gaza as camp hit again

**GAZA:** Injured residents and foreigners escaped Gaza to Egypt Wednesday, the first evacuations from the war-torn Palestinian territory pounded by Zionist warplanes in retaliation for an unprecedented Hamas attack. The brief glimmer of hope sparked by the temporary opening of the Rafah border crossing was quickly snuffed out as a fresh strike pulverized buildings in Gaza's biggest refugee camp for a second consecutive day, killing dozens according to the Palestinian health ministry.

Zionist Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to "continue until victory" over Hamas, whose Oct 7 attack sparked the latest conflict, the deadliest in decades of unrest between the two sides. AFP reporters at Gaza's southern border saw ambulances whisking away the wounded to Egyptian field hospitals, including one young boy with heavy bandaging around his stomach.

Whole families, struggling to carry their worldly possessions, rushed through the heavily fortified crossing towards Egypt.

Continued on Page 6



GAZA: Palestinians dig out the body of a child from the rubble of a building in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza on Oct 31, 2023. — AFP

### UK, US, China sign AI safety pledge at meet

**BLETCHLEY PARK, United Kingdom:** Countries including the UK, United States and China on Wednesday agreed the "need for international action" as political and tech leaders gathered for the world's first summit on artificial intelligence (AI) safety. The UK government kicked off the two-day event at Bletchley Park, north of London, by publishing the "Bletchley Declaration" signed by 28 coun-

tries and the European Union.

In it, they agreed on "the urgent need to understand and collectively manage potential risks through a new joint global effort to ensure AI is developed and deployed in a safe, responsible way for the benefit of the global community". Sunak called the declaration a "landmark achievement" while King Charles III, in a video message to the summit, urged international collaboration to combat the "significant risks" of unchecked development. "There is a clear imperative to ensure that this rapidly evolving technology remains safe and secure," he said.

UK technology minister Michelle Donelan told AFP that the declaration "really outlines for the first time the world coming together to identify this problem".

Continued on Page 6



BLETCHLEY PARK: SpaceX, X and Tesla CEO Elon Musk poses for a selfie with a delegate as he attends the UK AI Safety Summit on Nov 1, 2023. — AFP

### Saudi Arabia ready for summer or winter World Cup

**DOHA:** Saudi Arabia is prepared to host the 2034 World Cup in summer or winter, its football chief told AFP, as the conservative oil giant was anointed the tournament's host just weeks after announcing

a bid. The quickfire crowning of the alcohol-free desert monarchy, which first allowed non-religious foreign tourists in 2019, comes less than a year after neighboring Qatar held the first winter World Cup, and the first in the Middle East.

Despite summer temperatures touching 50 degrees Celsius in the major cities, Saudi Arabian Football Federation president Yasser Al-Misehal did not rule out playing the tournament in the hottest months. "Of course, we are ready for all possibilities," Misehal said late on Tuesday at the Asian Football Confederation awards in Doha, when asked about

the tournament's timing. "Today there are many new technologies that help you with cooling or adding air conditioners in stadiums, in addition to the fact that there are many cities in the kingdom that enjoy a very wonderful atmosphere in the summer," he said.

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter which is undergoing dizzying economic reforms, threw its hat in the ring on Oct 4, just 27 days before a truncated bidding process for the 2030 and 2034 World Cups ended on Tuesday. With the 2026 tournament set for the US, Canada and Mexico, and

Continued on Page 6





## Local

# Scenes from Gaza cause pain and anger, says Sheikh Salem

## Foreign ministry condemns Zionist regime's massacre at Jabalia refugee camp



KUWAIT: Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks during the special session.



Members of parliament attend a special session of the Kuwaiti parliament dedicated to discuss the situation of Palestinians in Gaza. - Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Kuwait's members of parliament attend a special session. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: The scenes, images, and videos coming from the Gaza Strip has caused pain and anger in the hearts of many people across the globe, said Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Wednesday. During a special National Assembly session on the sorrowful situation in the Gaza Strip in the past few weeks, Sheikh Salem said that the war-mongering Zionist regime had launched a heinous operation destroying, killing, maiming, and forcibly displacing by the thousands upon thousands of innocent people in the Gaza Strip.

Since 1984, this regime has taken draconian policies of displacing Palestinians and attempting to erase Palestine's identity and history throughout the generations, he pointed out, adding that the numerous and endless wars carried out by the Zionist occupation has failed and continued to be thwarted by the bravery of the Palestinian people. The Palestinian cause remains central for the Arab and Muslim worlds as well as all countries, individuals, and group who seek freedom and justice, he affirmed. The State of Kuwait, since independence and through its steadfast foreign policy, has highlighted the Palestinian cause and justice for it people, indicated Sheikh Salem.

He added that the current rage and anger from the Arab and Muslim countries is justified due to the ruthless campaign of the Zionist war machine and double standard policies of some members of the international community. Sheikh Salem questioned the world whether Palestinian lives were cheap in the eyes of the global community or whether the massacres committed



MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks during the special session of the Kuwaiti parliament.



Defense Minister Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah attends a special session of Parliament on November 1, 2023.

against the innocent was justified by international and humanitarian laws.

He affirmed that the only solution to the Palestinian question was through the establishment of an independent state with full rights, adding that what the Zionist occupiers are doing right now in the Gaza Strip is considered acts of war crimes and violation of human rights.

He insisted that international laws and UN resolutions must be implemented keeping justice in mind, saying that ignoring the crimes committed against Palestinians was a shame. Kuwait, since the beginning of the current cycle of violence against the Palestinians, had contacted several countries, organizations, and members of the international community to execute an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. Kuwait has partic-

ipated in this regard in several meetings highlighting the unjust war in the Gaza Strip including the GCC-EU ministerial meeting on October 9-10 in Muscat, the Arab League Foreign Ministers regular meeting on October 11 in Cairo, the GCC Foreign Ministers meeting on October 17 in Muscat, and the OIC Foreign Ministers meeting on October 18 in Jeddah, he revealed. Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah had participated in the Cairo Summit for Peace on October 21 to address the harrowing situation in the Gaza Strip, said the Minister of Foreign Affairs. His Highness Sheikh Mishal, during the summit, called on the international community to push

for a just and sustainable solution for the Palestinian people in line with the State of Kuwait's commitment to this just cause, he indicated.

Sheikh Salem said that the Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning in the strongest terms the Zionist regime's massacre at the Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, saying that it was part of a long line of war crimes committed by the Zionist aggressors.

The Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry continues to work with Arab, regional, and international entities at the UNSC to push for a humanitarian ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, he affirmed, noting that the Kuwaiti leadership had ordered the launch of a humanitarian aid air bridge on October 23, sending necessities, food, and medical supplies to the people of Gaza.

The Foreign Minister commended the response of the Kuwaiti people, indicating that the national relief aid campaign for Palestine had garnered KD 3 million (around \$9.9 million), reflecting Kuwait's support of this humanitarian issue. He noted that Kuwait had called on Oct 24 for an extraordinary meeting for the Arab standing committee for human rights to discuss measures to counter the Zionists' heinous crimes against the Palestinians. He reiterated Kuwait's stance on the Palestinian cause and called for establishing an independent Palestinian state within the June 4th, 1967 borders and east Jerusalem as the capital. Peace is only achieved through international resolutions on the matter and the Arab peace initiative, he affirmed. — KUNA

## Opinions vary on entertainment cost in Kuwait

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times has listened to the opinions of residents in Kuwait, both citizens and expatriates, to learn their views on the cost of entertainment in Kuwait. Some expressed their positive opinion regarding the prices of entertainment in the country, highlighting their pride in Kuwait's promising efforts to promote domestic tourism and recreational options for people. However, others believe that entertainment in Kuwait may be somewhat expensive, restricting it to certain groups and sometimes causing a strain on monthly budgets.

Bashayer Buhamad, a Kuwaiti citizen, told Kuwait Times: "The prices are suitable for the services provided, because recently, there has been a significant increase in tourist projects and the provision of recreational services. It is expected that citizens should pay for what the state provides." She accepted the value of the prices due to the excellent services rendered and emphasized on the rationale behind paying these costs, given the evident rise in recreational activities in the state. Buhamad further expressed her enthusiasm for the forthcoming developments in domestic tourism in Kuwait. "I notice positive and suitable changes, and I hope for an increase in projects," she said.

Tahira Bushehri, another Kuwaiti citizen, concurred: "Within the realm of recreational establishments, some are reasonably affordable while others are quite overpriced, particularly those that are located in shopping malls. It is well-known that children possess an appetite for play, while the burden of funding falls solely on their parents' shoulders. Hence, there



should be more inclusive and reasonable pricing structures that alleviate the financial strain on parents. This would enable children to enjoy their playtime without exhausting their parents' budget."

Bushehri sees that there is room for prices to be more affordable for parents. This is particularly crucial, since children, engrossed in their delight of playing, remain unaware of the burden borne by their parents.

An expat who did not wish to be named shared his opinion with Kuwait Times, expressing his belief that the development of the entertainment sector in Kuwait is a wonderful thing. "I really appreciate the availability of high quality, well serviced and promising leisure activities that provide visitors with a memorable experience. Due to this, we are no longer limited to indoor activities and visiting shopping malls. Now there are fantastic outdoor places to explore and enjoy. However, the high prices associated with these activities prevent many expats from fully enjoying them. These prices cater to the budget of Kuwaiti citizens and not the other categories residing in Kuwait," he said.

Thus, despite his delight for Kuwait's development in domestic tourism, the pricing presents a challenge to expat families, as they struggle to afford equal opportunities for their kids to partake in these games. Consequently, many expats feel excluded from certain entertainment activities.



## National Guard keen on honing skills of cadre

KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah paid a visit to the Protection and Reinforcement Command, where he was welcomed by Undersecretary of the National Guard Lt Gen Hashem Al-Rifai and senior commanders.

During his visit, Sheikh Faisal received a presentation from Maj Gen Hamad Ahmad, the Commander of Protection and Reinforcement, regarding the responsibilities of the reserve force on active duty. He learned about the diverse tasks entrusted to them in various circumstances, where they serve as companions to National Guard forces in executing security and military duties to the fullest extent. Additionally, they provide vital logistical support to various ministries and state institutions during emergency and crisis situations.

Sheikh Faisal also received a briefing from Brig Gen Talal Abdullah Mohammed, who heads the Directorate of Operations and Training, regarding the responsibilities of the Protection and Enhancement Command. This included insights into its human resources and their duties in safe-



KUWAIT: Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah pays a visit to the Protection and Reinforcement Command where he was welcomed by Undersecretary of the National Guard Lt Gen Hashem Al-Rifai and senior commanders.

guarding and securing critical installations and sites.

Throughout the tour, Sheikh Faisal was briefed on state-of-the-art mechanisms and weaponry, as well as their utilization in special operations. He also learned about the weapons and equipment used for preventive inspections and explosives detection. Human personnel are trained to master these operations while maintaining tight control over vital sites during their duties.

Concluding the visit, Sheikh Faisal emphasized the ongoing commitment to rehabilitation and training plans, aimed at honing the expertise of National Guard personnel. He highlighted the importance of providing logistical support to both

military and civilian organizations to ensure they are fully prepared to protect and defend the homeland.

"Since the inception of the National Guard, it has harnessed all the necessary capabilities to enhance the human element, which is the cornerstone of development. This approach ensures success in achieving our overarching goal of defending the homeland and safeguarding its capabilities, in close cooperation with the army, police and the Kuwait Fire Force. All of this is done under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and His Highness the Crown Prince, may God protect and guide them," Sheikh Faisal said.



# Ambassadors in Kuwait gather in show of solidarity for Palestine

Palestine ambassador thanks envoys from Africa, Europe, LatAm and Arab countries



KUWAIT: Palestinian Ambassador Rami Tahboub speaks during the solidarity meeting. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar and Passant Hisham

**KUWAIT:** A powerful stand for unity and support for the Palestinian cause unfolded on Wednesday at the Embassy of Palestine in Kuwait, as dozens of ambassadors and officials representing Arab, African, European and Latin American countries assembled to express unwavering solidarity. The gathering was organized by the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps along with the Iranian ambassador, highlighting the collaborative efforts of nations to address the ongoing challenges faced by Palestine.

Ambassador of Palestine to Kuwait Rami Tahboub thanked the presence of ambassadors from Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Arab nations, affirming that their stand with Palestine is a message to the occupying state that the world is aware and knows the truth about who is right and who is wrong; who is the oppressed and who is the oppressor.

Tahboub praised Kuwait's role in supporting Palestinians in international forums and the aid provided. "Kuwait's position cannot be described. It was a surprise that the leaders of Kuwait opened their opening session of the parliament by talking about Gaza. This alone is sufficient for us to see the position of Kuwait as a leader, along with its people and parliament. Dedicating today's session to Palestine reflects

what Palestine means to the Kuwaiti people and leadership, and all words of thanks will not be enough," he said.

The Palestinian ambassador demanded the international community to stop the war and aggression on Gaza. "More than 10,000 Palestinians were killed and wounded, including those still under the rubble. We need you all to work to stop this genocide. Palestinians want to live like any other people in the world, in dignity and respect, and all we are asking for is our independence. Don't we deserve it?" he asked.

Tahboub affirmed that the international community has to know that Palestinians will remain in their homes and will never leave, even if the Zionist occupation kills every single Palestinian. "Governments must know that we will not leave our country. Most of the Western media, especially the American one, is trying to write another chapter of the Palestinian people's history, which is October 7. Our tragedy started in 1948 not on October 7. And this date will never be accepted as a new chapter for the Palestinian people," he stressed.

Ambassador of Iran Mohammad Toutouchi affirmed his country's position on the right to self-determination for the Palestinian people is clear and principled. "Our position is a humanitarian position based on the rules of international rights and the United Nations Charter. Palestine has the right to

defend itself. The resistance of the Palestinians against the occupier and the continuous violation of their human rights is a legal and legitimate defense against injustice, aggression and transgression," he said.

"The right to legitimate defense is an intrinsic right that is explicitly recognized in the United Nations Charter as well as internationally. Unfortunately, we do not see any actions to prevent massacres and bombings against the Palestinians. The Zionist entity is still practicing genocide and killing in Gaza, and with its aggressive invasion of Gaza, the issue will enter a fateful and irreversible stage," Toutouchi warned.

Meanwhile, Ambassador of Tajikistan Zubaydullo Zubaydzoda, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, extended his sincere condolences to the brave Palestinian people for the loss of thousands of civilians, especially women, children and the elderly, as martyrs during clashes and military operations. He called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, the cessation of any military operations and the preservation of defenseless civilians, especially women, children and the elderly.

"Targeting unarmed civilians and bombing hospitals, schools and civilian infrastructure facilities are unacceptable and must stop immediately. We fully support the Arab initiative, which provides for a two-state solution and the establishment of the State of Palestine on the 1967 borders with East

Jerusalem as its capital," he added.

Ambassador of Iraq Al-Manhal Al-Safi said: "Our presence today in the solidarity stand with Palestine is the least we can offer to these heroes who are facing brutal killings that have been going on for weeks. We hope for a ceasefire so that we can bury our martyrs in peace and achieve victory."

Sudanese Ambassador Awad Al-Karim El-Rayah noted that Palestinians are being subjected to genocide in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank by the Zionist entity. "I agree with the Palestinian ambassador that the tragedy started in 1948, and the wars after that led to today. I ask God for Arabs' solidarity with the Palestinian cause, the cause of Arabs and Muslims, and that the Arabs can impose their vision in this matter based on the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative and that a Palestinian state be established. I hope that Arab leaders will provide the necessary support to Palestine in this critical historical circumstance," he said.

Turkish Ambassador Tuba Nur Sonmez indicated that her country has always been a strong supporter of the Palestinian people. The ongoing occupation has increased its atrocities and the Zionist regime has turned into a terror state, not acknowledging any kind of international norms, rules and regulations. "These are all crimes in humanity. We believe that Palestinian people will return to their original homeland, and we believe in the

two-state solution with the 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine. There's no other solution," she pointed out.

Sonmez stressed Zionist violence and crimes cannot be justified by any group's activity, noting she doesn't believe Hamas is a terror organization. "Hamas is a political party, so if the people of Palestine chose them to represent them in Gaza, we have no right to say anything but to respect their will. This is democracy," she said. "We see the hypocrisy and double standards of Western media all around the world because they are not portraying the real picture in Gaza. But people, through social media and independent journalism, reach real information, and we know exactly what kind of horror and terror is going on in Gaza," the ambassador added.

Charge d'Affaires at the Lebanese Embassy Ahmad Arafah expressed his country's support and solidarity for Palestinians who are being subjected to a systematic and barbaric war, ethnic cleansing and genocide by the Zionist enemy. "For us as Lebanese, this behavior is not strange, for the Zionists to violate all international conventions and international laws. What surprises us is the silence from the international community regarding what is happening in Gaza. It pains us to see the tragedies that children, women and the elderly are subjected to at a time when they are supposed to live a decent life," he concluded.



Ambassadors stand in solidarity at Embassy of Palestine — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Toutouchi with Tahboub.



Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Tuba Nur Sonmez with Tahboub



French Ambassador Claire Le Flecher with Tahboub.



Iraqi Ambassador Al-Manhal Al-Safi with Tahboub.



Omani Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Saleh Al-Kharusi with Tahboub.



UK Ambassador to Kuwait Belinda Lewis with Tahboub

## Kuwait University to foster research community efforts

**KUWAIT:** As part of Kuwait University's ongoing efforts to enhance its research processes, the administrative staff in the research sector initiated a visit to the College of Life Sciences. They were warmly welcomed by Dr Nawaf Al-Hajeri, the Acting Dean of the College of Life Sciences, and a group of academic staff members with a keen interest in scientific research. This visit took place on Monday.

The primary goal of this meeting was to foster cooperation and understanding between the research sector and the research community at Kuwait University.

During the meeting, the research sector presented an overview of the services and facilities available to researchers. They also provided an opportunity for researchers to ask questions and receive responses from the research sector's staff.

Dr Othman Al-Khodr opened the meeting. "The administrative staff within the research sector have taken the responsibility of meeting with researchers from the various faculties of Kuwait University to discuss the challenges and obstacles they encounter in their scientific research endeavors. We aim to find solutions to these issues and address all their inquiries," he said.

He emphasized that the research sector's objective is to stimulate increased demand from university colleges to undertake distinguished research projects that yield valuable scientific results. This, in turn, contributes to enhancing the research activity of researchers and aligns with the vision of Kuwait for 2035 by providing research of significant scientific interest to society.

Dr Nouria Al-Kandari, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research Analysis and Development, responded to researchers' questions regarding interim and final reports, procedures for publishing scientific papers resulting from funded and unfunded research projects, and other related inquiries. She also encouraged new academic staff members to apply for preliminary research advances, noting that the submission deadline is approaching and the application period is open from October 1 till the end of this month.

Furthermore, Dr Kandari announced that the research sector has begun accepting nomination applications for scientific research awards, including categories for the best young researcher and distinguished researcher for the academic year 2023/2024.

Dr Haneen Al-Ghabra, Assistant Vice Chancellor for External Research Cooperation and Consultation, addressed researchers' questions about the conditions for participating in the scientific poster event and the criteria for evaluating scientific posters. She explained that

the sector is currently organizing the third conference for scientific research with the theme "Kuwait Vision 2035: Technology, Creativity and Innovation."

The conference is scheduled to take place from Feb 19 to 20, 2024, and will involve the participation of academic and supporting staff members from all faculties of Kuwait University, graduate students, teaching assistants and researchers from local research institutions with cooperation agreements with Kuwait University. These institutions include the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), General Presidency of the National Guard, Kuwait Oil Company and the Environment Public Authority.

Dr Ghabra encouraged researchers from the College of Life Sciences who wish to participate in the event to promptly register and submit their contributions using the provided electronic registration links. The final day for receiving scientific posters is Nov 30, 2023.



## Total Kuwaitization to be achieved in 10 sectors this year

**KUWAIT:** The decision to replace expatriate workers with Kuwaiti nationals continued this year in many sectors with 10 sectors achieving a 100 percent Kuwaitization.

Government sources said that the replacement decision would be applied this year to replace expats with Kuwaitis as part of a plan developed by the government to address the imbalance in the demographics in order to reduce the number of non-Kuwaiti employees in government agencies annually. The sources added that requests by a number of government agencies to postpone the replacement have been rejected.

"Ten sectors will be totally Kuwaitized and expats will be replaced in jobs relating to information technology, marine, literature, media, arts, public relations, development, administrative follow-up, statistics and administrative support in all ministries, institutions and government agencies," the sources added.

The sources pointed out that the government plan succeeded by a large percentage in a number of sectors, including teaching and education, where it aimed to Kuwaitize only 70 percent but it achieved 75 percent, and livestock, agricultural and aquaculture jobs by 75 percent which reached 79 percent, among other jobs. "This comes as part of the work of the Supreme Committee for Addressing Demographics, which aims to reach 70 percent of citizens and 30 percent of expatriates."

"The total number of employees both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis in the government sector is about 4,746,000 workers, representing approximately 10.3 percent of the total population while the percentage of Kuwaitis working in the government sector is about 76.0 percent after a 4-year hiatus due to COVID-19," the sources added.

### Photo of the day



**KUWAIT:** An aerial view of the Kuwait City skyline on a partially cloudy day. Slight drizzles accompanied by gusty winds are forecast for Thursday as a precursor to the advent of winter season in the country. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Kuwait diplomat calls for halt to Zionist crimes against Palestinians

## GCC affirms rejection of heinous violations in Gaza

**NEW YORK:** The State of Kuwait renewed its condemnation of the criminal atrocities committed by the Zionist entity against the Palestinian people, which violated continuously international laws and UNSC resolutions, said a diplomat late on Tuesday.

Speaking to the UNGA meeting focusing on a report regarding the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) activities, member of the Kuwaiti permanent delegation to the UN headquarters in New York, diplomatic attache Khaled Al-Sabah affirmed that the Palestinian people continued to suffer from endless violations carried out by the Zionist occupation including heinous crimes committed by illegal settlers.

Kuwaitis feel the pain of their Palestinian brethren, they were themselves witness to a brutal Iraqi invasion in 1990, so they know the impact of the criminal acts carried out by the Zionist entity aggressors, said Khaled Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti official reflected his country's keenness on supporting the UN against challenges facing the protection of



**NEW YORK:** Kuwaiti permanent delegation to the UN headquarters in New York, diplomatic attache Khaled Al-Sabah addresses the UN General Assembly on Oct 31. — KUNA photos

human rights worldwide, affirming that on the national level, Kuwait had worked to implement all tenets of the UN charter in regards to human rights and freedoms as well as the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

The constitution of Kuwait had several articles dedicated to human rights and freedom of speech in line with international laws in this regard, said the Kuwaiti diplomat, indicating that Kuwait also was eager to support the UN and other organizations in the domains of humanitarian aid and bolstering peace, security, and global development. On empowering women, Khaled Al-Sabah noted that it was a priority for Kuwait, indicating that a Ministry of State for Women and Children Affairs was established to counter discrimination against women.

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Jassem Al-Budaiwi, asserted on Wednesday the consistent stance of the GCC countries in rejecting Zionist entity's violations in the



**GCC Secretary General Jassem Al-Budaiwi meets with EP delegation head Hannah Neumann.**

Gaza Strip and its continuous targeting of innocent lives, stressing the urgent need for an immediate ceasefire. The General Secretariat said in a statement that this came during a meeting with a delegation from the European Parliament, headed by Hannah Neumann, Head of the Delegation for Relations with the Arabian Peninsula in the Parliament.

During the meeting, Al-Budaiwi discussed the latest developments in Gaza and its surroundings stressing the GCC's firm position in supporting all efforts to stop the escalation of military operations. The Secretary General also called for a secure corridor for necessary humanitarian and medical assistance, rejecting any calls for forcibly displacing the Palestinian people from Gaza, as it represents a violation of basic human rights and international principles. The meeting also discussed GCC-European relations and exchanged views on various issues and international developments of common interest. —KUNA

## Kuwait's 10th relief aid plane for Gaza heads to Egypt

**KUWAIT:** The tenth plane within the Kuwaiti relief airbridge took off Wednesday, heading to the Egyptian city Al-Arish, carrying 40 tons of humanitarian aid, medical equipment and four ambulances, to be delivered to Gaza Strip. This initiative came from the Kuwait Relief Society, in coordination with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs, in line with Kuwait's leadership.

The airbridge is being executed with the participation of many Kuwaiti official and private bodies and under the direct supervision of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Health and the Air Force in the Kuwaiti Army, in cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, the Kuwaiti Relief Society, Al-Salam Humanitarian Society, and Kuwaiti charities and humanitarian institutions.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's eighth and ninth air bridge planes loaded with about 50 tons of medical supplies and urgent needs arrived on Tuesday at Egypt's Arish Airport to be delivered to people in the Gaza Strip. Speaking to KUNA in a statement, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Delegate to the Arab League Ghanim Al-Ghanim said the air bridge loaded with humanitarian aid came in implementation of the decree of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The ambassador, who was at the airport to receive the planes, said that the eighth plane carried 10 tons of food supplies provided by Al-Salam charity. The ninth plane was loaded with 40 tons of aid provided by Kuwait Relief Society, he said, indicating that the total aid has reached so far 240 tons. Four ambulances and medical equipment as well as others



**Kuwait: Kuwait's tenth aid plane for Gaza takes off to Egypt carrying 40 tons of humanitarian aid. — KUNA**

were included in the relief planes sent to Palestinians in the Strip, he noted. He thanked Kuwait and Egyptian Red Crescent Societies, and North Sinai Governorate for unlimited facilitations to enter Kuwait's humanitarian aid through Rafah border crossing to hand out the aid to the Gazans.

The ambassador said he met Egypt's Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouli during a field tour in Al-Arish and Rafah Cities. The premier thanked Kuwait, its leadership, government and people for humanitarian support to the Palestinian people, Al-Ghanim pointed out. Proving continually humanitarian aid to brothers in the Gaza Strip comes in implementation of the decree of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the directives of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the instructions of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the ambassador said. — KUNA



Scan & Subscribe  
KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

Kuwait Times  
Established 1961  
The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Tel: 24833199 Ext: 220





Northern China chokes under severe pollution

## A year on, peace holds in Tigray

Page 6

Page 7



RAMALLAH: A child carries a picture of a Palestinian prisoner as relatives of Palestinians detained in Zionist jails demonstrate to demand their release and in solidarity with the people of Gaza Strip on Oct 28, 2023. — AFP

# Families of Palestinian prisoners agonize amid Gaza bombardment

## Situation 'horrific' as Palestinian prisoners face abuse in Zionist custody

RAMALLAH: Thousands of Palestinian families are caught between hopes that prisoners in Zionist jails could be freed in a swap for hostages held by Hamas, and horror over the Zionist entity's bombardment of Gaza. Wafa Abu Ghoulmi said she loves her husband Ahmed, who is serving nine life sentences over the 2001 assassination of a Zionist minister, and wants to see him. But she is also suffering as she watches her fellow Palestinians murdered by the Zionist attack on Gaza. "When I saw the deaths, the destruction, the families torn apart in Gaza, I felt pain," she told AFP at her home in the occupied West Bank.

The Zionist authorities say more than 230 hostages were taken captive by Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups during an attack on occupied areas near the Gaza-Zionist border. The Oct 7 attack left 1,400 dead. In response, the Zionist entity has declared 'war' on Hamas, pounding the Gaza Strip with air and ground attacks that claimed more than 8,500 lives, including more than 5,600 women and children, according to Gaza medics.

### Intensified crackdown

Since the Zionist bombardment of the besieged Gaza Strip began on Oct 7, occupation forces have also intensified their nightly raids into Palestinian homes, villages and cities in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem. In the past 25 days, the Zionist occupation has doubled the number of Palestinians in its custody, from 5,200 people to more than 10,000.

According to Al Jazeera, this includes at least 4,000 laborers from Gaza who were working in the Zionist entity and who have been detained mainly in military bases. Separately, Zionist forces have also arrested 1,740 other Palestinians in overnight army raids in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, according to the Palestinian

Prisoners Club. Most of these prisoners are reportedly being held under laws and military orders that allow detention without trial or charge.

The last Zionist-Palestinian prisoner swap took place in October 2011 when 1,027 Palestinians were exchanged for Zionist-French soldier Gilad Shalit, who spent five years detained in Gaza. Two Zionist men who entered Gaza in 2014 and 2015 are believed still detained. The Hamas chief in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar — himself freed as part of the Shalit deal — said Saturday that Hamas was ready for an "immediate" exchange.

### US commandos dispatched

The hostages have become a hot-button issue for the Zionist government, with pressure building since Hamas said it was ready to free its detainees if all Palestinians in Zionist jails are released. Families of the hostages have, in several press appearances, demanded cease fire and expressed concern about the effect that the intensifying attacks on Gaza would likely have on the well-being of the hostages.

Hamas has freed four women and said late Monday that more foreign detainees would be released in coming days. The Zionist army said Monday it had rescued one detained soldier in Gaza during an incursion. According to Hamas, 50 of the hostages have been killed in Zionist strikes on Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has so far showed no public interest in the Hamas offer. A senior Pentagon official told the New York Times on Tuesday that the US has sent special forces to assist the Zionist occupation in finding the hostages. Christopher Maier, an assistant secretary of defense, indicated that commandos have been deployed to help the Zionists "do a number of things."

### 'Horrific' situation

Palestinian prisoners currently held in Zionist custody are at risk of death, according to an Al Jazeera report, which quoted recently released prisoners, as well as prisoner rights groups, lawyers' groups and official institutions. Since Oct 7, two Palestinian prisoners have died while in Zionist custody shortly after they were arrested, and at least dozens have been injured. Several videos have also emerged in recent weeks of Zionist soldiers beating, stepping on, abusing and humiliating detained Palestinians who have been blindfolded, stripped either partially or entirely, and have their hands cuffed.

"The situation inside the prisons is horrific," Amani Sarahneh, spokesperson for the Palestinian Prisoners Society told Al Jazeera. "We are receiving information of daily mass beatings of the prisoners. They (Zionist authorities) are threatening to kill them," she told Al Jazeera, adding that "no one has been spared." In addition to severe beatings, Zionist prison authorities halted medical attention for Palestinian prisoners for at least the first week after Oct 7, including to those who had been beaten, according to rights groups.

Khalida Abu Sattah, 45, hopes she will soon see her husband Mohammad — imprisoned for life since 2001. She says she has been glued to her TV since Oct 7, pondering how each development will affect her husband. But she wonders whether she will greet him "with tears of joy or sadness for all the deaths."

Abu Sattah said she only diverts her gaze to answer phone calls from "loved-ones and friends or families of prisoners who say they hope for a new exchange with (the Zionists)". She is certain it will happen, but also dreads the thought. "Our happiness would not be complete; we'll have the looks of the families of the victims of the war hanging over our head." — Agencies

## Iran urges Muslim countries to halt trade with Zionists

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged Muslim countries Wednesday to halt trade with the Zionist entity, including oil exports, in response to its bombardment of Gaza since deadly Hamas attacks. The bombing campaign has killed more than 8,500 people, two-thirds of them women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

"Islamic governments must insist on quickly ending the crimes," Khamenei told a gathering of students in Tehran. "Muslim countries should not cooperate economically with the Zionist regime," he said, calling for a "block on oil and food exports".

Khamenei lambasted Western governments who "stood against Palestine", naming Britain, France and the United States. "The Muslim world must not forget who is putting pressure on the population of Gaza. It's not just about the Zionist regime," he said.

Defence Minister Mohammad Reza Ashtiani warned "certain European countries which help" the Zionist entity to "be careful not to anger Muslims". Iran, which supports Hamas financially and militarily, has hailed the militant group's attack on Zionists as a "success" but denied any involvement.

The remarks come one day after Houthi rebels in Yemen claimed responsibility for a drone attack on the Zionist entity, with the group vowing to continue its attacks.

"It is natural that the resistance groups and movements do not remain silent against all these crimes" committed by the Zionist entity, Iran's top diplomat Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Tuesday in remarks relayed by his ministry. "They will not wait for anyone's advice, therefore we need to use the last political opportunities to stop the war," he said, warning the situation could "get out of control".

Shortly afterwards, the Zionist army said its forces intercepted a "surface-to-surface missile" fired towards Zionist territory from the area of the Red Sea, saying it was "successfully intercepted" by the Arrow aerial defense system.

President Ebrahim Raisi has said Iran sees it as "its duty to support the resistance groups" but insisted that they act independently. The White House has accused Iran of "actively facilitating" attacks on US forces in the Middle East. On Friday, the United States announced a new round of sanctions targeting Hamas's funding networks and sources of support in Iran. — AFP

## 'No winners' in war where thousands of children killed: UN

GENEVA: The UN child rights committee said Wednesday there were "no winners in a war where thousands of children are killed", as they condemned mounting "grave human rights violations" in the Gaza Strip.

The committee, which monitors countries' adherence to the international Convention on the Rights of the Child, expressed its "outrage at the profound suffering of children". "Grave human rights violations against children are mounting by the minute in the Gaza Strip, and there are no winners in a war where thousands of children are killed," the committee said in a statement.

The UN committee "strongly condemns the escalation of attacks by the (Zionist entity) against civilian targets in the Gaza Strip, which had resulted in the deaths of more than 3,500 children since Oct 7. "We also remain deeply concerned about children who continue to be held as hostages," it said.

"The committee calls for an end to the devastating harm being wreaked on children's lives in the occupied Palestinian territory. We add our voice to those calling for an immediate ceasefire. We urge the immediate release of child hostages, with their caregivers, as a first urgent phase towards the release of all hostages."

The independent committee's 18 members are independent human rights experts from around the



RAFAH: A Palestinian man cradles an injured child at the Najjar hospital following a Zionist air strike on a home in the southern Gaza Strip on Oct 30, 2023. — AFP

world, who serve in a personal capacity. They said there had been "devastating reports of acts that are forbidden by international humanitarian law, including maiming, injury, abduction, forcible displacement, deprivation of medical care, food and water".

The committee said armed conflict harmed children first and foremost and had lifelong effects on their physical and mental health, their development and ultimately the enjoyment of all their rights.

Children are also harmed when they survive but lose parents and other family members and friends, and when they witness catastrophic events, the committee added. They called on all parties to protect all children and provide them with the necessary medical and psychological support. "The ceasefire should be the beginning of discussions aimed at establishing a just and lasting peace in the region so that all children can fully enjoy all their rights," the committee said. — AFP



## International

## A year on, peace holds in Tigray

## Ethiopia still fractured, with armed conflict ongoing across African country

**ADDIS ABABA:** An accord signed a year ago between the rivals in Ethiopia's Tigray war has brought peace to the shattered region but ignited yet another conflict in the increasingly fractured nation. In November 2022, Ethiopia's federal government and the rebellious authorities of Tigray agreed in South Africa to a ceasefire after two years of bloodshed and atrocities that left hundreds of thousands dead.

The guns at last silent, the northern region of six million has begun the huge task of rebuilding. "I am surprised how fast the situation changed in one year ... We are still far from pre-war, but it improved quite a bit," said one member of a non-governmental organization active in Tigray who requested anonymity to freely discuss the situation.

The war which also drew in Eritrean forces inflicted terrible damage on the region: Ethiopian Finance Minister Ahmed Shide recently estimated the cost of reconstruction in the battle-scarred north at \$20 billion. Outside Tigray's capital Mekele, the restoration of electricity, telecommunication and banking services has been "very slow and gradual", said a teacher at a university in the region who asked not to be identified.

Close to 90 percent of Tigray's health facilities were totally or partially destroyed in the conflict, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report. "Health facilities were looted, for some you only still have a shell, a concrete shell," the NGO worker said.

The university academic said Tigray's agriculture, manufacturing, service and business sectors had been largely destroyed, leaving almost 200,000 people out of work. Salaries for civil servants resumed in December 2022, but 18 months of wages frozen during the war remain unpaid.

The suspension of food aid to Tigray by the US government and the UN's World Food Program (WFP) in May following allegations of misappropriation slowed efforts to address chronic hunger in the region. According to a recent study by foreign aid organizations and local health authorities, nearly 16 percent of children under the age of five in Tigray suffer from acute malnutrition, above the critical threshold defined by WHO and UNICEF.

More than half of the population reported going hungry in the previous month, the study found. "In the rural areas, there's nothing left after two years of war," the NGO worker said. Among the worst affected are the one million people inside Tigray forced to flee fighting. Many were driven out of territory still under control of security forces from neighboring Amhara, Tigray's rival region, which sided with the national army during the conflict.

In defiance of the Pretoria peace accord, these forces have refused to leave western Tigray and part of the region's south that the Amhara have long considered ancestral homeland, raising tensions with their former allies in Addis Ababa. "As a result of the agreement, the normalization of relations between Tigray and the Government of Ethiopia saw a simultaneous rupture between the Amhara and the federal government," said the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), a think tank based in South Africa.

For the Amhara, the Pretoria agreement represented a "reversal of alliances", said one diplomat in Addis Ababa. Tensions spilt over into armed violence in April when the army sought to disarm regional militias including those in Amhara, the second-most populous region in Ethiopia, with 25 million people. The conflict



In this file photo, Redwan Hussein (second left), Representative of the Ethiopian government, and Getachew Reda (second right), Representative of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), sign a peace agreement on Nov 2, 2022. — AFP photos

was "set to last ... and could destabilize the country", said the diplomat.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also remains a "prisoner of his alliance with Eritrea", said Patrick Ferras, president of Strategies Africa, a think tank. "He doesn't know how to get rid of the Eritrean soldiers still present in border areas," he said. The end of fighting in Tigray

has only served to spotlight the many other hotspots raging in Ethiopia, often along ethnic lines, troubling a vast and diverse country of 120 million people. Multiple, simultaneous but unrelated conflicts were "ongoing in the country at any given time", said the NGO monitor Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) in September. — AFP

## Ukraine reports most extensive Russian shelling

**KYIV:** Russia has shelled more than 100 settlements over the last 24 hours — more than in any single day so far this year, Ukraine said on Wednesday. Moscow has fired millions of shells on cities, towns and villages since it invaded in February 2022, reducing several to rubble across the eastern part of the country.

"Over the last 24 hours, the enemy shelled 118 settlements in 10 regions," Ukrainian Interior Minister Igor Klimentenko said on social media. "This is the highest number of cities and villages that have come under attack since the start of the year," he added.

Kyiv also reported a Russian attack on an oil

refinery in Kremenchuk, a central industrial city. There were no casualties but it took almost 100 firefighters several hours to put out the resulting blaze, Klymenko said.

Kyiv and the West fear Russia will escalate its attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure ahead of the cold winter — as it did last year. The overnight shelling in the northeastern Kharkiv region killed one person, and another was killed in the southern Kherson region, local officials said.

During the day, Ukraine said a Russian drone attack on the southern city of Nikopol killed a 59-year-old woman and injured four others. A rocket strike on a village in the Zaporizhzhia region killed a 52-year-old man. Both Kyiv and Moscow said they had also shot down enemy drones overnight.

Since the start of the war, Russia has dramatically ramped up its domestic arms production while also tapping its few foreign partners for ammunition supplies. Citing intelligence information, a South Korean lawmaker said Wednesday that North Korea

has provided Russia with over one million artillery rounds. Western countries have meanwhile provided billions of dollars of military aid to Kyiv to help defend against Russian attacks.

Russian officials have declared an air raid alert in the Crimean port city of Sevastopol in anticipation of further attacks from Ukraine. Sirens went off in the city early on Wednesday. Traffic on the Crimean bridge, linking the peninsula to Russia, as well as sea transport, were suspended.

The alert comes amid a string of Ukrainian attacks in recent weeks in and around Crimea, which was seized and annexed by Moscow in 2014. Kyiv's forces have struck a Russian air base on the peninsula and the Black Sea Fleet command post in Sevastopol, as Ukraine seeks to weaken Russia's control over the water. Russia said Tuesday it had arrested a man involved in a Ukrainian-led assassination attempt on Oleg Tsaryov, an ex-Ukrainian MP and Moscow-backed separatist, who was shot last week at his home in Crimea. — Agencies



KHERSON: A man in a military uniform looks at a part of a missile next to a residential building that was damaged during an overnight Russian attack on Oct 30, 2023. — AFP

## MPs slam Zionist war criminals...

Continued from Page 1

against the Palestinians, while MP Metab Al-Enezi wondered about the role of Muslim countries and international organizations towards barbaric bombardments of civilians in Gaza. MP Abdullah Al-Anbuei called on the government to bring wounded Palestinians for treatment in Kuwait.

MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem said the Palestinian cause started well before Oct 7 when Hamas forces attacked the Zionist entity. He hailed Kuwaiti official, parliamentary and popular stances toward Palestinians. He said III the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was put under tremendous pressure to normalize ties with the Zionist entity, but he refused.

MP Fahad Al-Azemi called on Arab and Muslim countries to strongly support the Palestinian people by using the economic weapon through popular boycotts and eventually to impose an oil embargo against countries

supporting the Zionist entity. MP Adel Al-Damkhi said the Zionist entity is committing genocide and massacres against the Palestinian people.

MP Hamad Al-Alyan hailed the heroic resistance of the Palestinian people in Gaza, adding that Kuwait and other Arab countries should consider using foreign investments and oil supplies as a weapon against countries backing the Zionist entity. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said Gaza has emerged victorious in this battle, while international organizations were defeated.

MP Osama Al-Zaid said there is nothing called the Zionist entity, adding that Kuwait is in a state of war with the Zionist entity and any dealings with them is a betrayal. MP Hasan Jowhar said Arab military arsenal is worth \$5 trillion but failed to fire a single bullet, while MP Shuaib Shaaban said the Zionist war on Gaza is a full-fledged genocide and not targeting Palestinians only but the whole Arab nation.

MP Mohammad Al-Sayer said the veto right was used 265 times in the UN Security Council in favor of the Zionist entity. He strongly criticized international organizations, headed by the United Nations, for their ineffective role. MP Abdulaziz Al-Saqabi said Gaza is witnessing Vietnam-style bombardment. He criticized the West's double standard policies, saying they see what is happening in Ukraine as resistance, while in Palestine it is "terrorism".

Hamas hailed Bolivia's decision on Tuesday, saying it "holds it in high esteem" while urging Arab countries who have normalized their relations with the Zionist entity to do the same.

The leaders of both Colombia and Chile also spoke out Tuesday against the Zionist offensive. "I have decided to recall our ambassador to (the Zionist entity) (Margarita Manjarrez) for consultation. If (the Zionist entity) does not stop the massacre of the Palestinian people, we cannot be there," Colombia's leftist President Gustavo Petro wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

Chile, which has the largest Palestinian population outside the Arab world, said Tuesday it was recalling its ambassador to the Zionist entity in protest against the Zionist entity's "unacceptable violations of international humanitarian law." Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council, has urged a ceasefire.

He said the "terrorist attack" by Palestinian militants against the Zionist entity did not justify killing "millions of innocents" in Gaza. "Just because Hamas committed a terrorist attack against (the Zionist entity) doesn't mean (the Zionist entity) has to kill millions of innocents," he said in a live address on social media. — Agencies

ish codebreakers cracked Nazi Germany's "Enigma" code, focuses on frontier AI. Donelan told AFP the event was a "historic moment in mankind's history" after earlier announcing two further summits, in South Korea in six months' time, and in France next year. But London has reportedly had to scale back its ambitions around ideas such as launching a new regulatory body amid a perceived lack of enthusiasm.

Donelan accepted that the summit "isn't designed to produce a blueprint for global legislation", but was instead "designed to forge a path ahead... so that we can get a better handle and understanding on the risk of frontier AI". Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was one of the only world leaders attending the conference, although tech giant Elon Musk was already present on the first day, and will talk with Sunak on Thursday. — AFP

## First evacuations from Gaza as...

Continued from Page 1

An Egyptian official said 76 wounded and 335 with foreign passports entered Egypt from Gaza. The Egyptian authorities had said they would allow 90 wounded Palestinians and around 545 foreigners and dual nationals to cross on Wednesday. Jordanian citizen Umm Saleh Hussein said she received word in the middle of the night that she was on the list for evacuation. "We've faced many problems in Gaza, the least of which were the shortage of water and the power outage," she told AFP. "There were bigger problems such as the bombardment. We were afraid. Many families were martyred."

A first group of mostly women and children arrived in Egypt, an official told AFP on condition of anonymity, as TV images showed parents with pushchairs and elderly people clambering off a bus. "It's enough. We've endured enough humiliation," said Gaza resident Rafik Al-Hilou, accompanying relatives including children aged one and four hoping to cross into Egypt. "We lack the most basic human needs. No Internet, no phones, no means of communication, not even water. For the past four days, we haven't been able to feed this child a piece of bread. What are you waiting for?"

The Jabalia camp suffered a second strike in as many days Wednesday, with AFP TV images showing major damage and rescuers clawing through rubble to extract blood-stained casualties. Dozens were killed and wounded, according to the Gaza health ministry, which came a day after Zionist jets hit the camp, killing at least 47 people, according to an AFP count. Rescuers said "whole families" had died.

UN chief Antonio Guterres condemned the Zionist entity's strikes on the Gaza refugee camp. "The secretary-general is appalled over the escalating violence in Gaza, including the killing of Palestinians, including women and children in (Zionist) air strikes in residential areas of the densely populated Jabalia refugee camp," spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

## Saudi Arabia ready for summer or...

Continued from Page 1

2030 destined for Spain, Morocco and Portugal with South American involvement, only candidates from the Asian and Oceanian confederations were eligible for 2034, due to FIFA's continental rotation policy. After Australia, the only other potential bidder, dropped out on Tuesday, Saudi Arabia was the sole candidate. Its successful bid was confirmed by FIFA president Gianni Infantino on Instagram.

The World Cup is just the latest in a string of Saudi sporting acquisitions under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, including Formula One, heavyweight boxing, Newcastle United and LIV Golf. Saudi clubs backed by the Public Investment Fund sovereign wealth vehicle have signed off hundreds of millions of dollars on star footballers this year, hiring the likes of Cristiano Ronaldo, Neymar and Karim Benzema in an unprecedented binge.

SAFF said hosting the tournament is an "honor and privilege", in a statement posted on social media late on Tuesday. "Driven by a huge passion for the game by our young nation, the Saudi Arabian Football Federation is fully committed to meeting and exceeding the bid's re-

"This is just the latest atrocity to befall the people of Gaza where the fighting has entered an even more terrifying phase, with increasingly dreadful humanitarian consequences," said Martin Griffiths, UN humanitarian chief. The Zionist entity said Tuesday's raid was a successful hit on top Hamas commander Ibrahim Biari, but the large death toll drew a chorus of international condemnation.

Hamas said seven hostages, including three foreign passport holders, had died in Tuesday's bombing. The group's leader Ismail Haniya accused the Zionist entity of committing "barbaric massacres against unarmed civilians", saying it was covering its own "defeats". AFP reporters saw more tanks pour over the border into northern Gaza, as the Zionist entity stepped up its ground incursion launched late last week. Its bombing campaign has killed 8,796 people, according to the Gaza health ministry.

The Zionist entity said 15 soldiers died in ground fighting in Gaza on Tuesday, taking to 330 the number of troops killed since Oct 7. The situation in Gaza remained desperate, with food, fuel and medicine for the 2.4 million residents all running short, according to aid groups. Palestinian residents told AFP they had evacuated from northern Gaza, as demanded by the Zionist entity, but were still under threat.

"We've been told people are evacuating from Gaza City towards the central area of the Strip beyond the valley, so we headed there," Amen Al-Aqlak told AFP. "After 20 days, we were bombarded. Three of our kids lost their lives and we all got injured. There is no hope in the Gaza Strip. It is not safe anymore here. When the border opens, everybody will leave and emigrate. We encounter death every day, 24 hours a day."

With fears mounting the violence could spiral into a regional war, US President Joe Biden called for "urgent mechanisms" to dial down tensions and said top diplomat Antony Blinken would embark on another Middle East tour from Friday. Turkey and Iran called for a regional conference to prevent a conflagration, as the Zionist entity faces a daily barrage of aerial attacks from Hamas and other Iran-backed groups around the Middle East, including Yemen's Houthis rebels. In the north, the Zionist entity has traded near-daily fire with Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah movement. — AFP

requirements," it said. Mischal also indicated that Saudi Arabia intends to push ahead and host the tournament alone, without asking its neighbors to hold any games.

That would make Saudi the first country to organize the newly expanded, 48-team World Cup on its own, after the joint hostings in 2026 and 2030. "Saudi Arabia will submit a separate bid," Mischal said, when asked if another country would hold any matches. Summers in the desert kingdom can touch 50 degrees Celsius, temperatures that would be considered dangerous for football and likely too hot for fans to be outside.

Some cities enjoy temperate weather in the summer, including Abha, Taif and Al-Baha, which hosted the Arab Club Champions Cup in July and August. However, none of those cities has international-level stadiums, and the bigger Saudi venues are clustered in the major cities of Riyadh and Jeddah.

Residents of the capital Riyadh hailed the news that Saudi Arabia will host the World Cup. "Saudi Arabia hosting World Cup 2034 is great news and it didn't come from nowhere," said 62-year-old Saud Al-Oreifi, pointing to the country's growing portfolio of sports events. "It came as a result of efforts and successes achieved in the past." Kuwaiti visitor Thamer Al-Shoiebi was similarly enthusiastic, saying: "I am proud in front of the whole world that the kingdom of Saudi Arabia will honor not only the Saudis but the whole Arab region." — AFP

## Jordan recalls envoy from Zionist entity...

Continued from Page 1

Bolivia "has decided to cut diplomatic relations with (the Zionist entity), in repudiation and condemnation of the aggressive and disproportionate (Zionist) military offensive being carried out in the Gaza Strip," deputy foreign minister Freddy Mamani told a press conference.

Minister of the Presidency Maria Nela Prada also announced the country was sending humanitarian aid to Gaza. "We demand an end to the attacks" in the Gaza Strip "which have so far caused thousands of civilian deaths and the forced displacement of Palestinians," she said at the same press conference. The government of leftist Luis Arce is the first in Latin America to cut ties with the Zionist entity since the divisive conflict erupted on Oct 7.

The Zionist entity responded on Wednesday by slamming Bolivia's move as "a surrender to terrorism". Bolivia only announced it was restoring ties with the Zionist entity in 2019, a decade after they were cut over previous attacks on the Gaza Strip.

## UK, US, China sign AI safety...

Continued from Page 1

The announcement came shortly after the UK and United States both said they were setting up their own institutes to assess and mitigate the risks of the fast-emerging technology. The release of the latest models have offered a glimpse into the potential of so-called frontier AI, but have also prompted concerns around issues ranging from job losses to cyberattacks and the control that humans actually have over the systems.

The conference at Bletchley Park, where top Brit-



## International

# Northern China chokes under severe pollution

## Smog to last until mid-November in several areas: State media

**BEIJING:** Tens of millions of people across northern China were under severe pollution warnings this week, with authorities urging them to reduce outdoor activities as a greyish smog enveloped the region. Several areas of north China's Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, home to over 100 million people, are suffering from some of the worst pollution they have seen in months.

In the capital Beijing, authorities Monday issued an



A woman wearing a mask crosses a street in Beijing on Oct 31, 2023. — AFP photos

orange alert — the country's second-highest pollution warning. "There has been more smog in the past two days ... it really has an effect," said office worker Fu Dalin, 27. "Because the smog is so serious, I won't go out for a run like usual, and will just have to stay at home," he told AFP in a business district in downtown Beijing.

Another resident of the capital, Xu Gengying, said the pollution wouldn't stop her from going about her everyday life. "We still go out when we need to, if there's something to do. Just avoid doing some exercise outdoors — no jogging," she said.

Serious pollution is expected to remain over Beijing and surrounding areas until the middle of the month,

Chinese state media said Wednesday. On Wednesday, Beijing's concentrations of hazardous PM 2.5 particles were more than 20 times higher than World Health Organization guidelines, air quality monitoring firm IQAir said.

And the Chinese capital was the third most polluted major city in the world, the firm said, just ahead of Bangladesh's capital Dhaka. In response to the smog, authorities have taken steps to limit the activity of heavy-emitting vehicles and encouraged residents to remain indoors. In several areas in densely populated Hebei province, which surrounds the capital, authorities issued their highest red alert. In parts of Hebei, one official forecast showed that hazy conditions brought visibility down to lower than 50 meters. In the nearby city of Tianjin, south of Beijing and home to 15 million people, the meteorological bureau advised anyone suffering from respiratory issues to refrain from going outside and to wear a mask if they do.

### Smog here to stay

Chinese officials were cited by the state-run Beijing Daily as saying that "moderate" and "severe and above" levels of pollution were expected to affect the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei area until mid-November. A "moderate" pollution ranking still means pollutants in the air are well over WHO-recommended limits.

The forecasts for the region were based on joint analysis conducted by the China National Environmental Monitoring Centre and local meteorological authorities across the country. "The primary pollutants (in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region) are PM2.5 and PM10," the report said. Those pollutants have been linked to premature deaths in people with heart or lung disease, as well as a host of breathing and other health issues, according to the US's Environmental Protection Agency.

### 'Unfavorable' conditions

Official forecasters say the smog, which they



BEIJING: Pedestrians walk on an overpass as traffic snarls amid haze from air pollution on Nov 1, 2023.

blamed on "unfavorable weather conditions", will linger in the region until temperatures drop from unseasonably mild highs later this week. Should a red alert be issued in Beijing, that would trigger measures such as reducing traffic by prohibiting emitting vehicles with license plates ending in even and odd numbers from driving on alternate days.

The Chinese capital declared "war on pollution" after winning the Winter Olympics bid in 2015, shutting down dozens of coal plants and relocating heavy industries to shed its status as one of the world's most polluted cities. But while there has been improvement

in recent years, air quality remains far below World Health Organization standards.

China is the world's biggest emitter of the greenhouse gases driving climate change, such as carbon dioxide. Greenpeace said in April that China has approved a major surge in coal power this year, accusing it of prioritizing energy supply over its pledge to reduce emissions from fossil fuels. The jump in approvals for coal-fired power plants has added to concerns that China will backtrack on its goals to peak emissions between 2026 and 2030 and become carbon-neutral by 2060. — AFP

## Stripped of passports, Belarusian dissidents left without hope

**WARSAW:** When police in Belarus began knocking on doors and interrogating citizens suspected to have taken part in pro-democracy rallies three years ago, Maxim Isayev knew he could never go back. Like thousands of others, the 32-year-old engineer and father of two peacefully protested against the disputed re-election of strongman leader Alexander Lukashenko in 2020 and is currently wanted by the country's authorities.

"I know that they came to my address in Belarus and searched for me," Maxim told AFP in Warsaw, where he now lives with his wife and children. More than 100,000 people are thought to have left Belarus since security forces began violently cracking down on dissidents, many of whom fled to neighboring Poland and the Baltic states. Lukashenko now wants to shut them out for good. In January, he signed a law allowing courts to strip "extremist" dissidents living abroad of their citizenship, and in September he blocked Belarusian embassies from issuing passports. The decision effectively deprives thousands of Belarusian dissidents of the ability to renew their passports unless they return, making it difficult for them to travel internationally, access public services, open bank accounts or obtain employment. "If people are forced to return to Belarus, many of them will be exposed to rights violations, like arbitrary arrest, and torture," UN rights expert Anais Marin told AFP after the decision.

Describing Lukashenko's decree as "outrageous", she called on all governments to refrain from sending Belarusians back to their country over invalidated or expired passports. For Maxim, who fears he faces multiple criminal charges including terrorism, returning is not an option. "I took part in the protests. Rallies, marches, calls for sanctions," he said. "There are more than ten counts I could be charged with."

### 'Delayed life syndrome'

Since 1994, Lukashenko has ruled Belarus with an iron fist, in what critics have called Europe's last dictatorship. Elections held in August 2020 resulted in another landslide victory for the long-time leader, a result which the opposition decried as blatantly falsified.

The fallout from the vote led to the biggest protests in Belarus' modern history, which were soon followed by a record number of arrests. "There are situations where people were travelling to the funeral of their relatives," Maxim said. "And they will put the child into an orphanage." They decided against the idea. Lukashenko has criticized those who have sought refuge abroad as disloyal, casting them as "criminals" who do not deserve citizenship. "Are these people worthy to remain citizens of Belarus if they have fled their native country and actually severed ties with it?" he asked at a government meeting last year. Most dissidents say it is the state that severed ties with them. "My contract with my country was terminated in 2020," said Inga Okava, a 49-year-old former volunteer who was jailed for trying to independently monitor the 2020 elections. "They falsified everything that everybody wanted," she sighed. After fleeing to Ukraine and then to Poland following Russia's invasion, she has since been offered a temporary Polish travel document. But it will expire next year, and she desperately misses home. — AFP



BAMBO: People flee as the M23 rebels attack Bambo on Oct 26, 2023. — AFP

## Panic, mortar fire: Civilians flee M23 push in east DRC

**BAMBO, DR Congo:** A mother guided her bawling five-year-old boy across rocks close to Bambo, a town in eastern DR Congo, as mortar fire rained down nearby. It was midday on Oct 26 when the M23 rebels attacked the town, nestled in the hills in Rutshuru, North Kivu province. An AFP team documenting the lives of people living on the frontlines of the M23 conflict was caught in the attack, leaving the town at the same time as its inhabitants. Families broke into a run as rifle fire crackled overhead, jostling with crowds of people on the road out.

Panicked Congolese soldiers and policemen were pushing to get out ahead of the crush, fearful of falling into rebel hands. AFP witnessed a soldier threatening to shoot a civilian unless he handed over his bag and phone. "It's always like that with our soldiers, when we flee they steal our money and telephones," said the victim, a young man. After lying dormant for years, the M23 launched an offensive in late 2021 and conquered swathes of North Kivu, displacing over a million people. Rwanda backs the group, according to the United States and several Western countries, although Kigali denies the claim. United Nations drone footage from mid-October, viewed by AFP, showed columns of soldiers heading towards Bambo. UN sources, who requested anonymity, said they were Rwandan military reinforcements. In the crowd fleeing Bambo, a man shouted: "A boy has just died". People pushed harder to get as far from the gunfire as possible. The victim was a 23-year-old named Hakiza, according to his uncle, interviewed by AFP later north of the town.

### M23 rebels

A Tutsi-led group, the M23 traces its lineage to earlier rebel movements in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Militias have plagued the volatile region for decades, a legacy of regional wars that flared in the 1990s and 2000s. In the early 2000s, earlier iterations of the M23 — operating under a different name — flitted between rebellions and periods of absorption into the Congolese army, a policy designed to neuter the threat it posed. The M23 was defeated militarily in 2013 after

seizing the Congolese city of Goma, with many fighters taking refuge in neighboring Rwanda and Uganda.

But the fighters took up arms again in 2021 demanding that the DRC honor a previously signed agreement foreseeing their integration into the army, among other issues. The M23 has justified itself differently as the conflict has expanded. It now claims to defend the Tutsi minority in eastern DRC. According to the UN, hate speech and violence towards Congolese Tutsis has spiked alongside the M23 campaign.

### Ambush experts

In Bambo, residents recalled the M23's arrival in November 2022. The army was thrown into disarray as the rebels seized the town of Kishishe, a few miles away from Bambo, in a matter of hours. M23 fighters then massacred 171 people in Kishishe, according to the UN. The victims were mostly men and boys accused of belonging to militias. Holding the hilly terrain around Bambo and Kishishe is important to the M23. The area is a stronghold of the FDLR — a militia created by Rwandan Hutu leaders who carried out the 1994 Tutsi genocide in Rwanda. "They're good at ambushes, they kill a lot of M23s," explained a female Congolese soldier at a hotel in Bambo the day before the M23 attack.

The DRC denies cooperating with the FDLR. But in Bambo, AFP saw FLDR fighters alongside Congolese soldiers and other militias. The soldier, wearing a khaki T-shirt emblazoned with a patriotic slogan, said it was important to work together to stop the M23 rebellion from spreading. Congolese soldiers fight in dire conditions. "We don't have bullet-proof vests, no binoculars, and when we throw a bomb, they throw 50 at us," said the 30-year-old. "Sometimes, we go 24 hours without eating," the woman said, adding that militias allied to the army resort to pillaging to feed themselves.

### 'Left behind'

In April, for reasons that remain unclear, the M23 withdrew from Bambo and Kishishe. The front lines several dozen miles from Goma were calm. But clashes erupted again in October, pushing 200,000 people from their homes, according to the UN's humanitarian arm OCHA. The Congolese army, assisted by European military advisors, has deployed artillery and war planes. The day before the M23 attack on Bambo, one Congolese army captain was fed up. "We're left behind here," he said, from a straw shelter by a road near the town. "The government should tell us whether it's abandoned the east of the country, so that no more soldiers die for nothing". — AFP

## King Charles stops short of apologizing for colonial abuses

**NAIROBI:** King Charles III met Kenyan veterans of World War II on Wednesday, after acknowledging there was "no excuse" for colonial-era abuses during Britain's rule of the East African country. Charles said he wished to "deepen my own understanding of these wrongs" during his four-day state visit to Kenya with Queen Camilla, but also to bolster "a modern partnership of equals facing today's challenges".

There have been widespread calls for Charles to formally apologize to a country Britain violently ruled for decades before Kenya's hard-fought independence in 1963. On his first day in Nairobi on Tuesday, the 74-year-old British head of state said the "wrongdoings of the past are a cause of the greatest sorrow and the deepest regret," but stopped short of an apology.

"There were abhorrent and unjustifiable acts of violence committed against Kenyans as they waged ... a painful struggle for independence and sovereignty. And for that, there can be no excuse," he told a state banquet. "None of this can change the past but by addressing our history with honesty and openness, we can perhaps demonstrate the strength of our friendship today, and in so doing, we can I hope continue to build an ever-closer bond for the years ahead." Charles has previously made three official visits to Kenya, but this is his first tour of an African and Commonwealth nation since becoming king last year upon the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II.

### 'Feared retribution'

On Wednesday, Charles and Camilla visited a war cemetery in Nairobi to honor Africans who died for Britain in two world wars, laying a wreath in front of their graves before meeting Kenyan veterans, some in wheelchairs. "I hope we can do something special for you," Charles told one of the veterans as he handed out medals to the former soldiers, part of a British initiative to belatedly recognize the contribution of non-European forces to the war effort.

One veteran, Samweli Mburia, who said he was over 100 years old, told AFP he had originally received a medal during colonial rule but got rid of it because he "feared retribution" from independence fighters. "There were a lot of people who were not happy we ... fought in the war," said Mburia, who served in Egypt, Ethiopia and Myanmar. — AFP



NAIROBI: Kenyan World War 2 veterans wait to meet King Charles III during his visit to a cemetery on Nov 1, 2023. — AFP



# Business

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2023

## Zain and SACGC host session on innovation and entrepreneurship

Startup owners from local business community attend the session



Marco Bertini with Neda Al-Dehani, Haya Al-Mana and Omar Al-Hamad.



Entrepreneurs and business owners attend the session.

**KUWAIT:** Under their strategic partnership to empower innovation and support entrepreneurship, Zain and Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC) – a center of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) have jointly hosted an informative session on innovation and sustainable financial success. The session, titled “Capitalize on Your Entrepreneurial Skills,” was presented by Marco Bertini, Professor of Marketing at Esade Business School, Barcelona.

Present were SACGC General Manager Neda Al-Dehani, Zain Kuwait's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Expert Haya Al-Mana, and Decision Lab Founder Omar Al-Hamad. The session was attended by over 80 entrepreneurs and startup owners from the local business community.

This step came under the umbrella of Zain and SACGC's recently signed MoU, which focuses on a number of strategic pillars and sustainable goals like supporting innovation, empowering entrepreneurs and startups, encouraging creativity, investing in the digital skills of children and young people, and more. The session was presented by Marco Bertini, the influential author, researcher, and expert in business and marketing. He currently serves as Professor of Marketing and Director of Open Enrollment Programs at the renowned Esade Business School in Barcelona. Professor Bertini has a wealth of experience in marketing, entrepreneurship, and business, having previously served in many senior roles in academic institutions, business schools, and consultancy firms around the world.

During the session, Professor Bertini shared some insightful tips that were valuable to any entrepreneur and new startup owner. He explained that successful entrepreneurship requires early and comprehensive consideration of monetization strategies, eliminating misconceptions, and focusing on customer-centric approaches to ensure sustainable financial success.

This session came under 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.



Prof Marco Bertini during the session.

## Electric vehicles gain traction in Jordan as petrol prices rise

**AMMAN:** Electric vehicle sales are surging in Jordan, a trend drivers and showrooms attribute to high petrol prices more than any concerns about air pollution and climate change. Boosted by low import taxes, especially affordable Chinese-made models have become a common sight on the streets of Amman and the kingdom's desert highways.

Tesla owner Shadi Zatari, 43, says he no longer worries about pump prices since he plugs in his car overnight at home, allowing him to drive 400 kilometers (250 miles) on a single charge.

“The main goal of buying an electric car is definitely saving money,” said the Amman-based merchant and father of three. “I saved almost two thirds of what I used to spend on gasoline.”

With Octane 90 unleaded petrol selling at about \$1.40 per liter, Zatari said he used to spend about 120 dinars (\$170) on fuel per month. He has slashed this to 40 dinars—the average rise in his monthly electricity bill—and is able to drive longer distances at no additional cost. Zatari's car is one of 60,000 EVs now registered in Jordan—still just a fraction of the total 2.2 million registered vehicles, but the fastest-growing segment. The number of EVs on Jordan's roads rose 103 percent by the end of July from the same period last year.

The rise was 167 percent for all of 2022 -- a year that also saw imports of petrol and diesel powered cars drop 27 percent and hybrid vehicle imports fall almost 25 percent. EVs have become a common sight, especially China's Changan Eado EV and E-Star, and models sold by BYD, Dongfeng and MG. Also popular are the South Korean-made Hyundai Ioniq 5 and Kona and Kia's Niro, as well as Japan's Nissan Leaf and Sylphy, Germany's Volkswagen ID4 and Italy's Fiat 500.

“There is currently a great demand for electric cars,” said Hashim Al-Zayyat, director of Al-Zayyat Car Trading. “The main reason is the high price of gasoline in Jordan, it is a burden with the high cost of living.” Jordan is facing tough economic times, with an unemployment rate of 22.6 percent last year, according to the International Monetary Fund, and youth unemployment around 50 percent.

Public debt exceeded 100 percent of GDP in the small and resource-poor country, which was hit hard by the Covid pandemic and the costs of hosting a large number of Syrian refugees.



AMMAN: A salesman at a car dealership assists a customer inspecting an electric vehicle for sale at the premises in Amman. — AFP

The kingdom is now watching with high concern as the Zionist entity's war with Hamas militants flares in Gaza, the deadliest ever conflict in the Palestinian territory. Amid the ongoing crises, budget-conscious Jordanians are mainly “interested in having the car travel the greatest distance with one charge”, said Zayyat. Battery-powered cars have none of the toxic tailpipe emissions that pollute cities, and are considered clean overall if they are charged using solar or wind power. For most Jordanians, Zayyat said, “the issue is a matter of savings, not an environmental issue at all”. “The environment is the last thing one would think about,” he added.

Jordan's government has encouraged the trend by slashing import duties on EVs to 10-15 percent, far lower than for petrol cars, where duties can top 80 percent. It has also licensed dozens of charging points at petrol stations and private businesses, and the number of battery-powered cars in the government fleet increased by a fifth in 2022. Chinese-made EVs are especially popular in Jordan, said Haytham Abu Hasan, a sales consultant at the Changan Auto dealership in the capital.

“We used to sell 60 to 70 electric cars per month,” he said. “Now we sell more than 100.” Many motorists driving petrol or diesel cars spend 150 to 200 dinars (\$211-280) on fuel per month, Abu Hasan said, compared with the extra cost of 30 to 40 dinars for battery-powered cars.

Many motorists value the range, with the Changan E-Star able to go more than 300 kilometers on a single charge, the Eado EV achieving more than 400 kilometers and the SL03 more than 500 kilometers, he said. “The demand for electric cars far exceeds the demand for gasoline cars, and every year it's greater than the year before.” — AFP

## German finance minister casts doubt on 2030 coal exit

**BERLIN:** German Finance Minister Christian Lindner on Wednesday called into question the government's aim to end coal use in Europe's largest economy by 2030.

“Until it is clear that energy is available and affordable, we should end dreams of phasing out electricity from coal in 2030,” Lindner said in an interview with the German daily Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger.

“Now is not the time to shut down power plants,” he added. Germany ought to “enable the expansion of renewable energies more quickly” and expand domestic gas production, said Lindner, who also leads the pro-business FDP party. Lindner's comments threaten to deepen division within the ruling coalition between Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats, the Greens and the FDP, where ministers have clashed over how to respond to higher energy

prices while reducing fossil fuel usage.

The coal exit date is a plank in Germany's project to produce 80 percent of its electricity from renewables by 2030 and the coalition aims “ideally” to close all coal-fired plants within the same timeframe. The agreement brings forward the exit date agreed by the government of former Chancellor Angela Merkel's to quit coal by 2038.

Germany's plans to decarbonize energy production were thrown into disarray by Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent cut to sorely needed gas supplies from Russia. The turn of events, punctuated by the sabotage of a key pipeline, sent energy prices soaring and left Germany looking for new sources of energy. The government brought mothballed coal plants back online to take the pressure off of gas-based electricity production, with the re-activated fleet available through March 2024.

At the same time, Berlin has pledged to cut red tape for installing wind turbines to meet the ambitious target, but observers say the pace is still too slow. Germany also shut off its last remaining nuclear power plants in April this year, a long-planned step, which some critics said could make it harder to hit climate targets. — AFP

## US manufacturing shrinks more than expected in October

**WASHINGTON:** US manufacturing activity contracted in October by more than analysts had expected as new orders fell sharply, survey data showed Wednesday. The Institute for Supply Management's (ISM) manufacturing index came in worse than expected at 46.7 percent last month, down from 49.0 percent in September. This was well below the median expectation of economists surveyed by MarketWatch, and suggests that manufacturing activity remains firmly below the 50 percent threshold indicating growth in the sector.

It was the 12th straight month of contraction, and the lowest monthly figure since July of this year. “The US manufacturing sector continued to contract and at a faster rate in October,” ISM survey chief Timothy Fiore said in a statement. He added that companies were “still managing outputs appropriately as order softness continues,” adding that the new orders index was now contracting at a faster rate. Of the five sub indexes that directly factor into the manufacturing index, only the production index was expanding, Fiore said.

The more rapid contraction will factor into the Fed's decision-making process as it prepares to announce its latest interest-rate decision later Wednesday. Analysts and traders overwhelmingly expect the US central bank to hold rates steady and indicate it intends to keep them at a 22-year high for some time. Meanwhile, hiring in the US private sector rebounded in October, with education and health care creating the most jobs, payroll firm ADP said Wednesday.

“Policy makers have been eyeing the pace of job growth as they work to rein in inflation by lifting interest rates to cool demand. While the labor market has been resilient in the face of higher rates, economists expect officials to hold off a further hike at the end of a policy meeting Wednesday as they work to balance the inflation fight against tipping the economy into a downturn. In October, the US private sector added 113,000 jobs, above the 100,000 figure expected by analysts, according to the latest ADP report. This was also higher than the 89,000 figure in September.”

“No single industry dominated hiring this month, and big post-pandemic pay increases seem to be behind us,” said ADP chief economist Nela Richardson in a statement. She added that although the job market has slowed, it is still “enough to support strong consumer spending.” The service sector accounted for most job creation last month with education and health services adding 45,000 jobs, while trade, transport and utilities added 35,000. — AFP



## Business

# Bangladesh garment workers block roads in fair wage protest

## 'Monthly minimum wage of \$75 does not cover basic needs'

**DHAKA:** Thousands of Bangladeshi garment workers barricaded roads in Dhaka Wednesday demanding fair wages for clothing they make for major Western brands, with at least two killed during days of protests. Sabina Begum, a 22-year-old seamstress, said she joined the protests because she was "struggling to ensure bread and butter" for her family, saying the monthly minimum wage of 8,300 taka (\$75) did not cover basic needs.

"How can we spend a month with 8,300 taka when we need to spend 5,000-6,000 taka alone for the rent of a one-bedroom house?" Begum told AFP. The garment worker protests come as Bangladesh also reels from separate anti-government demonstrations, with opposition party supporters demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina step down ahead of elections due by the end of January.

Bangladesh's 3,500 garment factories account for some 85 percent of the South Asian country's \$55 billion exports, but conditions are dire for many of its four million apparel workers. Major Western companies including Adidas, Gap, H&M and Levi Strauss purchase goods from Bangladesh manufacturers. Bangladesh's powerful manufacturers' association has offered workers a 25 percent pay raise, ignoring demands for a nearly threefold increase to the basic salary.

Police said at least 5,000 garment workers, demanding a monthly minimum wage of 23,000 taka (\$208), set up roadblocks in the capital Dhaka. An AFP correspondent at the protests said the number of workers could be significantly higher.

Assistant Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Omar Faruq said no violence had been reported

on Wednesday in the city. However, a crowd of some 1,500 protesters hurled rocks at multiple factories in the industrial city of Gazipur, regional head of the industrial police unit Sarwar Alam told AFP. "We fired tear gas and sound grenades to disperse the protesters," he said.

Garment worker Nurul Islam, 25, accused supporters of the ruling party of attacking the protesters. "We want justice, we want a sufficient wage," Islam said. Police could not confirm any such attack but the Prothom Alo newspaper quoted witnesses reporting that a ruling party activist had fired a gun.

"The ruling party men attacked our people yesterday," Islam said. "The owners don't want to raise our wages. Should we die of hunger and injustice?" Protests began early last week but violence escalated on Monday when tens of thousands left their shifts and staged protests in Gazipur, where a six-storey factory was torched by workers, leading to the death of one laborer. Another worker was killed during clashes between police and protesters. On Sunday, police charged opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and more than 150 other top party members with the murder of a policeman during the anti-government demonstrations.

The violence has sparked international concern, with seven nations including the United States, Australia, Britain, Canada and Japan urging all sides to "exercise restraint, eschew violence and work together" for a free and fair vote. The country of nearly 170 million people has overtaken neighbouring India in per capita income, with the garment industry at the centre of its impressive growth over the past



**DHAKA:** Garment workers block roads as they take part in a protest in Dhaka on November 1, 2023. — AFP

two decades. Hasina's government set up a panel this year to set a new minimum wage.

Unions say that garment factory owners — who include ministers and influential lawmakers — have played a role in fixing the minimum wage during past

negotiations. Faruque Hassan, the president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said Tuesday they would raise minimum wages from next month but without specifying by how much. — AFP

## In Brazil town turning to desert, farmers fight to hang on

**GILBUÉS, Brazil:** Standing amid a terrain of rugged red craters that looks like something from Mars, Brazilian farmer Ubiratan Lemos Abade extends his arms, pointing to two possible futures for this land fast turning to desert.

Abade, a 65-year-old cattle rancher, lives in Brazil's worst desertification hotspot: Gilbués, in the northeastern state of Piauí, where a parched, canyon-pocked landscape is swallowing up farms and residences, claiming an area bigger than New York City. Experts say the phenomenon is caused by rampant erosion of the region's naturally fragile soil, exacerbated by deforestation, reckless development and probably climate change.

But several hundred determined farming families are hanging on in this desolate land, scraping by with hardscrabble ingenuity and sounding the alarm over the spreading problem. "Things have gone haywire. It's not raining the way it used to. So we use irrigation. Without that, we wouldn't get by," says Abade.

To his right, he points to a barren field of withered grass that died before his cattle could eat it. To his left, he points to an exuberant patch of tall bluestem grass watered with a makeshift irrigation system, which he is counting on to keep his 15 cows — and himself — alive.

He installed the system a year ago, digging a well and jerry-rigging a network of hoses. "Without irrigation, this whole place would look like that — dying of thirst," he says. "It takes technology to farm here. But when you're poor, technology is hard to come by."

### 'Fragile land'

Seen from the sky, the "Gilbués desert" looks like a giant sheet of crumpled, brick-red sandpaper.

Its erosion problem isn't new. The name "Gilbués" likely comes from an Indigenous word meaning "fragile land," says environmental historian Dalton Macambira, of the Federal University of Piauí.

But humans have made the problem worse by razing and burning vegetation whose roots helped secure the silty soil, and by over-taxing the environment as Gilbués has grown to a town of 11,000 people, he says.



**GILBUÉS, Brazil:** Aerial view shows a car riding along a dirt road in the Desert of Gilbués, in Gilbués, in the northeastern state of Piauí, Brazil, taken on September 30, 2023. — AFP

Gilbués was the scene of a diamond-mining rush in the mid-20th century, a sugarcane boom in the 1980s and is now one of the biggest soybean-producing counties in the state. "Where there are people, there's demand for natural resources," Macambira says. "That accelerates the problem, by demanding more of the environment than it can sustain."

Macambira published a study in January finding the area affected by desertification more than doubled from 387 square kilometers in 1976 to 805 (310 square miles) in 2019, hitting 15 counties and some 500 farming families. Climate scientists say further studies are needed to pinpoint whether global warming is accelerating the phenomenon.

Farmers say the dry season has gotten drier, punctuated by a shorter, more-intense rainy season — which exacerbates the problem, as heavy rains wash away more soil, deepening the gaping canyons known as "vocoocas." Macambira says a hotter planet can only make things worse. "Wherever you have environmental degradation, climate change tends to have a more perverse effect," he says.

### Turnaround

The United Nations calls desertification a "silent crisis" that affects 500 million people worldwide, fu-

eling poverty and conflicts. But there is opportunity in the problem, says Fabriciano Corado, president of conservation group SOS Gilbués.

The 58-year-old agricultural engineer says although Gilbués' soil erodes easily, it is also a farmer's dream: rich in phosphorous and clay, it needs no fertilizer or other treatments. Like Abade, he says farmers need technology to survive the encroaching desert — but nothing too high-tech.

Local producers are getting extremely positive results with things like protecting native vegetation, drip irrigation, fish farming and the ancient anti-erosion technique of terrace farming, he says. "We don't have to reinvent the wheel. The Aztecs, Incas and Mayas did it already," he says.

He condemns the closure six years ago of a government-run anti-desertification research center in Gilbués that helped local farmers implement just such techniques. The state plans to reopen it — but has not set a date.

The region meanwhile has huge potential as a solar energy producer, says Corado, citing the recent opening of a 2.2-million-panel solar park. Another is in the works. Get the right mix of conservation and technology, and "there's no stopping us," he says. — AFP

## Indonesia lays out roadmap for \$20bn energy transition pact

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia slashed carbon emissions targets for its power sector by 2030 and pledged to boost the share of renewable energy in a roadmap it released on Wednesday as it seeks to wean itself off coal.

Southeast Asia's largest economy is attempting to reach net-zero power sector emissions by 2050 in return for financing for the \$20 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) plan. Under the plan, Jakarta has pledged to slash its power sector carbon emissions to a peak of 250 million metric tons by 2030, down from a previous cap of 290 million.

It also plans to boost its renewable energy generation share to 44 percent by 2030, up from an initial target of 34 percent, the planning document released on Wednesday said. The billion-dollar public and private financing for the plan, released last year, follows a model first trialed in South Africa and then announced for Vietnam and Senegal, with rich countries pledging funds for the developing world's energy transition. Jakarta is reportedly unhappy about the JETP deal's proposed mix of financing, worried it will be offered mostly market-rate loans that saddle it with debt.

But it laid out more ambitious targets in the document, titled the Comprehensive Investment and Policy Plan (CIPP), noting that it was not binding. "The CIPP is a living document, which means that this... will be updated on an annual basis," Edo Mahendra, head of the JETP Indonesia secretariat, said in a statement. It was published for public consultation, with a final document to be sent out before the COP28 climate summit in the United Arab Emirates that begins later this month.

The United States, Japan, Canada and six European nations signed the deal with Indonesia — one of the world's top coal exporters and coal power generators — to shift it away from its coal reliance.

Jakarta's new figures in Wednesday's document fail to account for a number of new "captive" coal plants, which power factories rather than feeding into the grid. But the JETP secretariat said Indonesia and the signatory countries "share a strong commitment to identifying and implementing viable solutions going forward". — AFP

## India, Bangladesh launch coal-fired power plant

**NEW DELHI:** India and Bangladesh on Wednesday jointly opened a coal-fired power plant near one of the world's largest mangrove forests, despite environmental criticism in both nations saying it threatens millions of people's livelihoods.

The 1320-megawatt Maitree Super Thermal Power Project is set to burn 4.75 million tons of coal annually, and begins operations weeks ahead of the UN COP28 climate conference in Dubai.

The plant, built in Bangladesh, is close to the UNESCO world heritage site of Sundarbans, one of the world's largest mangrove forests. Environmentalists say the power plant threatens the livelihoods for about two million people in the Sundarbans and could violate the UN's Ramsar Convention to protect wetlands. The first half of the \$2 billion power plant — financed with a \$1.6 billion loan from India — went online last year.

The two leaders also inaugurated cross-border railway and port links between their countries. "These projects are a shining example of win-win cooperation between our countries," Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday, in a virtual ceremony with India's Narendra Modi.

Dhaka buys at least a million tons of Indian coal annually, but the dirty fuel for the new plant will



**NEW DELHI:** India and Bangladesh on Wednesday jointly opened a coal-fired power plant near one of the world's largest mangrove forests, despite environmental criticism in both nations saying it threatens millions of people's livelihoods.

be sourced from Bangladesh. The power plant will "enhance energy security in Bangladesh", India's foreign ministry said in a statement. Global leaders failed to agree to a phase-out of fossil fuels at September's G20 summit in New Delhi, but they backed a target of tripling global renewable energy capacity, and acknowledged that limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius will require slashing greenhouse gases 43 percent by 2030 from 2019 levels.

COP28 will draw up the first official assessment of humanity's efforts to respect the 2015 agreement and its ambition to limit global warming "if possible to 1.5 degrees C" since the pre-industrial era. — AFP

## China's electric bus revolution glides on

**SHENZHEN, China:** On a rainy afternoon in Shenzhen, damp passengers jostle their way onto the megacity's buses, the quiet foot soldiers of an electric revolution for coal-guzzling China's public transport network.

Shenzhen ditched diesel buses and went fully electric in 2017 — a world first — with its taxi fleet not far behind. Other Chinese cities have since followed suit, with many aiming to fully switch their systems before 2025.

"Electrification is one of the most important strategies" for reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA), with bus decarbonization representing around five percent of cumulative emissions reductions in transport. But so far China is an outlier, accounting for over 90 percent of the world's electric buses and trucks in 2021, according to the International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT).

"It didn't happen in a night," EV specialist Elliot Richards told AFP. "It was many years of planning and huge amounts of infrastructure work. But it's made such a huge difference in terms of global awareness." Wrangling over the path to a net-zero future will be at the heart of the United Nations' upcoming COP28 climate summit in oil-producer



**SHENZHEN, China:** In this picture taken on October 18, 2023, a worker disconnects a charging cable next to electric buses at Antuoshan charging station in Shenzhen, China's southern Guangdong province. — AFP

Dubai, which begins in late November. So far though, budget and planning constraints, a lack of knowledge and the difficulty of rejigging infrastructure in older cities have prevented others from replicating China's experience, Richards said.

At a Shenzhen bus depot, driver Ou Zhenjian told AFP he had been ferrying passengers around the city for 18 years and saw a "big difference" with the shift to electric. "It is really comfortable to drive... easy to operate, and environmentally friendly. It's soundless too — it's great to drive like this." "At the beginning of the service, we had to step-by-step solve problems," Ethan Ma, deputy general manager of the Shenzhen Bus Group (SZBG), told AFP. — AFP



## Business

# Europe's economic powerhouse tests a shorter working week

## Firms look to balance between worker shortages, need to stay competitive

**BERLIN:** Maximilian Hermann's weekend starts on Friday morning, when he puts his motorcycle helmet on and takes his bike out for a ride to the southern German Alps. Like all his colleagues, the 29-year-old project manager shifted to a four-day week at the beginning of the year and is making the most of it.

His new, shorter working hours are part of a trend that is gaining traction in Germany, where companies are looking to balance between worker shortages and the need to stay competitive. Among the pioneers of the four-day week is Hermann's employer KlimaShop, a purveyor of heat pumps and air-conditioning systems based near Augsburg in southern Germany.

Instead of working 40 hours a week across five days, Hermann now spends a total of 38 hours at work over four working days. Otherwise put, each of KlimaShop's 30 employees works an hour-and-a-half more for each day they are in the office, while having an extra day to themselves each week.

Hermann's colleague Michael Pankoke sees the shift switch as "big progress". "You work much more intensely, everything you do is more precise," the 58-year-old customer advisor told AFP. Management consultancy Intrapreneur is leading the first large-scale experiment with the shorter schedule in Germany together with the organization 4 Day Week Global, which has already run similar trials in other countries, such as the United Kingdom. Starting in 2024, up to 50 companies of varying size are set to test the new hours, with the aim of avoiding a drop-off in productivity.

Intrapreneur, which already "abolished Friday"

for its workers in 2016, said it has 33 interested candidates for the trial. But an increasing number of businesses in Europe's largest economy have already taken the leap.

Wolfgang Schmidt, the founder of a manufacturing business near Hamburg, in the north, said he flipped his staff onto a four-day week at the end of 2022 to save his employees, some of whom commute long distances, "fuel and money".

In nearby Wedel, the town administration has introduced a four-day week to attract more "competent and motivated" workers. During the annual round of wage negotiations in the steel industry, starting in November, Germany's biggest union IG Metall will call for the introduction of a four-day week with hours reduced from 35 to 32, for the same pay. Beyond a better work-life balance and increased productivity, the move would reduce "one of the highest rates of part-time employees of Europe", said Sophie Jaenicke, working time lead at IG Metall. According to a study by the Hans-Boeckler foundation, fully 81 percent of Germans would support a shift to a four-day week.

Since Belgium workers have had the right to ask for a four-day week with the same number of hours since the end of 2022, in Germany, workers and employers agree their own work times up to a maximum 48 hours a week. Enthusiasm for the idea of a shorter week is lukewarm among many managers and economists, however. A 20 percent reduction in working hours would have "a disastrous economic impact", according to economist Holger Schaefer. While "limiting unproductive activities and condensing work" is still feasible in the office, all the



In Germany, companies are looking to balance between worker shortages and the need to stay competitive.

options for increasing productivity in industry have already been exhausted, said Schaefer from the IW economic institute in Cologne.

With the labor supply already stretched by the exit of the baby-boomer generation from the work force, cutting hours would lead "inevitably to a re-

duction in the amount of goods and services produced", he warned. A shorter week was, in short, an "unrealistic dream", said Michael Huether, also of the IW economic institute in Cologne. Instead of the solution to labor shortages would be longer, not shorter hours, he said. — AFP

## NBK mobile banking app, now with new innovative features

**KUWAIT:** National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) remains dedicated to enhancing the digital services offered to customers through NBK Mobile Banking App. This commitment involves the incorporation of new features and enhancements to the App, all meticulously crafted to align with customers' needs and aspirations. As part of this initiative, NBK has introduced a comprehensive set of new services that empower customers to seamlessly and securely manage their accounts, enabling a wider range of transactions to be conducted conveniently at any time and from anywhere.

Customers can access the newly introduced services by updating and submitting the request via NBK Mobile Banking App, offering them the convenience of doing so anytime and anywhere. These services are accessible 24/7, providing an effortless and secure experience.

### FlexiPay

Customers holding eligible NBK credit cards are provided with the flexibility to make payments for their in-store or online purchases, whether conducted locally or internationally. This option allows them to cover transactions up to KD 150 using the Flexi-Pay service, with the added convenience of splitting the payment into manageable 12-month installments that carry no interest. This advantageous service is accessible to eligible NBK credit card holders at a wide range of points of sale, notably including participating outlets like "Gate," Jarir Bookstore, Fantasy World, Unitech Medical Devices Company, and Samsung Al-Babtain.

### Temporarily block/unblock credit cards

Users have the capability to easily block or unblock their credit cards using the NBK Mobile Banking App with just a few simple steps. The service is instant, safe, and available around the clock.

### Report lost/stolen cards

Users can report/lost stolen cards with a click of a button via NBK Mobile Banking APP. Once the card has been reported, a replacement card will be issued automatically.

## Russian aviation sector faces strong headwinds

**MOSCOW:** Russia's aviation industry is facing heavy turbulence, as concerns for passenger safety mount in the face of poor maintenance, a lack of spare parts and regular breakdowns. The sector, heavily reliant on international suppliers, has been among the hardest hit by Western sanctions over Moscow's assault on Ukraine.

Cut off from Europe's Airbus and US-based Boeing, Russian airlines are facing particular trouble securing and maintaining both physical parts and advanced software needed to keep planes in the air, experts say. "The conditions in which Russian airlines operate have certainly become much more difficult and the risks for the industry have obviously increased," Oleg Panteleyev, director of AviaPort.ru, an agency specializing in the Russian aviation industry told AFP.

Several recent incidents have highlighted the concerns. In August, passengers on a Red Wings flight were stuck in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg for 24 hours due to simultaneous "tech-

nical malfunctions" on the only two available aircraft.

The company pointed to "external sanctions" and "restrictions on the supply of spare parts, which complicates aircraft maintenance" in a press release. The same month a Russian Pegas Fly plane was delayed in Thailand due to faults with its weather monitoring system. At the start of October, flagcarrier Aeroflot suffered three technical failures to its planes in a single day.

The Kremlin has acknowledged that all is not well in Russia's aviation industry. "We are facing new challenges, and we are looking for new ways to resolve them," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, when asked about the headwinds buffeting Russia's aviation sector.

Several Russian airlines and the federal aviation agency did not respond to AFP requests for comment. The majority of planes operated by Russian airlines are made by either Airbus or Boeing, Western companies that have stopped doing business with Russia. The main

### Transfer receipt

Users will get a transfer receipt after making transfers: between own accounts, local, and international transfers. They can also refer to the account statement, go to the transfer transaction, and get the transfer receipt.

Open and manage NBK investment funds

Private Banking users can open and manage NBK Investment Funds through NBK Mobile Banking App. This process is safe, secured, and accessible anytime anywhere.

### Login with another user

Users now have the ability to log into NBK Mobile Banking App using a different username on the same registered device. A new button, "Login with Another User," has been introduced to facilitate this process.

### Manage the registered devices

Users can now manage their registered devices on NBK Mobile Banking through the application itself. They can add a device or delete it. For the safety and security of the customer, NBK is keen to limit the number of devices allowed to register for the service.

In response to the introduction of these new features, Mohammed Al-Dakheel, Head of Mobile Banking, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said, "Our commitment lies in ensuring that our digital innovation translates into the delivery of advanced digital services and products to our valued customers. To attain this goal, our utmost priority remains the constant enhancement of the NBK Mobile Banking App—an essential platform on which our customers place their trust to seamlessly conduct their transactions".

"All newly introduced features and services are meticulously designed to cater to our customers' needs. We attain a deep understanding of these needs through continuous and attentive communication, ensuring that every detail is taken into consideration. Addressing these requirements as our goals, we recognize their significance in delivering an exceptional banking experience to our customers." Moreover, Al-Dakheel highlighted the impor-



Mohammed Al-Dakheel

## Enjoy the New Services on NBK Mobile Banking



ance of the newly incorporated services within the NBK Mobile Banking App, underscoring their effectiveness in meeting the ongoing needs of a multitude of customers in their daily routines. He also underscored NBK's objective of encouraging customers to engage in their transactions using the diverse range of NBK digital channels.

Through NBK Mobile Banking APP, NBK aims to offer customers a secure platform to conveniently manage their finances at any given moment. This service facilitates a wide range of banking activities, including opening new accounts, monitoring transactions on accounts and credit cards, accessing accumulated NBK Miles and NBK Rewards Program points, settling credit card balances, making payments for electronic bills, locating the nearest NBK branches, ATMs, and CDMs across Kuwait, submitting requests for account statements and cheque-books, updating personal information, and handling other related tasks. Customers can easily download NBK Mobile Banking App, which is currently accessible on various platforms including the Apple Store, Google Play Store, and the Huawei App Gallery.



## China lithium boom harming Tibetan plateau: Report

**BEIJING:** China's booming electric vehicle industry is fuelling a lithium rush in the Tibetan plateau that risks damaging the troubled region's fragile ecology and deepening rights violations, research published Wednesday said.

China is the world's biggest EV market but largely relies on other countries to supply the lithium used in the batteries that power low-carbon vehicles. That is set to change as Beijing begins to exploit vast deposits on the Tibetan plateau—around 85 percent of the country's total lithium reserves.

But this "white gold rush" has led to Chinese miners polluting the local environment with "quick, cheap and dirty" extraction and processing techniques, according to the report by Turquoise Roof, a network of Tibetan researchers. The group used satellite data and public resources to chart the impact of lithium mining in culturally Tibetan areas and its links to carmakers, including Elon Musk's Tesla and its Chinese competitor BYD.

Those firms, it said, are "increasingly reliant on Tibet's lithium exploitation". "Bigger, faster electric cars require larger capacity lithium batteries—which cannot be done without a hidden footprint in Tibet," it said. Citing Chinese geological research, Turquoise Roof said about 3.6 million tons of China's lithium lies in hard rock deposits in Tibet and the adjacent provinces of Sichuan and Qinghai.

Miners exploiting those resources risk creating "devastating" pollution in biodiverse regions particularly vulnerable to climate change, the report says. It pointed to a mine in Sichuan whose activities reportedly killed thousands of fish in a local river and harmed grasslands home to Tibetan herders. "Tibetans have no voice in this latest rush to riches... there can be no informed local consideration of whether there should be extraction," it says.

In one example, the report cites a patch of land in a Tibetan autonomous county in Sichuan province found to have rich lithium deposits that sparked a bidding war between firms, eventually won by Chinese battery giant CATL.

But local Tibetans, it said, "were not informed that their hill pastures were being sold, let alone consulted in any way about the land being drilled beneath their feet."

Tibet has alternated over the centuries between independence and control by China, which says it has brought infrastructure and education since taking over the region in 1951. But many exiled Tibetans accuse China's ruling Communist Party of repression, torture and eroding their culture, with rights groups and some Western governments backing their claims. About a million Tibetan children have been separated from their families and put through "forced assimilation" at Chinese residential schools, UN experts have said. Wednesday's report comes as China seeks to shore up domestic supplies of critical minerals in the face of fraying ties with Western exporters.

Beijing imposed curbs on the graphite used to make EV batteries after the United States restricted outflows of high-tech microchips to China. The European Union has also angered China by launching a probe into Beijing's subsidies for its homegrown EVs. — AFP



MOSCOW: A view taken on September 7, 2023 shows the newly opened Vnukovo Airport station on the Solntsevskaya Line of the Moscow Metro. — AFP

problems for Russian airlines centre around engine maintenance and computer systems. S7, Russia's largest private airline, will reduce the number of flights by 10-15 percent over the 2023-2024 autumn/winter period due to maintenance problems concerning the US-made engines for its Airbus planes, Russian media reported.

Unable to secure original parts for their Western-made jets, Russian com-

panies have resorted to cannibalizing their existing fleet—grounding entire planes to strip them for parts.

Such a solution is seen as a short-term fix. Russia is no stranger to air disasters as a result of pressure on the industry. The country saw a string of crashes that killed hundreds in the 1990s and early 2000s, due to an ageing Soviet fleet and poorly maintained aircrafts. — AFP





A woman peruses items for sale in the gift shop of Salts Mill, a former textile mill, now an art gallery, shopping centre, restaurant and commercial space in Saltaire, near Bradford.--AFP photos



New Mills, a derelict former textile mill in the centre of the village of Marsden, near Huddersfield.

Once the epicentre of global trade, the awe-inspiring buildings of northern England's industrial age have reinvented themselves as cultural and economic hubs feted by artists from David Hockney to Noel Gallagher and Sting. Inspired by Renaissance figures such as the Medici family, the textile titans of 18th and 19th century Britain built monumental structures designed to stand "forever" as a testament to their power and tastes. These industrialists combined Italian architectural flair with the natural gift of the local golden "Yorkstone" to transform the hills of West Yorkshire in particular. But as the country's textile sector went into decline after World War II, many of these icons of Britain's heritage fell into disrepair and were demolished.



## Icons of UK's industrial age enjoy cultural and economic revival



A portrait of Sir Titus Salt in Salts Mill, a former textile mill.

However thanks to the ambitious visions of recent custodians, others have been saved and become cultural hubs, showcasing world-class talent. Two of the best examples are Salts Mill near Bradford—the largest factory in Europe when it opened in 1853 -- and the Piece Hall in nearby Halifax. In its pomp, some 5,000 workers produced miles of cloth each day at Salts Mill, but there was little interest when it went on sale in the 1980s. Inspired by childhood memories of the mill, its grand beauty and his long-time friendship with local artist turned global star Hockney, entrepreneur Jonathan Silver hit on the unique idea to turn it into a gallery in 1987.

### 'Unheard of'

"What he saw here was a very well looked after building... and that it was in Bradford—it would be a perfect place to put a Hockney gallery," Silver's brother Robin, a recently retired director of the site, told AFP. Silver, who died in 1997,

had previously floated the idea with Hockney when he stayed at the artist's home in the United States. Hockney was happy to lend paintings but thought the idea was "very odd", while members of Silver's family though he was "bonkers", recalled his brother. "It opened up in the November, and if you think of November in a dark satanic mill, in pouring rain and fog and cold winds blowing—nobody came in at all," he recalled. But Silver's decision to promote the mill as a "cultural, art-based enterprise, which was unheard of in the north of England then," paid off. Along came the culture vultures, who in turn made businesses realize the area's potential. IT firm Pace Micro Technology moved into the mill and it now has a high-tech industry base, complemented by art exhibitions, a

bookshop and diners, spurring wider local regeneration.

The mill's creator, Titus Salt, sent architects to Venice for inspiration. Robin Silver believes the structure is fundamental to its current success. "The Victorian industrialists... actually saw it (as) 'this is a mill that's going to be here forever, so we might as well make sure that it's fit for purpose to last forever'. The focus on enduringly attractive architecture also helped turn Halifax's Piece Hall, around eight miles (13 kilometers) to the south, into a gig venue loved by artists including Gallagher, Sting, New Order and Nile Rodgers.

### 'Magical'

Its multi-storied arched portals resemble those in St Mark's Square, Venice, but Piece Hall was actually built in 1779 as a marketplace for local cloth-makers. As the textile industry evolved, it became a general marketplace and event space but was rescued from demolition in the 1960s and again in the 1980s. It wasn't until a £19 million (\$23 million) facelift and the idea of its CEO Nicky Chance-Thompson to host gigs that the building recaptured its former glory. After hosting

"spectacles", US folk rocker Father John Misty became the first musician to play the venue's grand yet intimate courtyard, in 2018.

Since then, bands including Duran Duran, Boygenius and The War on Drugs have performed. Johnny Marr, former guitarist with the Smiths, played and called it "the talk of the town", said Chance-Thompson. "Noel Gallagher said it was his favorite gig of the summer and Nile Rodgers said 'there's something about this place that is magical,'" she added.

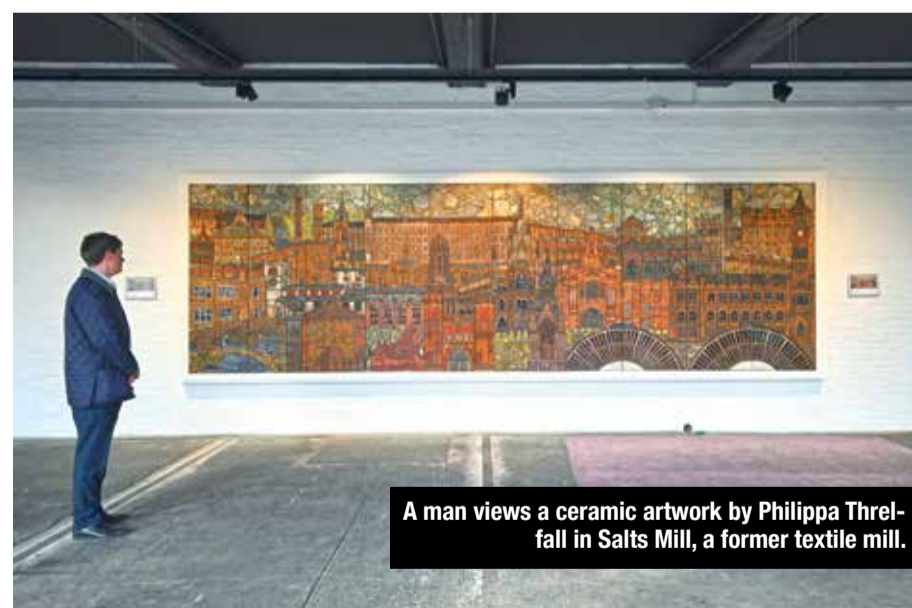
As with Salts Mill, its emergence as a cultural centre soon attracted re-

tail outlets and each pound invested has generated £6 in return, according to independent assessors, providing a much-needed shot in the arm for the town. It also convinced key anchor stores such as Marks and Spencer to remain in Halifax, said Chance-Thompson. Rock concerts may be a far cry from the creators' original vision, but Chance-Thompson "hopes they'll be pleased" as "it means that we get to preserve this wonderful building."—AFP



New Mills, a derelict former textile mill in the centre of the village of Marsden.

Members of the public admire artworks created by students at Bradford Grammar School, on display in Salts Mill.



A man views a ceramic artwork by Philippa Threlfall in Salts Mill, a former textile mill.



Members of the public view an artwork by David Hockney in Salts Mill.



A man sits next to artworks by David Hockney in Salts Mill.

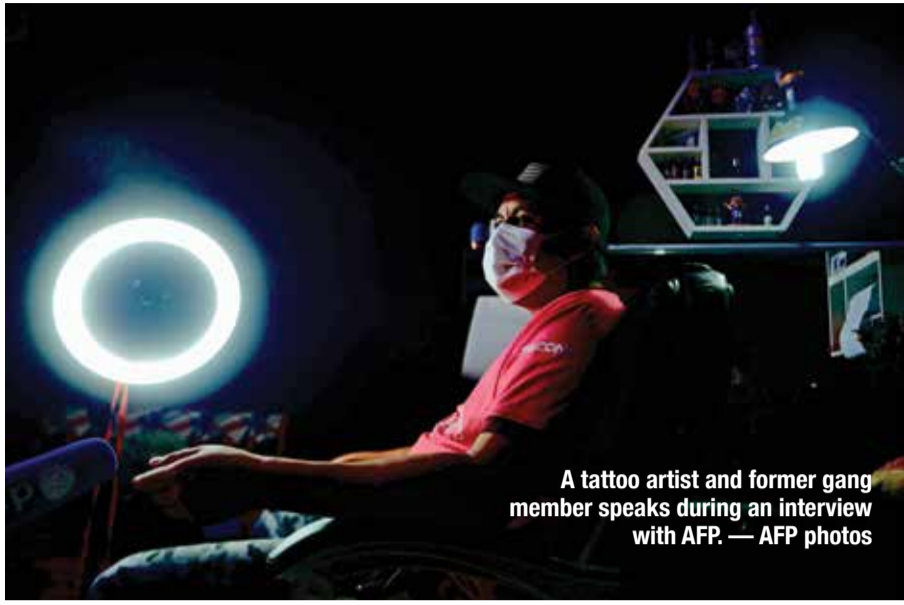


An entrance sign is pictured for the Piece Hall in Halifax, northern England.



A man walks in an unrefurbished space in Salts Mill.





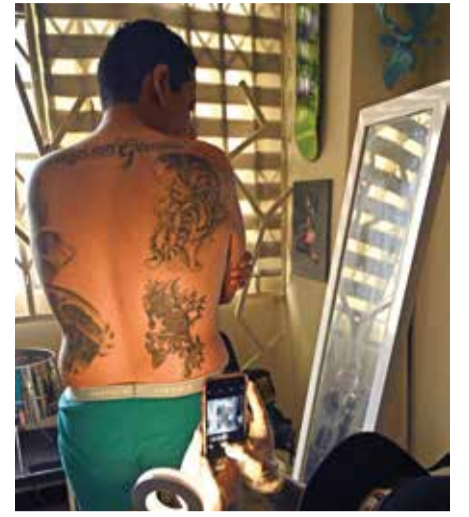
A tattoo artist and former gang member speaks during an interview with AFP. — AFP photos



A tattoo artist performs a tattoo at his studio in Guayaquil, Guayas Province, Ecuador.



A tattoo artist takes pictures of the tattoos he has created on a client's body in Guayaquil, Guayas Province, Ecuador.



# IN ECUADOR, ANIMAL TATTOOS TAKE ON DANGEROUS GANG STIGMA

In gang-ridden Ecuador, people who sport popular animal tattoos such as tigers or eagles are increasingly forced to hide their ink as such symbols have become usurped by criminal groups. The small country's descent into deadly drug violence has come at the hands of groups such as Los Lobos (The Wolves), Las Aguilas (The Eagles), Los Tiguerones, whose brand is the tiger, and the powerful Los Choneros, who identify with the lion. Images of these animals are graffitied on prisons and neighborhoods where the gangs dominate, and inked onto the bodies of their members. In the port of Guayaquil, which has borne the brunt of the drug violence and gang conflict in Ecuador, both criminals and police keep a sharp eye out for the markings.

"I prefer to always keep my tattoo under my clothes because of all the current problems in the country," a young man told AFP on condition of anonymity. He had a large tiger tattooed on his back, just because he liked it, never imagining it would turn into a dangerous symbol. "It seems absurd to me because they pigeonhole you, they stigmatize you" as being in a gang, he added.

### 'Certain death'

The phenomenon has also set tattoo artists on edge who fear getting caught



Aerial picture shows a mural painted on a wall at the Guayas 1 prison in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

up in gang rivalries. "What I do is, I comb through the social media of the person writing to me" asking for a tattoo, said Jean Paolo, an artist using only his first name. "With so much danger... I literally need to be like the FBI," he added. He said that in some contexts, a mark associated with one of the gangs meant "certain death" for the wearer.

During police raids, officers and soldiers search under the clothing of suspects for tattoos linking them to gangs. They also look for such marks on people joining the security forces, to avoid infiltration by gangs. Colonel Roberto Santamaria, the police chief in Nueva Proserpina, the most violent area in Guayaquil, said the tattoos were a mat-

ter of gang identity and loyalty.

"Drug culture leads to the creation of doctrines and stories, and this is a way of recruiting minors by getting it into their heads that they are part of a structure," he told AFP. On his cellphone, Santamaria keeps images of gang members and their tattoos, from AK47 machine guns to black-ink tears and animal tattoos. "Each of these organizations has a special tattoo, for example, Los Tiguerones ink a tiger with a beret and stars that represent the hierarchy" in the gang, he said.

### 'Tainting the art'

A tattoo can mean life or death in the country's violent prison system, where battles between rival gangs have left some 460 dead since 2021, their bodies often found dismembered, decapitated, or incinerated. Before entering prison, convicts "identify themselves by the tattooed symbols so that they are not placed in a wing run by another gang, because they know that the moment they enter that wing they are going to die," said Santamaria.

Some tattoo artists report being asked to cover up animal images with new ink. Clients who can afford it go to clinics to have their body art removed with laser. "Tattoo artists have been



Colonel Roberto Santamaria, head of the Nueva Proserpina police unit in Guayaquil, shows images of tattoos found on mobile phones seized in police operations during an interview with AFP.

killed. Not for links to gangs, but because someone found out they covered up a tattoo" or worked on a rival, one artist who formerly belonged to a gang, said on condition of anonymity. "They are tainting the art." — AFP



A man wearing a mask and flashing \$100 bills says he is dressed as a CEO as SAG-AFTRA members walk the picket line outside Netflix Studios.



SAG-AFTRA members dress in costume for Halloween.



SAG-AFTRA members dress in costume for Halloween as they walk the picket line outside Paramount Studios in Los Angeles. — AFP photos



SAG-AFTRA members dress in costume for Halloween.

# Halloween hits Hollywood strike as actors boycott Barbie costumes



Costumed strikers walk with SAG-AFTRA members as they picket outside Amazon Studios.



SAG-AFTRA members dress in costume for Halloween.

Generic ghosts and vague vampires haunted the Hollywood picket lines this Halloween, as striking actors tried to scare studio bosses by refusing to dress up as any of their famous characters. With talks still ongoing between the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) and the likes of Netflix and Disney, costumes that could be seen to promote lucrative film figures like Barbie — or even Oppenheimer — have been declared off-limits this spooky season. "Let's use our collective power to send a loud and clear message to our struck employers that we will not promote their content without a fair contract!" said a recent SAG-AFTRA online post.

On Tuesday, actors marching outside Netflix, Sony, Amazon and Paramount's Los Angeles offices had taken that advice to heart, with cats, bats and a dancing frog replacing the usual cast of superhero and sexy villain costumes beloved in the US entertainment capital. "It would be a little strange when you're protesting these companies but also supporting them," explained actress Sonia Grace, dressed as a schoolgirl. "Boo, boo to the AMPPT," added Christian Copeland, in a cat costume, referring to the studios' Alliance of Motion Picture and Televi-



SAG-AFTRA members dress in costume for Halloween.



SAG-AFTRA members dress in costume for Halloween as they walk the picket line outside Netflix Studios.

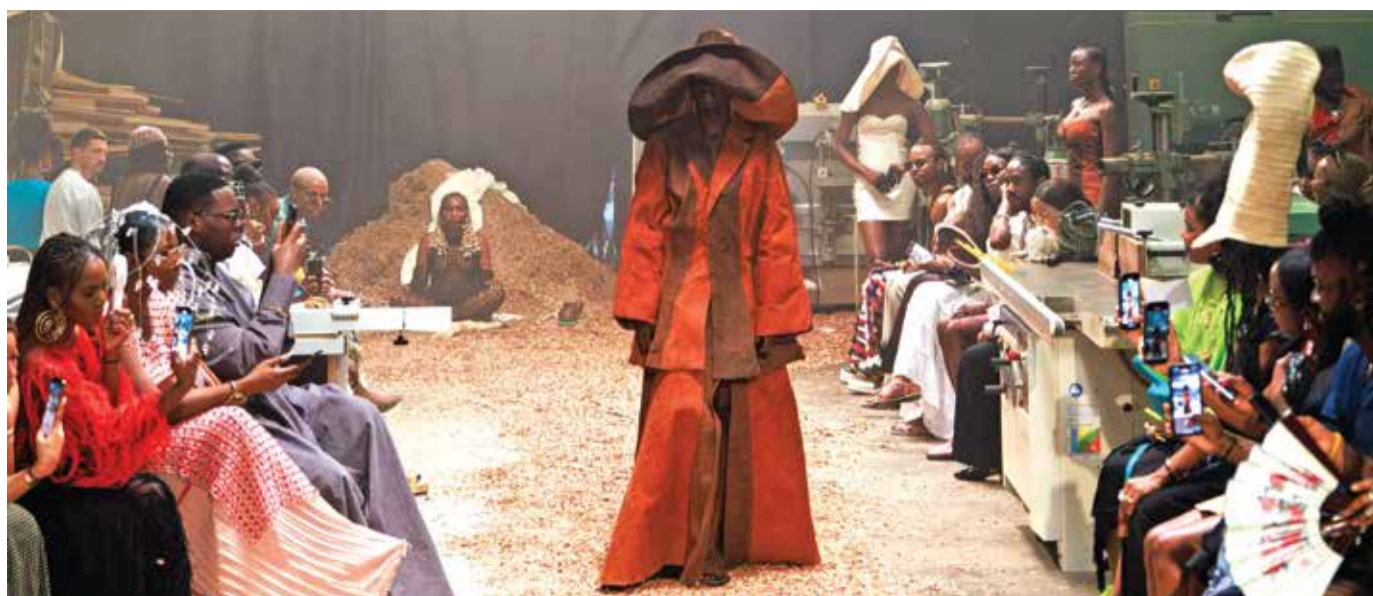
sion Producers. SAG-AFTRA members walked off film and TV sets in July, over terms including pay and the use of artificial intelligence. Talks have intensified in recent weeks, with the two sides meeting most days and expressing cautious optimism—while also warning that they remain far apart on several key issues. If the strike is not resolved in the next few days, film and television production is un-

likely to be able to restart at all this calendar year, as Hollywood annually shuts down over the holiday period.

"I think all of us being here, we've been scaring the studios for the past 110 days," said actress and SAG-AFTRA organizer Mykale McCoslin. "It's time for them to just negotiate, and give us what we need. Time's up!" But despite the dire situation, Grace insisted

that the strike should not totally prevent actors from dressing up and having some fun this Halloween. "There's a lot of people that are non-actors that are supporting us, so of course we want to celebrate Halloween with them," she said. "But we also want to stay strong and hold out for what we feel is a more than fair deal for us." — AFP





A model wearing clothes by Nigerian fashion designer Bubû Ogişi walks down the runway at her fashion show, Shadows, in Lagos.--AFP photos



A model wearing Nigerian fashion designer Bubû Ogişi's design, walks down the runway.



Models wearing clothes designed by Nigerian fashion designer, Bubû Ogişi, are seen backstage during her fashion show.



Nigerian fashion designer Bubû Ogişi (right) talks with models backstage at her fashion show, Shadows, in Lagos.



## NIGERIA'S BUBU OGISI, FASHION 'HARBINGER' WITH AFRICAN TALES

Wearing one of her trademark large hats and dark glasses, Nigerian designer Bubû Ogişi puts a group of models through final fittings in preparation days for Lagos Fashion Week—one of the cultural highlights in Nigeria's economic capital. Dressed in black, white and tan creations with hand-crafted bracelets and collars, models walk by as Ogişi checks out parts of her Spring/Summer 2024 collection entitled "Shadows", with the concept of exploring protective materials and fibers.

One of Nigeria's foremost designers, Ogişi may have featured in Vogue and partnered with Victoria's Secret, but she remains resolutely driven by her exploration of African stories and

traditional materials. Describing herself more as a researcher than designer, Ogişi travels Africa looking for inspiration to incorporate traditional materials and techniques into her designs for her IAMISIGO brand. "I think I'm still just continuing my process and expanding actually the materials that I'm researching," Ogişi told AFP at the fitting in the 16/16 boutique hotel in Lagos. "It's what I love engaging in every day."

Kenya, Ghana, Ivory Coast and her native Nigeria are among the African countries that have inspired Ogişi—who worked in the oil and gas industry before studying fashion in Paris, finding her creative voice and eventually forming IAMISIGO. "Everything I create is always either assembled there

or I bring all the magical elements or ingredients for the soup that I created between Nigeria and Kenya," she said. "But I love sourcing for everything I find within these different places."

### 'Out of her comfort zone'

IAMISIGO art director Roxane Mbanga said Ogişi's work sought to bring back stories from the past "that were erased by colonization". Later at the Lagos Fashion Week, Ogişi's models, with hands and faces marked by henna, walked slowly over sawdust covered floor past the seated audience. In a logistical problem faced by many businesses in Lagos, where the power grid is unreliable, the show went without air conditioning until late

because there was not enough fuel for the generator.

But the show went on despite the heat, accompanied by artist Sheila who performed a ritual with chants paying respects to the shadows and spirits. "For me, what Bubû represents in a global, not just an African perspective, is the need for us to understand that craftsmanship is at the very heart of fashion," Omoyemi Akerele, Lagos Fashion Week founder, told AFP. "I see Bubû as an artist and I see her as, sort of like a harbinger, so to speak, of craftsmanship, you know, she goes out of her comfort zone to travel into communities."

Increasingly, Nigeria's creative industries have been making their mark

around the world, with Afrobeats music stars Burna Boy and Sake filling stadiums and winning awards, while Nollywood movies are becoming hits on streaming platforms Netflix and Amazon Prime.

For Ogişi, who has worked with musicians and other artists, Nigeria's fashion fuses naturally with the other worlds of entertainment. "You can't, you can never, ever, remove costume from any of these musicians," she said. "Directors need their films to be as amazing visually for the audience, and you can't have that without an amazing set of pieces for the body."—AFP



### 'AI' named Collins Word of the Year

The abbreviation of artificial intelligence (AI) has been named the Collins Word of the Year for 2023, the dictionary publisher said on Tuesday. Lexicographers at Collins Dictionary said use of the term had "accelerated" and that it had become the dominant conversation of 2023. "We know that AI has been a big focus this year in the way that it has developed and has quickly become as ubiquitous and embedded in our lives as email, streaming or any other once futuristic, now everyday technology," Collins managing director Alex Beecroft said.

Collins said its wordsmiths analyzed the Collins Corpus, a database that contains more than 20 billion words with written material from websites, newspapers, magazines and books published around the world. It also draws on spoken material from radio, TV and everyday conversations, while new data is fed into the Corpus every month, to help the Collins dictionary editors identify new words and meanings from the moment they are first used. "Use of the word as monitored through our Collins Corpus is always interesting and there was no question that this has also been the talking point of 2023," Beecroft said.

Other words on Collins list include "nepo baby", which has become a popular phrase to describe the children of celebrities who have succeeded in industries similar to those of their parents. "Greedflation", meaning companies making profits during the cost of living crisis, and "Ulez", the ultra-low emission zone that penalizes drivers of the most-polluting cars in London, were also mentioned.—AFP

The vast waste and pollution caused by the fashion industry has made recycling clothes a top priority, but only now are simple tasks like pulling the sole off a shoe being done by machines. CETIA, a company in the southwest of France is finally offering some mechanical solutions to the challenges of recycling clothes. Its research team has invented a machine that uses artificial intelligence to scan garments, identify hard elements like zippers and buttons, and use a laser to cut them out.

It has also built a machine that grabs shoes in a large mechanical arm and yanks off the soles. In a world of space travel and vaccines, that may seem a relatively rudimentary piece of technology, but it had simply never been done before. "It was a chicken and egg question. No one was recycling soles because we couldn't separate them from the shoe, and no one was separating them because there was no recycling," said Chloe Salmon Legagneur, director of CETIA. Previously, recyclers had to bake the shoes for many hours to melt the glue and then pull the sole off by hand.

"There's nothing spectacular in



what we've done," Legagneur said. "But we've done it." For now, barely one percent of textiles in Europe are turned back into new clothes. Most end up as housing insulation, padding or asphalt for paving roads. That is because clothes are usually a complex mix of materials that must be separated carefully to keep the fibres in good condition if there is any hope of respinning them into new garments. Usually done by hand, CETIA says its AI-laser ma-

chine can do this at a much faster rate that is rapidly evolving as it perfects the technology. It also has machines that can sort clothes by colour and composition at a rate of one per second.

### Incentives

The reason these inventions are finally emerging is that tough new European rules are imminent that will force clothing companies to use a set amount of recycled fibres in their gar-

ments. CETIA's work is backed by big retailers like Decathlon and Zalando who are urgently looking for industrial-scale solutions. There are also political incentives. The French government sees the potential for new manufacturing jobs if recycling technology allows it to deal with some of the 200,000 tons of textile waste currently being shipped abroad each year.

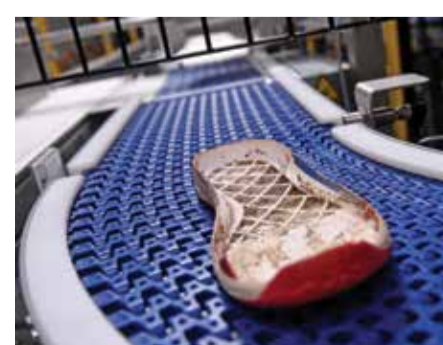
CETIA's focus is on preparing textiles for reuse. Other companies must now start melting down the separated soles and turning them into new ones. But it is an important first step. "As long as we do not have systems to prepare materials for recycling, we will not have a recycling sector in France," said Veronique Allaire-Spitzer, of Refashion, which coordinates waste management. It injected 900,000 euros into Cetia with a similar contribution from the regional government. "None of this is a magic idea. It's just common sense," said Legagneur. "But it's about putting together the engineers and the financing and the companies who need these solutions, and it's only now that these things are coming together. Ten years ago, no one wanted it."—AFP



A photograph shows a machine tearing off the rubber sole at CETIA.



An employee places old clothes on the textile sorting machine at CETIA.



A photograph shows an old sole on a machine at CETIA, the very first innovation platform dedicated to the recyclability of textiles and leather articles.



## Sports

## World Cup not over for Pakistan: Azam

## Every win in the World Cup boosts our confidence

**KOLKATA:** Pakistan captain Babar Azam said Tuesday that he still clings onto hope that his team can squeeze into the World Cup semi-finals despite the odds stacked against them. "Yes, We are trying to win our next two matches and let's see where we stand," said Azam after a seven-wicket romp over Bangladesh gave them a third win in seven matches.

"We will take a lot of confidence into those matches." Pakistan have six points and sit in fifth place in the 10-nation table. Australia, in fourth place, have eight points and a game in hand while third-placed New Zealand are third, also on eight points, having also played one game fewer.

Pakistan face the Kiwis on Saturday in Bengaluru before finishing their group campaign against defending champions England in Kolkata on November 11. As well as two wins, the 1992 champions will need other results go their way if they are to stay in the tournament.

On Tuesday, Shaheen Shah Afridi grabbed three wickets while openers Fakhar Zaman and Abdullah Shafique made 81 and 68 respectively as Pakistan chased down a 205-run target for the loss of three wickets with 105 balls to spare.

"We know when Fakhar plays the way he can for 20-30 overs it is a different ball game. So we let him play his natural game and it is good to see," said Azam of Zaman, the only Pakistan batsman to have scored a double century in one-day international cricket.

Azam added: "We started well. Shaheen took early wickets. The main thing is we stuck to our

length in the middle overs and we took wickets." Fakhar, a 33-year-old left-hander, was playing only his second match of the tournament after being sidelined with a knee injury.

"We were anxiously waiting for this win," said Zaman. "Every win in the World Cup boosts the confidence and our aim is to win the remaining two matches. Our target is semi-final." Zaman admitted the defeat to India earlier in the tournament had been a bodyblow but the team had gained new confidence by pushing South Africa all the way.

Pakistan fought hard against the Proteas only to lose by a narrow one-wicket margin in Chennai on Friday. "That loss to India made the difference, every match against India does but we fought well in the South Africa match and that fight gave us much-needed rhythm," said Zaman.

Zaman also said the impact of his injury was not as severe as first feared. "I was batting well in the nets and had the team needed me before I would have played but my aim is to always score runs that help the team win."

## 'Bounce back'

Bangladesh became the first team to be eliminated after six losses in seven games. "At this moment we have to perform together in all three departments. It's not any individual that can win us games," said captain Shakib Al Hasan.

His team still have two games to play in the round-robin stage against Sri Lanka in New Delhi on November 6 and against Australia in Pune five



**KOLKATA:** Pakistan's Abdullah Shafique avoids a bouncer during the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between Pakistan and Bangladesh at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. — AFP

days later. "We need collective performances. Two more matches hopefully we can bounce back," said Shakib, playing in his fourth World Cup.

"The fans supported us and are behind us whether we are doing well or not. We have to give something back to them so they can smile." — AFP

## News in Brief

No contract  
Willey to retire

**MUMBAI:** England seamer David Willey said Wednesday he will retire from international cricket following the World Cup after missing out on a national central contract. The 33-year-old left-arter, also a hard-hitting lower-order batsman, was the only member of reigning champions England's struggling 15-man squad in India not to be given a deal of any kind. That decision left Willey in the strange position of trying to turn round England's woeful title defence while knowing his bosses were not prepared to secure his future as an international cricketer. "I never wanted this day to come," said Willey in a post on Instagram announcing his retirement. — AFP

Osimhen nominated  
for top award

**JOHANNESBURG:** Nigeria star Victor Osimhen is among 30 nominees named on Wednesday for the 2022-2023 men's African Player of the Year award. The prolific Napoli forward was the leading scorer in Serie A last season with 26 goals and in 2023 Africa Cup of Nations qualifying with 10, including four in one match. Stars from the Morocco squad that made history in Qatar last December by becoming the first World Cup semi-finalists from Africa are also contenders. They include goalkeeper Yassine Bounou, defender Achraf Hakimi, midfielder Sofyan Amrabat, winger Hakim Ziyech and forward Youssef en Nesyri. Sadio Mane of Senegal and Mohamed Salah of Egypt, both two-time winners of the award, have also been nominated. — AFP

Maxwell out of  
England clash

**AHMEDABAD:** Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell will miss the Cricket World Cup clash with old rivals England after falling off a golf buggy and suffering concussion, media reports said Wednesday. The 35-year-old came off the back of the buggy in the dark after playing a round on Monday as players took a break between matches at the marathon tournament. As well as concussion, Maxwell picked up significant bruising, said cricket.com.au, the digital arm of Cricket Australia. It is the second freak accident to befall Maxwell in the last 12 months after he broke his leg at a friend's birthday party in November 2022. Maxwell blasted his way into the record books at the World Cup last week when he hit the fastest hundred in tournament history off just 40 balls in a 309-run demolition of the Netherlands in New Delhi. Although Maxwell will sit out Saturday's game against England at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad, he is expected to return for the later stages of the tournament. — AFP

No swing, no problem  
as Shaheen goes  
to number one

**KOLKATA:** Pakistan spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi has become cricket's top-ranked bowler but his prime concern is keeping his country in the World Cup. The 23-year-old, who has 16 wickets at the tournament, has displaced Australian quick

Bangladesh's World  
Cup flop sparks  
calls for change

**DHAKA:** Bangladesh's dismal performance at the World Cup has sparked calls for wholesale changes from dragging players out of their comfort zones to a radical transformation of a domestic set-up too often plagued by allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Bangladesh became the first country to be eliminated from the World Cup when they crashed to a seven-wicket defeat to Pakistan in Kolkata on Tuesday. Pakistan swept to victory with 105 balls to spare leaving Bangladesh out of contention with two rounds of matches left to play.

They started the tournament well enough, beating Afghanistan by six wickets. However, they then lost six consecutive matches, which not only ended their semi-final chances but also put the side's qualification for the 2025 Champions Trophy in jeopardy.

Bangladesh lost to England by 137 runs, New Zealand by eight wickets, India by seven wickets, South Africa by 149 runs and to non-Test playing Netherlands by 87 runs before Pakistan put them out of their misery. Bangladesh went to the World Cup after finishing third in the Super League qualification tournament just behind New Zealand and defending champions England.

But many of the games they won were on home turf, where low and slow wickets suited the team's playing style. "We have seen a rapid transformation in international cricket, where you may need to hit four sixes in an over and bowl very accurately," said Bishwajit Roy, sports editor of the Daily Star newspaper. "Bangladesh players could not develop the required skill due to playing consistently on low and slow wickets at home."

## 'Appear helpless'

Highly-regarded local coach Nazmul Abedin Fahim suggested Bangladesh restructure its domestic cricket to create a challenging environ-

Who will Eddie Jones' successor  
be as Wallabies coach?

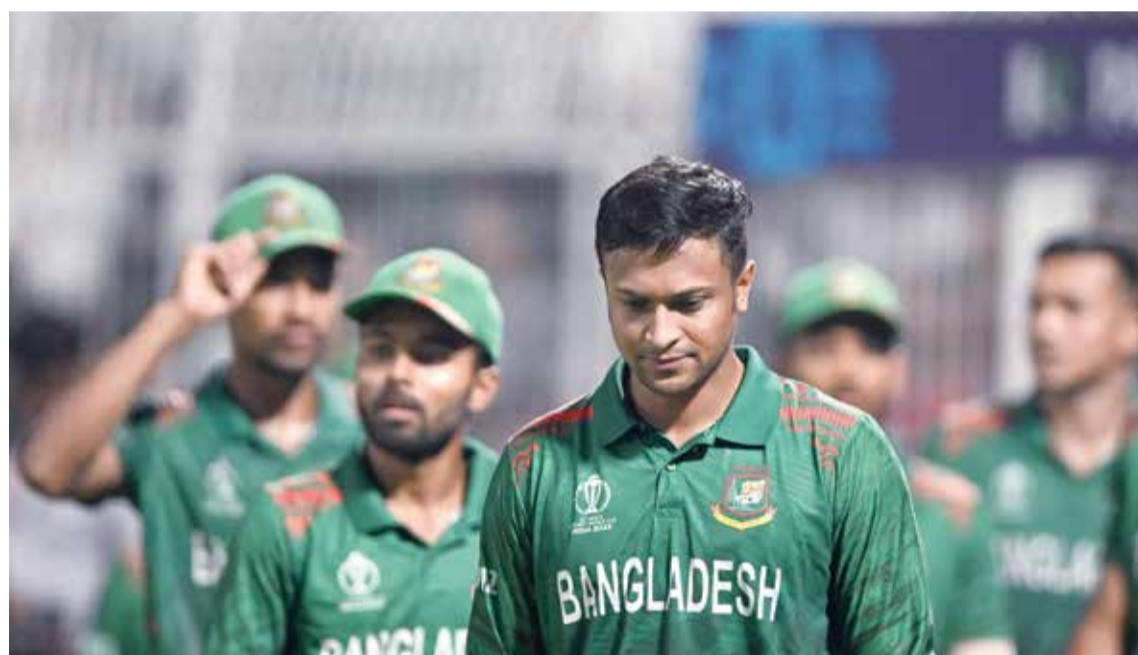
**SYDNEY:** Rugby Australia face the daunting task of finding a new Wallabies coach after their disastrous experiment with Eddie Jones ended abruptly this week. AFP Sports looks at potential candidates to repair Australia's reputation with a 2025 British and Irish Lions tour and 2027 home World Cup on the horizon:

## Dan McKellar

The highly regarded 47-year-old was widely seen as heir apparent to former Wallabies coach Dave Rennie, working as his assistant until the New Zealander was axed in January. But McKellar was overlooked and left for England to take over as head coach at Leicester Tigers when the polarising Jones was appointed. Brisbane-born McKellar made his name as coach of the ACT Brumbies and reportedly has a Wallabies exit clause in his contract with Leicester. He is considered a frontrunner.

## Stephen Larkham

The decorated former Wallabies fly-half is a brilliant tactician with an in-depth knowledge of Australian rugby. After winning 102 caps as a player, he became attack coach under then-Wallabies mentor Michael Cheika at the



**KOLKATA:** Bangladesh's captain Shakib Al Hasan (C) reacts at the end of the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup one-day international (ODI) match between Pakistan and Bangladesh at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata. — AFP

ment for players that would benefit them in the international arena.

Poor wickets, substandard umpiring, and allegations of match-fixing often mar Bangladesh's domestic game. "We must address the core problem instead of looking at the periphery," said Fahim. "Our players don't face challenges in local cricket. As a result, they appear helpless in international matches. We should change it and ensure they get better coaching in local cricket as well," he told AFP.

Their overseas form has also exposed a gulf between Bangladesh's domestic cricket and international results. Anamul Haque and Mohammad Naim, two of the top run-getters in the previous two seasons of the Dhaka Premier League, failed to grab a spot in the World Cup squad.

Bangladesh were the last team to announce a

15-man squad, less than 24 hours before the players' departure for India. Controversy over the axing of Tamim Iqbal and captain Shakib Al Hasan's subsequent verbal attack on the batsman created an unsettled environment.

That was reflected in performances. In a tournament which has witnessed record and rapid run-getting, Bangladesh's highest total was just 256 against India. Several players who have served the team for nearly two decades are set to end their careers very soon.

Captain Shakib Al Hasan and batsmen Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah are unlikely to play in another World Cup. Mahmudullah is Bangladesh's top run scorer at the World Cup but he will be 38 in February. Out-of-favor opening batsman Tamim, who was overlooked for the World Cup, is also nearing the end of his career. — AFP



Eddie Jones

## Michael Cheika

The vastly experienced 56-year-old coached the Wallabies between 2014 and 2019, steering them to the 2015 World Cup final before a messy departure as results deteriorated. He has only enhanced his reputation since and guided Argentina to the World Cup semi-finals in France last month. Now out of contract, Cheika could be tempted by a return home. An innovative thinker, he was a teammate of Jones at club side Randwick and has also coached Leinster, Stade Francais and the NSW Waratahs.

## Ian Foster

The 58-year-old New Zealander is

out of work despite leading the All Blacks to a narrow loss to South Africa in the World Cup final. His successor Scott Robertson was appointed before the tournament. Rugby Australia chief Phil Waugh has said he is prepared to speak with him, but having another Kiwi at the helm so soon after Rennie might not go down well with Wallabies fans. After his four-year tenure with New Zealand, Foster will have no shortage of job offers and said after the World Cup he was open to coaching another international team.

## Wildcards

Left-field prospects include former Harlequins, Brumbies and Connaught coach Andy Friend, who used to be in charge of the Australian Sevens team. NSW Waratahs coach Darren Coleman has also been mentioned in local media, but would appear to lack experience. Another outside chance is New Zealander Joe Schmidt, who helped transform Irish rugby into a global force and has more recently been working with the All Blacks. — AFP

Josh Hazlewood at the top of the pile, taking the honor for the first time since making his international debut in 2018.

Afridi claimed 3-23 in the seven-wicket win over Bangladesh in Kolkata on Tuesday, a victory which kept alive their slim hopes of making the semi-finals. His dismissal of Bangladesh opener Tanzid Hasan also gave him a 100th wicket in his 51st one-day international. "I am delighted at completing 100 ODI wickets but the biggest thing is that all these wickets are for Pakistan and my goal is always to do some-

thing that helps us win," said Shaheen.

Shaheen's success in India has come despite a lack of swing, prompting him to adjust his sights in the campaign. "I watched some of the IPL matches this year and there was not much swing," said Shaheen. "So I am not much surprised. But this is not for me only, it's for other left armers like (Mitchell) Starc and (Trent) Boult also."

He added: "I knew there will be less swing so the effort is on keeping a proper line and length and that is very important." Shaheen also hailed fellow fast bowlers Haris Rauf (2-36 against Ban-

gladesh) and Mohammad Wasim (3-31).

"It was not easy for Wasim to sit on the bench and then on getting an opportunity he bowled very well in both the games he has played," said Shaheen. "Haris has speed and has played a key role in white ball cricket for Pakistan. It is good for Pakistan cricket to have bowlers like them."

With the win against Bangladesh, Pakistan have six points from seven games. They not only need to win their remaining two matches but also hope other results go their way if they are to make the semi-finals. — AFP



## Sports

## Kuwait weightlifting team wins 32 medals

## Al-Jassar praises performance of Kuwait in the championship

CAIRO: The President of the Kuwait Weightlifting Federation, Talal Al-Jassar, expressed pride in the players of the Kuwait national team, who won 32 various medals in the Arab Championship for men and women, which concluded on Tuesday in the Egyptian capital Cairo.

Al-Jassar told Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Wednesday after the arrival of the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the tournament to the country that the Kuwaiti team was able to occupy this advanced position in the tournament after strong competitions with 19 participating teams, knowing that the host Egyptian team was crowned the title while Algeria came third.

He explained that what contributed to this achievement was the outstanding level shown by the Kuwait national team players by achieving 19 medals through the players Malak Al-Haddad (gold and bronze), Amal Mesaieed (3 silver), Abrar Al-Fahd (3 silver), Fatima Al-Balushi (3 bronze), Hanan Al-Amir (3 bronze), Hanouf Al-Mejren (two bronze), Zahraa Kamshad (one bronze) and Zainab Al-Mohammed (two bronze).

He stated that the blue weightlifters also won 13 medals in the championship through Hamid Akbar (three silvers), Mohammed Al-Mullah (two silvers and one bronze), Hussein Munshid (three bronze), Fahd Al-Otaibi (one bronze) and Ali Shams (three bronze).



KUWAIT: The victorious Kuwait's national team welcomed at the airport. — KUNA

Al-Jassar praised the performance of Kuwait's champions in the championship, especially the promising champion Malak Al-Haddad, who was crowned gold in the -45 kg competition for the cubs category, in a wonderful achievement for her and her country, dedi-

cating this remarkable victory to the country's political leadership and the Kuwaiti weightlifting family.

He considered that these great achievements of the Kuwaiti champions will motivate them to achieve more of them in the upcoming events, es-

pecially since most of them are young and have a brilliant future ahead of them in the game, stressing the Federation's endeavor to support its players of both sexes to achieve the best results in foreign tournaments. — KUNA

## Holders Leipzig knocked out of German Cup

BERLIN: Wolfsburg produced the first shock of this season's German Cup, knocking out holders RB Leipzig with an inspired 1-0 win as fourth-tier Homburg upset Greuther Fuerth and Kaiserslautern sank Cologne. Wolfsburg, coached by Niko Kovac, who guided Eintracht Frankfurt to glory in this competition in 2018, took an early lead through Vaclav Cerny — and Leipzig never recovered.

The Red Bull outfit have a rich recent pedigree in the competition, reaching the previous three finals, losing in 2021 to Borussia Dortmund first but winning the last two against Freiburg and Frankfurt. However, Wolfsburg have not made it beyond the quarter-finals since lifting the trophy in 2015.

But on home turf, Kovac's side put their Bundesliga troubles behind them and pulled off their biggest victory of the season. Despite going into this game having lost four of their last five league games, Wolfsburg flew out of the blocks. Summer signing Cerny latched onto a perfectly-weighted pass by Tiago Tomas and unleashed an unstoppable left-footed drive into the roof of the net for his first goal of the season. Leipzig struggled to find their rhythm and when Yussuf Poulsen saw red nine minutes into the second half for a clumsy second yellow, the reigning champions' chances disappeared. In another surprise result, Greuther Fuerth of Germany's second division were beaten 2-1 at home by fourth tier Homburg with Phil Harres scoring a late winner.

Bundesliga strugglers Cologne were sent packing by second-tier Kaiserslautern, whose slick performance put them 3-0 up after 65 minutes and seemingly out of sight. Cologne clawed it back to 3-2 but



WOLFSBURG: Wolfsburg's Belgian defender #03 Sebastiaan Bornauw (L) and Leipzig's Dutch midfielder #20 Xavi Simons vie for the ball during the German Cup (DFB Pokal) second round football match between VfL Wolfsburg and RB Leipzig in Wolfsburg, northern Germany. — AFP

it was too little too late, ending the game with nine men after Eric Martel and captain Florian Kainz were sent off within the space of five second half minutes.

Cologne have now won only one of their last 10 games. In an extraordinary game between third division Unterhaching and second-tier Fortuna Duesseldorf, the underdogs were pegged back to 3-3 after being 2-0 up, with Duesseldorf eventually prevailing 6-3 after extra time.

Hamburg were 13 minutes from going out to third-tier Arminia Bielefeld but levelled the game at 1-1, with the second division club eventually clinching

victory 4-3 in a penalty shoot-out. Earlier, Stuttgart's fine start to the Bundesliga season transferred to the Cup, winning 1-0 against beleaguered Union Berlin. Union Berlin qualified for the Champions League for the first time in their history last season, but their domestic form this term has been poor. The only goal of the game came in first half stoppage time courtesy of Deniz Undav. Borussia Moenchengladbach, three-time German Cup winners, beat Heidenheim 3-1 to reach the last 16, while Johannes Eggstein scored a 102nd minute winner for St. Pauli, who needed extra time to beat Schalke 2-1. — AFP

## From F1 to CR7, Saudi's sports shopping spree

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia was named as the lone bidder for the 2034 World Cup on Tuesday, a major success that follows a string of high-profile sports acquisitions. The conservative Gulf monarchy, often criticized over its human rights record, is attempting to burnish its image and attract tourists and investment as it tries to diversify its economy away from oil. Here are some of the moves that have turned Saudi Arabia into a major player in sports:

## Winter sports

Saudi Arabia, a mostly desert country where summer temperatures touch 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), raised eyebrows last October when it was chosen to host the 2029 Asian Winter Games. The event, which has already earned the wrath of environmental campaigners, will be held at NEOM, an under-construction \$500 billion megacity that is planning a year-round winter sports complex. Five years later, the same year as the World Cup, the capital Riyadh will put on the 2034 Asian Games, an Olympic-sized multi-sports event. Hosting an Olympics is the kingdom's "ultimate goal", Sports Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Turki Al-Faisal told AFP last August.

## Formula One

The glitzy world of F1 zoomed in to Jeddah, the Red Sea city that is a gateway for pilgrims to Mecca, in 2021 with a night race flanking the coastline. It is one of four grands prix to be held in the wealthy Gulf this year. The 2022 edition was overshadowed by an attack by Huthi rebels from Yemen, Saudi's war-torn neighbour, that left oil facilities belching black smoke within sight of the circuit during practice sessions.

## Football

Saudi Arabian clubs — backed by the Public Investment Fund sovereign wealth vehicle — have been on an extraordinary buying spree this year, starting with Al-Nassr's signing of Cristiano Ronaldo in January on a two-and-a-half-year deal said to total 400 million euros.

It opened the floodgates, with Ballon d'Or holder Karim Benzema joining Al-Ittihad, Neymar leaving Qatar-owned Paris Saint-Germain for Al-Hilal and a

stream of other late-career stars making their way to the Saudi Pro League. In October 2021, well before the Pro League's acquisitions, a Saudi-funded consortium completed its takeover of English Premier League club Newcastle United following a protracted wrangle with regulators. Fans of the long-time "sleeping giant", who had been at odds with the previous owner for years, celebrated by donning Arab headdresses at St. James's Park stadium. Newcastle have since enjoyed a lift in fortunes, qualifying for this season's Champions League. Meanwhile Saudi Arabia will host the Club World Cup at the end of December as well as the 2027 Asian Cup, now a dress rehearsal for the World Cup. It is also bidding to hold the women's Asian Cup in 2026.

## Golf

Saudi money has changed the face of professional golf after the upstart LIV Golf, following a legal battle with the established US PGA and European tours, announced a shock merger with its rivals in June.

The deal, which is due to be finalized at the end of December, follows a two-year civil war after LIV poached players for huge sums, prompting the US and European circuits to rule them ineligible for certain tournaments including, in the case of Europe, the Ry-

der Cup. Former world number one Dustin Johnson has been one of the prime beneficiaries, scooping \$35 million in prize money in the inaugural season — on top of a reported \$150 million just for agreeing to play.

## Boxing

When world heavyweight champion Tyson Fury won a split-decision in a non-title bout with MMA star Francis Ngannou on Saturday, it was just the latest high-profile fight in Saudi Arabia. Anthony Joshua, another British heavyweight, has fought twice in Saudi, earning a big payday each time while swatting off criticism over alleged sportswashing. Joshua won his revenge match against America's Andy Ruiz in King Abdullah Sports City in December 2019, before returning in August last year when he was outclassed by Ukrainian maestro Oleksandr Usyk.

## Tennis

This year's Next Gen ATP Finals, featuring the hottest young men's players, will be played in Jeddah in December. Saudi Arabia was also reported to be the front-runner to host this year's WTA Finals before Cancun in Mexico was named as the organizer. — AFP



RIYADH: Nassr's Portuguese forward #07 Cristiano Ronaldo runs to shoot the ball as Duha'il's Qatari defender #04 Yousef Aymen looks on during the AFC Champions League Group E football match between Saudi's al-Nassr and Qatar's al-Duhail at the King Saud University Stadium in Riyadh. — AFP

## Alcaraz stunned by qualifier in Paris Masters defeat

PARIS: Carlos Alcaraz slipped to a shock defeat on his return from injury on Tuesday at the Paris Masters while Alexander Zverev needed three sets to see off Marton Fucsovics. Spanish world number two Alcaraz, who was making his return to the court following injuries to his lower back and left foot, had been given a bye in the first round but had no answer to Russian qualifier Roman Safiullin who eased through 6-3, 6-4.

"He didn't surprise me at all because I knew that he has been playing a great level these last few months, beating big guys, reaching finals," said a disconsolate Alcaraz. "I knew that he was going to play a high level."

Safiullin, ranked 45 in the world, cancelled out an early Alcaraz break in the first set and then never looked back as he ran on to claim the opener 6-3. The same scenario then played out in the second set, with Alcaraz breaking for an early lead only for his opponent to strike back immediately.

Having only announced he would play in the tournament last Wednesday, Alcaraz looked far from his sharpest. "I just didn't feel well, you know, on the court," he said. "A lot of things to improve, a lot of things to practice."

"I think I didn't move well. In the shots, I think I had a good quality of shots. But physically, in terms of movement, I have to improve a lot." However, much credit must go to Safiullin, who was relentless in getting over the line for a career-boosting win in what was his first meeting with the Spaniard.

The 26-year-old held his nerve under pressure from the Wimbledon champion to serve out for the win, despite facing several deuce points in the final game. "Even if he's not in the best shape it's tough to beat him," said Safiullin. "So, I'm really happy that I made it."

## Zverev eyes ATP Finals

The German 10th seed Zverev also had his difficulties, having to come back from a set down to beat Hungarian Fucsovics 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 in the round of 64 at Bercy Arena. "It was just one or two points (that made the difference)," said Zverev. "He was playing incredibly well and tactically I think he was unbelievable."

"His slice was effective as I did not know what to do on this surface here. It was a very difficult match, and I am happy to be through. I found my level and I am happy with that." Zverev is still seeking to secure his place among the top eight who will go on to the ATP Finals in Turin next month. After this victory, the 2021 champion sits seventh just behind Stefanos Tsitsipas and 430 points ahead of ninth-placed Hubert Hurkacz.

## Fritz pulls out

American Taylor Fritz's chances of qualifying for the tour's showpiece event took a hit when he was forced to retire with an abdominal injury. On Monday, the ninth seed had comfortably beaten Argentine Sebastian Baez 6-1, 6-4.

Hometown favourite Gael Monfils was knocked out in the first round by Argentinian world number 21 Francisco Cerundolo in three sets on Tuesday. The battling 37-year-old looked tired after losing the second set in a tie-break but rolled back the years with a break of serve right at the start of the third.

However, it was not enough as Cerundolo struck back in the eighth game of the set, before breaking the Frenchman's serve again to take the decider 7-5. The 11th-seeded Hurkacz saw off Sebastian Korda 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3 to book his place in the second round alongside Felix Auger-Aliassime, who toppled Jan-Lennard Struff in two sets. Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev completed the day's play with a quickfire 6-4, 6-3 victory over Japanese qualifier Yoshihito Nishioka. — AFP



## Saudi's Al-Dawsari, Australia's Kerr named AFC players of the year

Kerr accepted the award in a video message



DOHA: President of Asian Football Confederation (AFC) Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa poses for a picture with the award winners during the AFC Annual Awards Doha 2022 on Oct 31, 2023. — AFP

DOHA: Saudi Arabia winger Salem Al-Dawsari and Australia striker Samantha Kerr were named Asian Football Confederation (AFC) players of the year at a glitzy ceremony in Doha on Tuesday. Al-Dawsari, who won the accolade of best men's player, thanked his teammates, fans and family at the annual awards held this year in the Qatari capital.

"I thank my father, my mother and my

teachers in life, and I also thank my wife and my sons and daughters," Al-Dawsari, who plays for Saudi Pro League Team Al-Hilal said. The player also thanked political leadership in the Gulf monarchy which is all but certain to host the 2034 FIFA World Cup following the withdrawal of Australia, the only other contender for the tournament, on Tuesday.

The Saudi player, who clinched the winning goal in his team's upset win against

Argentina in the 2022 World Cup, fought off competition from Australia's Mathew Leckie and Qatar's Almoez Ali to win AFC male player of the year.

Kerr, who also won the women's AFC player of the year award in 2017, had vied with nominees, China's Zhang Linyan and Japan's Saki Kumagai to win the women's accolade. "It's been an amazing year for me and my team and I just want to thank all my team-

mates, my coaches, my family and friends. It's been amazing," the Chelsea player and all-time Australia top goal scorer said as she accepted the award in a video message.

The annual awards ceremony, which had been due to be held in Qatar in 2020, returned after a four-year hiatus because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The gas-rich Gulf state, which hosted the 2022 World Cup, is to host the confed-

eration's upcoming Asian Cup beginning in January. The tiny emirate has said the Asian Cup will be held across nine stadiums including seven that are a legacy of the world cup held almost exactly one year ago.

"The AFC is delighted to be able to bring the Asian football family together in the stunning city of Doha," AFC President Shaikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa said. — AFP



LEICESTER: Belgium's defender Laura Deloof tackles England's striker Alessia Russo during the UEFA Women's Nations League football Group A match between England and Belgium. — AFP

## Spain thrash Swiss as England stumble

PARIS: World champions Spain ruthlessly dispatched Switzerland 7-1 in the Women's Nations League on Tuesday while England's hopes of progression were dented by Belgium. Alexia Putellas grabbed a goal either side of half-time and an assist as the Spaniards put Switzerland to the sword in Zurich. The match was the team's first since FIFA announced on Monday that former Spanish football chief Luis Rubiales had incurred a three-year ban for his forced kiss on Jenni Hermoso. If the news had any impact on the players, it was soon forgotten as Oihane Hernandez gave them the lead after four minutes, which Putellas then added to seven minutes later. The world champions piled the misery on the hosts after the break, adding five goals. Alayah Pilgrim grabbing a consolation strike for the Swiss. Star midfielder Aitana Bonmati was present for the occasion despite picking up the Ballon d'Or on Monday in Paris.

Spain sit five points clear of Sweden, who drew 1-1 with Italy, at the top of Group A4 with a maximum 12 points from

four matches. Switzerland, on the other hand, have endured a difficult start in a tough group, going down to four consecutive losses.

### England in trouble

World Cup runners-up England slipped to a 3-2 defeat in Leuven that puts their Nations League hopes in the balance. It was the first time that England have conceded three goals since Sarina Wiegman took over as coach in 2021.

Laura de Neve curled in a free-kick to give Belgium the lead on nine minutes, only for Lucy Bronze and Fran Kirby to put England back in charge. The home side were level, though, before half-time through their captain Tessa Wullaert who struck deep into first-half additional time.

When Georgia Stanway was penalized for handball five minutes from time, Wullaert calmly put away the penalty to secure the win for Belgium. The European champions languish third in Group A1 on six points, three behind leaders Netherlands who won 1-0 in Scotland. France stumbled to a 0-0 home draw against Norway, but with 10 points they remain top of group A2, three clear of second-placed Austria who beat Portugal 2-1. Herve Renard's side lacked inspiration but were denied three times by the post as well as some good saves by Norwegian goalkeeper Aurora Mikalsen. — AFP

## Pegula upsets Sabalenka to reach WTA semis

CANCUN: Jessica Pegula upset Aryna Sabalenka in straight sets at the WTA Finals in Cancun on Tuesday, punishing an error-strewn performance by the world number one to reach the semifinals of the season-ending tournament for the first time. World number five Pegula, who had beaten Sabalenka only once before in five previous meetings, dominated her out-of-sorts Belarusian opponent from the outset to claim a 6-4, 6-3 victory.

Pegula was assured of reaching the last four as the winner of Bacalar Group later Tuesday after fourth seed Elena Rybakina defeated Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-0, 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/2) in the day's other game. "I feel more comfortable playing (top players) this year, I feel more confident," Pegula said after her win.

"I don't think it feels like such a big deal. Last year when I made top five, I think I psyched myself out a little bit. You have a couple thoughts in your head—do I really belong at that level?" Sabalenka, who is one of several players who have complained about the condition of the court at this week's tournament, looked uncomfortable throughout against Pegula, finishing with 33 unforced errors and five double faults.

Sabalenka, who can still reach the last four with a win over Rybakina on Thursday, again bemoaned the state of



Jessica Pegula

the playing surface after her defeat, describing it as "like leather." "You never know what's going to happen, whether the bounce is going to help you or work against you," Sabalenka said.

"I guess today was a day where it didn't work well for me. But it's okay I still have a chance to pass the group, so I'm trying to stay strong. "I'll do some recovery tonight and just try to analyze what happened today. I'll do everything I can in the next match."

The 25-year-old from Minsk was broken in the fifth game of the first set and Pegula cashed in by holding serve in the next game to open up a 4-2 lead. Sabalenka blasted a wild forehand wide in the next game to hand Pegula another break and leave her serving for the set at 5-2 up. — AFP

## Wembanyama, Spurs stun Phoenix in last-gasp thriller

LOS ANGELES: Victor Wembanyama scored 18 points as the San Antonio Spurs staged a dramatic comeback to snatch a last-gasp 115-114 victory over Kevin Durant and the Phoenix Suns on Tuesday. San Antonio, coming off a brutal 40-point mauling by the Los Angeles Clippers on Sunday, looked to be heading for another heavy defeat after Phoenix cruised into a 20-point lead early in the third quarter.

But a thrilling duel in Phoenix was turned on its head by San Antonio in the fourth quarter, who outscored the

Suns 33-19 in the final frame to secure victory. French prodigy Wembanyama, the No.1 NBA Draft pick, played a crucial role in the comeback, with a jump shot from 15 feet making it a three-point game with 49 seconds left on the clock.

The 7ft 4in (2.24m) tall teenager then tipped in a dunk to make it a one-point game with seven seconds remaining. The decisive play however came from forward Keldon Johnson, who wrestled the ball away from a stunned Durant before driving to the basket for a layup that handed San Antonio their first lead of the game with just two seconds remaining.

There was still time for Durant to launch an attempted buzzer-beater, but his shot missed to leave San Antonio celebrating their first road win of the season. "It wasn't our prettiest game but we're learning every day and we're on the right path," the 19-year-old Wembanyama told broadcaster TNT after the win. — AFP